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THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON MOSCOW WOMEN:
GENDER CONSCIOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS IN
THE IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD, 1945–1953

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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*****

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To Mary Anne Bucher and Arthur Lewis
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# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Women in leadership positions in the textile industry in 1948</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women in leadership positions in the textile industry</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Childcare facilities in the Leningradskii District</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Childcare in selected Moscow districts, 1950</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rate of abortion in Baumanskii, Frunzenskii, Leningradskii, and Kievskii Districts of Moscow</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Abortion as a Percentage of Live Births</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Women’s Clinic No. 60</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Scherbokovskii District</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURES</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Women in selected economic sectors,</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945, 1947, 1951, 1953</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women in selected economic sectors,</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945, 1947, 1951, 1953</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
Introduction

In 1945 the Soviet Union celebrated its hard won victory over Germany and turned from the challenges of the war to the task of rebuilding a devastated country and a shattered economy with a depleted and exhausted workforce. The enormous costs of the war, both in human lives and property damage, left scars on the Soviet people that took years to heal and are still visible today. Despite their heavy losses, Soviet citizens had no time to grieve—survival demanded that they immediately begin the labor of reconstruction without stopping to mourn. For Soviet women, the postwar years were particularly bleak as they continued to shoulder the burdens left to them by their dead husbands, fathers and brothers, while they also bore and raised the next generation of citizens. Soviet state officials understood that the country's future lay in the hands of its women, and formulated social and economic policies to mobilize women to fulfill their productive and reproductive obligations.

Policymakers could not, however, concentrate solely on women, and many of the laws and resolutions passed by ministries and unions to help women were lost amid the deluge of orders that fell upon bureaucrats as the state
formulated hundreds of new policies, each deemed critical to the reconstruction of the economy. Managers, union leaders and local officials could not implement every order and were forced instead to decide which were most important and in keeping with their primary function—fulfilling production quotas. State directives on support for women often resulted in extra work—building projects, changing existing work patterns, new management procedures—or placed new demands on already overextended budgets without raising productivity. For these reasons, management, union and local officials avoided implementing policies on women and argued that the responsibility for their execution lay elsewhere. Since bureaucrats could not simply refuse to comply with state policies, they passed orders on to other organizations, which would send them on to other bodies. State directives on support for women that were not lost entirely could remain in the limbo of this bureaucratic shuffle for years without any action being taken.

Many of the problems of postwar life resulted not only from the war, but emerged out of the complexities involved in creating the new Soviet society, which had evolved since 1917 from a mixture of communist ideals and traditional Russian beliefs and practices.¹ The new

regime could not simply impose a new value system on the public, but the early leaders attempted to redefine gender roles and the family through legislation—a practice that continued throughout the Stalin years. The Bolsheviks began this process by passing two decrees immediately after the October revolution, replacing religious marriages with civil ceremonies and legalizing divorce on demand. A year later, the Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship included these two provisions and also granted women equal legal status, gave both men and women the right to alimony, and eliminated the stigma of illegitimacy. In addition, theoreticians debated what shape the new family would take and what role women would have in that family. Lenin himself had called for women to be freed from household drudgery, arguing that women could not be truly equal to men as long as they were "domestic slaves." He believed that it was the state's responsibility to provide public dining halls, child care facilities and communal laundries that would relieve women

of household chores, enabling them to take an equal role in economic and political life.\textsuperscript{3}

The decade of the 1920s was marked by high ideological hopes for the future of women, which contradicted the economic and social realities that reinforced women's dependence on men and household responsibilities.\textsuperscript{4}

Ideally, women were to join the workforce and become

\textsuperscript{3}Mary Buckley, \textit{Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 26-27, 45-47. Buckley discusses housework and ideology at some length but has very little to say about this issue in the Stalin years.

economically independent. They would be able to marry and divorce at will; state operated nurseries would care for their children while they worked, and widespread communal services would eliminate household cares. In short, the traditional family was no longer to be the model for Soviet society, and some theoreticians believed that, like the state, the family would simply wither away. These dreams, however, were impossible to realize in the pseudo-capitalist economy of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Women were the "last hired, first fired," and their economic dependence on men persisted. The budding system of child care facilities and communal dining halls disappeared in the harsh realities of NEP, leaving women with the responsibility to watch over their children and cook for their families, tying them once again to the home and promoting their dependence on men. By 1926, the rising numbers of women abandoned without support for their children resulted in a new Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship, which recognized de facto marriages and stated that marriage registration was in the state’s best interest. Already, the state was backing away from its earlier hopes that the family would "wither away."

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5 Goldman, p. 5.
6 Ibid., pp. 109, 126, 130.
7 Ibid., p. 249.
The trend toward tradition continued in the 1930s, culminating in the Family Law of 1936, which was designed to reinforce the family unit and encourage larger families by outlawing abortion, making divorce more difficult to obtain, setting minimums on child support, extending maternity leave, providing aid for needy mothers, creating the "Heroine of Motherhood" awards, and expanding the network of maternity clinics, daycare centers, and milk kitchens. A natalist bias clearly underlies this legislation. By limiting women's ability to choose whether or not to have children and increasing the difficulty involved in obtaining a divorce, the state supported the traditional family, placing more of the burden for supporting children on fathers and the state, but firmly reinstating women's traditional roles as wife and mother. In addition, the drive to industrialize the country demanded that more women go to work during the 1930s. Overall employment in this period increased dramatically, however, so the percentage of women workers rose only from 27 to 39.3 percent between 1927 and 1937.

The return to the traditional family and women's increasing involvement in the economy were the first steps in solidifying the Soviet woman's dual role as worker and mother. As industrialization swallowed the Utopianism of

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8 Ibid., pp. 331-332, 336.

the 1920s, women fell increasingly under the burden of the double shift—women became the fodder for the industrialization drive.

The Second World War accelerated women’s entrance into the workplace as men left jobs to go to the front, increasing their participation from 38 percent in 1940, to 55 percent in 1945. Furthermore, Soviet women were not sent home following the war as women were in western countries. The loss of eight million soldiers and another twelve million civilians meant that women formed the basis of the postwar workforce as well. Between 1941 and 1950, women constituted 92 percent of all new workers. In 1946 women comprised 57.4 percent of the total population and over 60 percent of the population in


the age group sixteen and over. By the beginning of 1948, 8.5 million soldiers had been demobilized out of the 11.4 million in the army in May 1945. While statistics on the number of men who returned home disabled are not available, it is clear from anecdotal evidence that many, if not most, returning veterans suffered some kind of injury. Finally, the state often quietly arrested returning prisoners of war and sent them off to the camps upon their return home. In the absence of statistical information, it is impossible to calculate the impact of these last two phenomena on the workforce, but it is clear that women comprised the largest group of available, able-bodied workers.

Policymakers wanted these women to stay on the job, but they had other plans for women as well. The population loss went beyond the deaths caused by the war, since the reproductive rate had also fallen substantially. To offset the possibility of a future labor shortage, the state needed women to reproduce and raise children as well as work. In the difficult living conditions of the postwar years, these competing interests shaped women's roles at work and at home, indicating the intricate


relationship between state policy, economic and social needs, and women's lives.

In order to facilitate women working and raising children, the state revised the existing laws governing marriage and family and passed the 1944 Family Law. This law retained many of the aspects of the 1935 law—divorce was still a difficult and expensive procedure and abortion continued to be illegal—but incorporated new statutes regarding child support. Single mothers were no longer able to sue the fathers of their children for child support, instead, the state assumed the financial responsibility for these children by granting financial assistance to single mothers. Scholars have argued that these laws supported the traditional family, interpreting the fact that women were no longer able to sue for child support as a move by the state to protect men from paternity suits, thereby reinforcing the family.\(^{15}\) While the restrictions on divorce discouraged couples from breaking up, the fact that men were protected from paternity suits hardly strengthened marriage. Instead it allowed men to have as many affairs as they liked with no financial consequences and, therefore, encouraged male promiscuity.

Laws were not the only means through which expectations of women were articulated. The state's control over the

media provided it with the means to attempt to shape public perceptions of women's roles and, consequently, women's actual roles in society and in the workplace. The state embraced propaganda as a powerful tool in shaping women's lives, using it not only to inform women of their obligations, but also as the forum in which it contracted to support women in their dual roles as workers and mothers with child care and communal services, adequate housing, health care, and in special cases, financial aid. The press emphasized that the Soviet state was unique, not only in providing women with the opportunity to work, but also in making this covenant with them, stressing Soviet women's unique position in the world and pointing out their duty to excel both as workers and as mothers in return for their good fortune.

Despite the state's promises to help working mothers, the primary goal during this time continued to be the expansion of heavy industry—the economy had been devastated by the war—and the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans stressed production quotas over every other aspect of the economy. Consequently, all resources were diverted to production, and the plans for support systems for women were pushed aside as secondary considerations—these facilities required capital, building space and staffing, all of which were in short supply and would not directly result in raising productivity; the manager who was willing to divert the precious resources to such services
could even suffer a temporary drop in production. Despite constant reiteration of the state’s dedication to supporting women and appeals to management to provide support services, few facilities materialized, leaving women with the double burden of work and housework. When state bodies and union organizations investigated the lack of communal services, they invariably found that institutions refused to take responsibility for providing these services, arguing that other organizations were supposed to implement the directives. All institutions were under the umbrella of the state, but administrative differentiation between ministries, unions and enterprises enabled bureaucrats to shuffle the responsibility for fulfilling state directives around and avoid the difficulties involved in actually fulfilling the state’s promises to women.

Women’s double burden was exacerbated by the difficulties of postwar life—food shortages, lack of consumer goods, extended work days, and inadequate housing placed new demands on women’s time and energy. Despite the fact that state officials knew that the life pictured in propaganda and women’s day to day lives were vastly different, they continued to pressure women, both through propaganda and legislation, to be dedicated workers and devoted mothers. The added difficulties of postwar life complicated both roles, and these factors all interacted to shape women’s relationships with men, mothers, children
and neighbors. For example, the housing shortage meant that several generations often lived together in the same room, and this created a myriad of problems ranging from a young couple's need for privacy to fights with intrusive in-laws. The housing shortage also led to tension among neighbors as they vied for use of the kitchen and lavatories. Most of these conflicts involved women—either as a contender for the stove to fix dinner or as the one caught between her husband and her mother in a family fight.

Despite its pivotal role in the social history of the Soviet Union, the postwar period has been largely ignored by historians. The few works that do cover this period address specific issues and do not explore the relationship between state policy and women's lives. Works on Soviet women also overlook this period, with two exceptions. Lapidus provides an important analysis of women in the economic and political structure, but only lightly touches on Stalin's later years and does not specifically explore the issue of how women's lives were affected by the war. Buckley's study focuses exclusively on ideology and views the Stalin era as a


17 Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society.
Both of these works assume that postwar policy and ideology regarding women followed the pattern of the 1930s—that the state continued to support the traditional family—but these assumptions are not supported by archival research.

This work focuses explicitly on the postwar years, and, challenging the assumptions made by earlier scholars, approaches later Stalinism as a continuation of prewar ideology but with distinctions precipitated by the war. The state's commitment to women working and raising children assumed paramount importance in Soviet family policy, undermining the pre-war emphasis on traditional families. Through legislation and propaganda, the state offered women a contract whereby it assumed the paternal responsibilities for children born to single mothers and provided support for working mothers. Most women had little choice but to fulfill their roles as workers and mothers, but the state did not live up to its obligations as fully, substituting propaganda and coercion for support. The contradiction between word and deed created a myriad of problems for women in the postwar Soviet Union, and their experiences provide a means of understanding the relationship between material reality, ideology, and individual perceptions in postwar Soviet society.

Buckley, *Women and Ideology.*
The sources for this project fall into three distinct categories and provide very different kinds of evidence. The first is propaganda from the periodical press, which provided the models that the state hoped women would emulate. The press in this period engaged in an extremely limited discourse on Soviet society and therefore is useful mainly as the arena in which the party/state apparatus set down its plans for society. The second and largest body of sources came from the Moscow archives. Most of the documents were records from state committees, unions and ministries that are housed in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Moscow City Archive (TsGAORSSgM). The third body of evidence came from extensive interviews with fifteen women who lived in Moscow during the postwar period. These interviews not only serve as a check on the archival evidence, but also provide illuminating insights into daily life during this period.

In order to maintain the women’s anonymity and make the text more readable, I have given each of the fifteen women a fictitious name. Each woman had a unique experience in the postwar period, although there are striking similarities in their lives that cross class and educational lines. The youngest, Marta, had the most unique postwar experience. She was twelve in 1945, and her father was a high-ranking officer who was assigned to Germany after the war. She spent a few months in Germany
with her parents, then she and her younger sister moved back to Moscow to attend school. They lived alone in a communal apartment for several months before her parents returned. She eventually went to Moscow State University (MGU) and studied mathematics, eventually obtaining her doctorate. She married in 1954. Daria was thirteen in 1945. She also went to MGU in 1950 to study mathematics and rented a "corner" from an old woman in Moscow, because there was not enough room for her in the dorm. She eventually moved to a dacha, which she shared with ten other women. She became a teacher at MGU. Another thirteen-year-old, Elena, had very different experiences. Her mother took her out of school after the war in order for her to begin working in a factory. Elena worked in a rubber factory for a few months, was imprisoned for two months for leaving work, and finally got a job at a veterinary clinic as a janitor. In 1951 she married and had a daughter in 1952. She lived with her husband, daughter, mother and uncle in a one room communal apartment. Elena eventually became a graphic artist.

Three of the women were fourteen at the close of the war. Sasha moved from a collective farm to the Moscow region to study at an institute. She became a norm-setter and later an economist and began working in a factory on

19 Interview with author, 24 April 1993.
20 Interview with author, 8 April 1993.
21 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
the outskirts of Moscow. She did not marry or have children during this period, although she did later.\textsuperscript{22} Mariia lived in a communal apartment with her father and mother. Because her mother was an invalid, Mariia took on household responsibilities early, but she finished school and went on to become a literature teacher. She married in 1955.\textsuperscript{23} Ira, a Jewish woman, had been in evacuation during the war, and did not return to Moscow for several years. She went to a medical institute in 1950 and eventually became a doctor. She also did not marry until after Stalin’s death.\textsuperscript{24}

Tania was seventeen when the war ended. She had been working in a factory during the war, but afterwards began studying at an institute to become a construction engineer. Initially, she lived with her parents and siblings in a crowded apartment, but eventually moved into a dorm room of her own. She did not marry during this period and had no children, although she did have one abortion.\textsuperscript{25} Lilia was also seventeen when the war ended and went to an institute to become a librarian. She was the only woman interviewed who lived in a private apartment, which she shared with her mother and sister.

\textsuperscript{22}Interview with author, 4 April 1993.  
\textsuperscript{23}Interview with author, 13 April 1993.  
\textsuperscript{24}Interview with author, 9 May 1993.  
\textsuperscript{25}Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
Lilia never married.26 Natasha was eighteen in 1945 and matriculated into MGU as a history major. She married another history student during this period and they lived with his mother in Moscow. Both she and her husband continued on to graduate school in history and she became a professor at MGU. She eventually divorced this man and lived alone for the remainder of the postwar years.27

In 1945 Galia was twenty years old. She spent the war years nearly starving in evacuation, but returned to Moscow to attend MGU. After the university, she worked as an economist in an institute and later in a Ministry. Galia never married.28 Anna was twenty-one when the war ended. She had spent the war years as a nursery school teacher in evacuation and returned to Moscow in 1945, where she became a typist in an asphalt factory. Initially she lived in the factory's dorm with other women, but she later married and moved in with her husband. They did not have children.29 In 1945 Alla was twenty-two and a student studying legal psychiatry. She was married and, in 1951, had a daughter. She, her husband, his mother, and their daughter lived together in a communal apartment after the war.30 Olga was twenty-

26Interview with author, 16 April 1993.
27Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
28Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
29Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
30Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
three when the war ended and had served as a nurse at the front. She began her studies in mathematics at MGU after the war and became a professor. She lived with her parents in the country and commuted an hour to get to the university.31

Sofiia was thirty-four at the end of the war. She was a laboratory worker in an institute, although she did not hold an academic degree. She lived in a communal apartment with her husband, who travelled a lot on business, and three children.32 Katia was thirty-seven in 1945, and a doctor. She already had two daughters of school age, although her husband had been executed during the purges of the 1930s. She, her daughters and a nanny lived in a communal apartment in Moscow during the postwar years. She eventually remarried.33

All of these women emphasized that life was very difficult both materially and emotionally. While they all believed that the family was important, the women talked at much greater length about their work, both in terms of its importance to society and its importance to the family. Work was not just a livelihood, but it was the center of their creative lives as well as the source of their friends and support networks. They thought about themselves and their lives in terms of their work rather

31Interview with author, 9 April 1993.
32Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
33Interview with author, 29 March 1993.
than in terms of their families, their homes, their appearance, or non-work associates. In postwar Soviet society, women were defined and defined themselves in terms of their work to a far greater extent than we have previously acknowledged.

In addition to discussing their personal experiences, the women interviewed talked about their perceptions of the state’s role in their lives. For example, several women had had abortions, despite the law prohibiting them. Other women, who had not had abortions themselves, knew women who had and agreed that while it was a most painful and unpleasant procedure, it was not difficult to find a doctor to perform it safely. The propaganda campaign that promised support for working mothers insisted that women were entitled to state aid, but most women noted that facilities were severely limited. All but one woman stated that laundries were practically non-existent and that childcare facilities were overcrowded and difficult to get into. Dining halls only operated in the workplace (although not all had them), so that women still had to prepare at least two meals a day for their families. All of the women stated emphatically that state aid to single mothers and mothers of large families was merely nominal, and that single mothers in particular had a very difficult time working and caring for their children. Despite the attitude that women were entitled to state support, these women did not blame the insufficiencies in the system on
the state—in general, they did not think of their
difficulty in finding support facilities as a political
issue but as a private problem, and if they blamed anyone,
they faulted individual managers who did not follow laws
rather than blaming the state for failing to enforce them.
In addition to these issues, the women talked about their
relationships with men and with each other, birth control,
divorce, changing morality and many other topics. A few
of the women also discussed their work in the party, but
most claimed that they were not political and had had no
interest in party work. While these interviews were, of
course, impressionistic and cannot be used as a definitive
source for the time period, they provide an excellent
insight into the lives these women led and the efficacy of
the state’s attempts to shape their lives.

The official attitude toward women’s issues was
confusing and contradictory—on the one hand, women were
told that their roles both at home and at work were of
vital importance—important enough that the state would
provide support for these roles. On the other hand, the
bureaucrats that women dealt with every day ignored their
responsibilities to woman. This contradiction between how
life was and how life was supposed to be affected women’s
lives profoundly. Conflicting duties to the state and
family, combined with economic and social pressures,
shaped women’s lives, consciousness and relationships in
ways which the state did not foresee or desire. Rather
than a "supermom," capable of working, raising a family, and being socially active, the postwar Soviet woman, in the words of one woman, "tried to do everything fifty-fifty and so nothing was perfect." Women were exhausted and distracted by the many roles they played, affecting their performance at work and at home. These problems combined with inadequate housing led to tensions between family members and neighbors, which were sometimes resolved by divorce or moving, but more often simply had to be endured.

Women's lives were changed by the war and its aftermath. As their opportunities and responsibilities at home and at work expanded, the conflicting pressures of postwar life forced women to be more independent and self-reliant, but the demands on their time deprived them of the opportunity to explore the possibilities these changes may have given them. The state was unable to tailor women's roles and consciousness to meet its needs, and women made decisions and shaped their lives out of a combination of the state's ideals and their own needs, suggesting the complex relationship between the economic and population interests of the state, the production of public ideals, and the experiences and attitudes of women negotiating the heavy demands placed upon them.

The following chapters will examine in more detail the conditions in which women lived. Chapter II outlines the "supermom" campaign, drawing distinctions between the
images portrayed in the propaganda and the reality of women's lives. Chapter III carries this distinction further by describing women's daily lives in the postwar Soviet Union. Chapter IV outlines Soviet labor policy regarding women and explores women's roles in the workplace. Chapters V, VI and VII examine the availability and condition of childcare, housing, communal services and health care as well as the anti-abortion campaign, analyzing the impact these factors had in shaping women's lives. Chapter VIII concludes by considering how all these elements affected women's relationships with men, relatives and neighbors and what this period has meant in the development of the Soviet family.
CHAPTER II
Propaganda

The Stalinist propaganda machine began churning out material on the postwar reconstruction even before the final declaration of victory. Without missing a beat, the press turned its attention from the war to the homefront and to the tasks of rebuilding the workers' paradise, using the image of the strong, determined and yet self-sacrificing Soviet woman as its model. The concept of a peacetime economy as it existed in the west was antithetical to Stalinist desires for rapid industrialization, so the return to normalcy consisted of shifting the focus from exhorting workers to produce more in order to defeat Germany to demands to produce more to rebuild socialism.

To enable the state to reach its goals, Soviet women were expected to fill multiple roles: to be productive workers, caring mothers and consummate homemakers. In an attempt to keep women working, the Soviets continued to praise them lavishly for their heroic and self-sacrificing labor during the war and to exhort women to redouble their efforts to increase production. The state also extolled the virtues of motherhood, emphasizing women's important duty to raise the next generation. Finally, the state
encouraged women to create happy homes for their families and to care for themselves to enhance their beauty. In fact, they expected women to be what the contemporary American media calls "supermoms." An exploration of Soviet propaganda directed at women in the post-1945 period, and of the responses of women to the demands of the state, reveals the limits of the power of the media to challenge and coopt traditional ideas about women.

The periodical press took the leading role in conveying the image of the Soviet supermom. The state used the press to influence women's consciousness and create new patterns for women's roles in society and at work. The model of the perfect woman appeared everywhere in the periodical press with the exception of purely technical journals. Two women's magazines, Sovetskaia zhenshchina (Soviet Woman), and Rabotnitsa (The Woman Worker), stood at the forefront of the state's campaign on women, but they were not the only medium carrying the messages. State, party or union organizations controlled all of the periodical press and used it to speak to a variety of audiences: Pravda, for the population at large; Komsomol'skaia pravda, a daily newspaper published by the komsomol for young people; Gudok, a daily newspaper published by the Ministry of Communications and the Central Committee of the Railroad Workers' Union; and Meditsinskaia sestra, a monthly nursing journal published by the Ministry of Health, for more specialized audiences;
and Partinaia zhizn', Bol'shevik, and Bloknot agitatora, for party members.

The campaign distinctly lacked subtlety. There were no mixed messages, no nuances of meaning. In its effort to keep women working and reproducing, the state used simple, direct propaganda, creating a prototype of the perfect Soviet woman and bombarding women with this model. The campaign began immediately after the war with articles extolling the heroic actions of women on the battlefield and on the homefront. Many of these pieces also talked about the importance of reintegrating returning female veterans into the workforce and civilian life.¹ Komsomol'skaia pravda hailed returning women, pointing out that army life had made them into disciplined workers who were in great physical shape and capable of doing physically difficult work.² A later article dealt with women who worked on the homefront during the war, emphasizing that, with some retraining—such as learning how to make civilian clothes rather than uniforms—these women could use the skills they learned doing war


²"S vozvrashcheniem, devushki!" Komsomol’skaia pravda, 1 August 1945.
production for peacetime work. Women from both the homefront and the battlefields merited congratulations, but the primary purpose of these articles was to send them back to work to build the postwar economy.

Propaganda stressed dedication to work. Every woman who was profiled in the press had over-fulfilled her duty in some way, thereby heroically doing her part to build communism. Many of these women were stakhanovites—that is, they discovered new and better ways to increase production and significantly improved output in their factories. Rabotnitsa carried the picture of a young woman stakhanovite on its inside cover in March 1951. This woman developed a new technique that increased work speed and taught it to seventy-five women in her factory. Moskovskii komsomol’ets profiled a stakhanovite in the textile industry. Although this woman was also very young, she was a candidate for the Supreme Soviet, showing that a woman could achieve anything through hard work and dedication. The state clearly wanted women to emulate the stakhanovites and structured much of the propaganda

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4Inside cover, Rabotnitsa, March 1951.

around them. The **stakhanovite** wives—exemplary housewives who supported their super-productive husbands by making home pleasant and who did voluntary social work—were completely absent from the postwar media, although they had figured prominently in the propaganda of the 1930s. Women in the postwar period were too valuable as workers to be wasted as housewives. The campaign to keep women working after the war was largely unnecessary—in the difficult postwar economy, women had to work to survive. But by framing women's work as an heroic effort to build communism, the state was also attempting to raise women's consciousness and to persuade women that they were working for a greater purpose than their paychecks. Women did not necessarily view their labor in these grandiose terms, but all of the fifteen women interviewed remembered the media's emphasis on work and the importance of fulfilling the Five Year Plans. Most reported that work was personally important as well and seemed to derive a

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large part of their identity from work. Olga claimed that for at least half of Soviet women, work was more important than food, "Soviet women feel that the greatest happiness comes from work." The media not only emphasized the need for women to work but also paved the way for women to continue or enter jobs previously reserved for men. During the 1930s most of the women stakhanovites who appeared in the press were textile workers—a traditionally feminine industry—but in the postwar period, many of the female stakhanovites worked in other industries as well. In its Women’s Day articles, Rabtonitsa made a concerted attempt to include stakhanovite women who were not in the textile industry—women like L. G. Bugaeva, who was the best borer in a metal working factory and Anastasiia Maliutina and Nina Iushina, lathe operators at a machine-building factory. Other reports on stakhanovites also included more than just textile workers—for example, Zinaida Vasil’evna Ial’stevva who was a welder at a Leningrad factory and E.

8 Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 29 March 1993; interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 16 April 1993.

9 Interview with author, 9 April 1993.

10 Hoffman, Peasant Metropolis, 122.

11 "8 marta," Rabotnitsa, February 1949, 1; A. Abramova, "Vpered k kommunizmu!" Rabotnitsa, February 1953, 2.
D. Mishina, a machinist on the metro. This attempt to balance the image of successful women in the textile industry with images of women's prowess in non-traditional fields indicates that the Soviets were making a conscious effort to encourage women to consider new occupations.

The press also used overt tactics in this crusade, reporting on women in "masculine" fields. Sovetskaia zhenshchina reported that during the war years, eighteen-year-old Dina Mikheicheva took a "masculine" job in a foundry and eventually became the head of the shop's laboratory. Bloknot agitatora profiled a woman blast furnace worker who said that no one asked her to do this "formerly men's work," she just started on her own initiative because she wanted to do something for her country. A candidate for deputy to the Supreme Soviet was the first female machinist on the metro. She said that during her training she was told that some things were men's work, but she did them anyway. During the war, she eventually taught enough women to have a train superbly maintained and run entirely by women. While

12 Rabotnitsa, June 1951, inside cover; Ol'ga Ziv, "Nadezhnyi ruki" Sovetskii sport, 25 January 1947; "


such descriptions of successful women in "masculine" professions were designed to encourage women to consider going into previously male fields, simply by identifying certain jobs as "masculine," they reinforced traditional notions of gender-specific work. Women's responses in the interviews suggest that this campaign was largely successful—women perceived no stigma in crossing gender lines at work, although they still had definite ideas about what constituted "masculine" jobs as opposed to "feminine" ones. Most women associated "men's work" with heavy or dirty labor but did not think it "unfeminine" for women to take on these jobs. Women who crossed gender lines at work were simply caring for their families.

The state also wanted women to see themselves as active participants and leaders in the development of the socialist state. In order to encourage women to feel involved, propaganda asserted that women had the same

16 Other articles on women in "male jobs" included one on three women oil-industry workers who did the work as well as men. L. Polonskii, "Peredovye neftianitsy," Rabotnitsa, August 1947, 12-13; and another on the first woman metal-worker, who had been awarded the Order of Labor of the Red Banner and given the distinction "etlichnik" or "excellent worker." A. V. Shishkin, "V bor'be za metall," Rabotnitsa, August 1947, 13.

17 Interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 9 May 1993.

18 Interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 9 May 1993.

19 Interview with author, 16 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993.
opportunities as men in all areas. In children’s publications, articles showed boys and girls preparing for the same exams. A cartoon in the humorous magazine Krokodil pictured a teacher watching a girl make a list of nouns of feminine gender on a chalkboard. The girl had listed deputat (a masculine noun meaning a deputy of the Supreme Soviet or other state body). When the teacher questioned the word’s gender, the girl replied, "Of course [it is feminine], my mother is a deputy!"

Party and state officials also wanted women to believe that they could move up in their chosen profession. While it is unclear how many women retained powerful positions after the war or lost them to returning veterans, articles stressed that women could attain any heights. Rabotnitsa described how one woman started as an average worker and moved up to become the director of her factory. An article in Smena about general Z. Troitskaia, director of locomotives on the Moscow metro, and another in Ogonek on five prominent women graphic artists typified praise of

20"Kak vy gotovites’ k ekzamenam?" Pionerskaia pravda, 29 March 1946; "Tak gotoviat’sia k ekzamenam," Pionerskaia pravda, 6 April 1951.

21Krokodil, 20 February 1950, 4.

women who had risen to the top of their professions.\textsuperscript{23} Such messages encouraged women to think in terms of advancement on the job rather than giving up choice positions to men. Other articles stressed that women could rise in party and state work and showed women who had attained leadership positions. An inside cover in *Rabotnitsa* pictured an agitation center in Moscow with several women leaders.\textsuperscript{24} Another article featured a district council of the party in Kostroma composed of five women and one man.\textsuperscript{25} Such photographic evidence of women active in party work promised women equality.

While the evidence indicates that women were not as prevalent in powerful posts as men after the war\textsuperscript{26}, it is equally clear that the Soviet government wanted women to believe that they could attain such positions, both in the workplace and in the party/state apparatus. Presumably,


\textsuperscript{24}Inside cover, *Rabotnitsa*, February 1953.

\textsuperscript{25}T. Chekalova, "Smelee vydvigat’ zhenschchin!" *Rabotnitsa*, August 1950, 2.

\textsuperscript{26}See Chapter IV.
women who think they can get ahead will work harder than those who know that they cannot hope to hold positions of power. Model women workers were aggressive, ambitious (to help build socialism, not for themselves), willing to work long hours under poor conditions if necessary—in short, dedicated to their jobs and the party.

Women's perceptions reflect this ambivalence. Some stated categorically that discrimination existed in their professions,\(^27\) while several others asserted that there was no discrimination but then contradicted themselves by saying, for example, that men got raises and promotions faster than women,\(^28\) or that men were much more likely to be in powerful positions, because they were more apt to belong to the party.\(^29\) Even those women who believed that there had been discrimination did not blame the state. They all believed that a woman could either get married or rise to a leadership position in her profession, but not both. Not only were men reluctant to marry women bosses, but most women with families to care for did not have time for such jobs.

Although work was very important to these women, they seemed to privilege motherhood over career advancement—in fact, Sasha said that she wanted to be a nachal'nik but

\(^{27}\)Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993.

\(^{28}\)Interview with author, 24 April 1993.

\(^{29}\)Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
got married instead.\textsuperscript{30} This attitude reflected the overall emphasis of the state's campaign. While there was a significant amount of propaganda encouraging women to get involved in higher level work, there was much more on motherhood. Furthermore, the state did very little to help women move into these positions, but it did actively encourage women to be mothers through legislation. The perfect woman might be able to be a mother and a leader, but the state chose to give practical help in addition to ideological support to mothers. In fact, the propaganda suggests that motherhood was such a high priority that the state actually challenged the traditional family by emphasizing reproduction above all, regardless of marital status.

During the 1930s and culminating in the Family Law of 1944, the state had been limiting options for family life. While the 1936 law stressed the traditional family by outlawing abortion, making divorce a difficult and expensive procedure, enforcing alimony payments, and giving awards to mothers of large families, the 1944 law emphasized reproduction outside of marriage by preventing unmarried mothers from suing the fathers of their children for child support, replacing paternal support with state aid to single mothers. The dual nature of the law—on the

\textsuperscript{30}Interview with author, 4 April 1993. A nachal'nik is a blanket term for boss or superior. It can be used to refer to the head of a section of a factory or to the director of the entire factory.
one hand protecting marriage and on the other encouraging extra-marital affairs in order to produce children—is reflected in the propaganda.

Many of the women portrayed in articles about employment seemed to be single, and it was almost never made clear whether they were widowed, divorced or just single mothers. The issue did not seem to be important from a propaganda point of view. The complete disregard of the situation, without even an attempt to show that the women profiled were married but lost their husbands in the war as many must have done, indicates that the state was resigned to the idea that its family model would have to include the single-parent family.

The press also suggested that people were marrying too hastily, as demonstrated by several cartoons in Krokodil. One showed a couple sitting on a bench with the man asking where they should go now that they had become acquainted. The woman responded, "Where? To the ZAGS [marriage registry office]!" Another depicted a couple who fell in love at first sight and rushed into a ZAGS. The second frame showed them one week later getting a divorce. In a third, a couple was standing in front of the registry desk, with the woman asking the official why he did not congratulate her groom. The official replied, "I'm fed up, I have already congratulated him here several times.

31 Krokodil, 30 August 1952, 12.
32 "Nedogliadeli," Krokodil, 20 February 1953, 15.
This last cartoon not only warned against hasty marriages between couples who barely knew each other, it also pointed out another problem—that of men bouncing from relationship to relationship. This was a very real problem in the postwar period, a result of the quick, unregistered "marriages" between men and women that took place at the front, the fact that there were so many women and so few men, and men's immunity from any legal consequences of this behavior.

Propaganda warned women about the danger of abandonment in light of the Family Law of 1944, which enabled men to move from one relationship to another by denying an unmarried woman any legal recourse if the man left after she got pregnant. A letter in Rabotnitsa in March 1950 told the story of a child care worker who had had a baby by a doctor and later found out that he was married. The doctor decided that since he and his wife had no children, he would like to have his son. The woman refused to part with her baby, so the doctor kidnapped the child and used his influence to get the woman fired from her job. The doctor again used his influence to adopt the child without her consent. She took the case to the Supreme Court of the RSFSR but lost. She finally appealed to Rabotnitsa for help. The magazine reported that they had looked into the case with the result that the child had been returned to the mother, who had also regained her

33"V ZAGSe," Krokodil, 20 April 1953, 14.
job. The doctor was imprisoned for two years, presumably for perjury.34 Whether or not this was a real letter from a reader does not change the message: Women needed to be careful to protect themselves from unscrupulous men. The end result of the case, that the unwed mother got her child back rather than the married father keeping him, indicates that the state and society were not opposed to single mothers—in fact, a single mother could be better than a married father.

A cartoon in Krokodil along the same lines showed a woman and her son from the time he was an infant until he was grown going to various government agencies to find the father. The mother and son were depicted in each frame as strong, determined people who were managing to live reasonably well on their own. At one point the son told an official, "We have done fine without papa!" In the last scene, the elderly mother sat at a dinner table with her son and his wife. A ragged old man appeared at the door, introduced himself as the father and begged his angry son to support him in his old age.35 The message here was that men may leave, but women could survive and raise their children successfully on their own. The problem of deadbeat fathers was widespread and attracted considerable attention in the press.


The other side of the picture, that life was difficult for single mothers, was never mentioned even when discussing aid to single mothers. Rather than telling women not to have children alone or showing women how hard their lives would be as single mothers, the state emphasized at every turn the material support that single mothers could expect. This message was in almost every article that dealt with Soviet women in general, and many other pieces centered on this issue. One in Rabotnitsa discussed government subsidies for single mothers and emphasized throughout the support that single mothers could expect from family and friends. The author contrasted this with the plight of unwed mothers in the west who were ostracized and left to fend for themselves in hopeless poverty by a cruel capitalistic society that only valued married women or chaste maidens.


Such articles emphasized that Soviet society prized all women all the time and was innocent of the bourgeois attitude that children should only be produced within marriage. The models in the press of ideal Soviet women were very often women with children but without husbands who had full and happy lives. These women cheerfully and effortlessly worked and raised their children alone, sometimes with help from the state. In a context in which women of marriageable age outnumbered men, the state's need for children was greater than its desire for traditional families. Rather than attempting to impose the traditional family on Russian women, and thereby limiting the number of children, the state suggested an alternative family model—the single parent family.

When asked about single mothers, most of the women interviewed responded that they had known several and that there was no stigma against them. Tania said that more of her friends had children outside of marriage than got divorced. She went on to say that these women knew that they either had to raise a child on their own or live alone forever. Only Sasha said that it was a disgrace

38 Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 29 March 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993; interview with author, 16 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 24 April 1993.

39 Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
to be a single mother. Mariia had a mixed reaction, saying that, while it was bad for the children to grow up in a "debauched" atmosphere, such "audacity" was wonderful to see. Yet all the women agreed that life was very difficult for single mothers. The women who knew about the state aid to single mothers said that it was "miserly." Tania stated that the party and state did not care for single mothers or about women in general. Another common complaint was that child care facilities were poor and inadequate, and that this was a special problem for single mothers. Certainly single mothers led a difficult life in postwar Moscow, as did all working mothers—support facilities were simply inadequate—but the stigma attached to unmarried mothers seems to have been slight. In any case, for several years after the war, a woman who feared the social consequences for herself or her child could simply claim to be a war widow. Finally, the high value placed on children during this period enabled a single mother to view herself and present

40 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
41 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
42 Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 16 April 1993.
43 Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
44 Interview with author, 20 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 7 May 1993.
herself as a patriot, fulfilling her duty to society.

It is significant that while many articles emphasized women’s equality by detailing the state’s efforts on their behalf, none mentioned that abortion was illegal. In line with the pro-natalist policy of the state, propaganda presented child rearing as a social obligation, the "sacred duty" of women to the state. The press seemed willing to go to any lengths to convince women that they wanted to have children--one article even made the claim that no matter how ugly a woman was, the happiness of being a mother would make her beautiful. Just how many services the state actually provided and of what quality is an important question, but the message in the


46The state provided pre-natal care; sanatoriums for pregnant women, new mothers and their children; counselling services to prepare to raise children; thirty five days maternity leave before birth and forty two days after; day care; nurseries; and free medical care. Anna Miasnikova, "Sovetskie zakony o sem’e i brake," Sovetskaia zhenshchina January-February 1947, 49.

propaganda was clear: women must have children and the state would support them.48

While a few of the women interviewed were childless, they all believed that motherhood was a necessary and natural part of a woman's life. They assumed that any "normal" woman wanted children and only those who were unlucky did not have any. They certainly shared the Soviet philosophy that having children was a vital part of a woman's life. They were divided, however, on how well the state supported mothers. It is significant that the women who believed that child care was adequate had no children during this period.49 Mariia said that schools and pioneer clubs had afterschool activities for the children that kept them busy and productive and this helped mothers a lot.50 Other women were not so impressed with the system. Tania said that women sometimes had to leave children at home alone because there were so few child care facilities.51 Alla said that there were kindergartens available but they were very bad.52 Sofiia worked at an institute where the male director, knowing that it was difficult to find child care, had a

48See chapters V, VI and VII for discussion of support systems.

49Interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993.

50Interview with author, 13 April 1993.

51Interview with author, 16 March 1993.

52Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
kindergarten built in the institute. Finally, Elena had to quit her job after her child was born because the baby was weak and the nursery could not provide adequate care for her. She said that in order to get a place for her daughter, she had been on the waiting list for child care since before her daughter was born.

Despite the firm belief that women were supposed to have children, several of these women had had abortions or knew women who had had one during the postwar period. They all knew that abortion was illegal but asserted that underground abortions occurred all of the time. None of the women seemed at all distressed by this, and a few said that each woman knew her own circumstances best and should make that decision on her own. When asked why abortion was illegal, Mariia responded that it was just another way for Stalin to control people. Elena said that it was illegal because the state needed the labor force to grow. These women's attitudes towards abortion make it

53 Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
54 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
55 Interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 7 May 1993.
56 Interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993; interview with author, 13 April 1993.
57 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
58 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
clear that their ideas did not slavishly follow the state's line.

Reinforcing the conclusion that motherhood superceded marriage, articles about married women couched their relationships with their husbands in very ambiguous terms. In many profiles of women workers, husbands played no part in the story. Occasionally, usually in a story about the mother of a large family, the author pointed out that the father was the voice of authority in the home. But in many cases, the husband merited only a brief mention along with an example of wifely solicitude. In one case, a woman stakhanovite always took dinner to her husband when he was at work—even stakhanovite women had time to take care of their men! Women were often pictured preparing dinner or sewing for their families. There was no attempt to portray the husband as a helper in the home—his most important role there was as a good father. Being a good father meant positively influencing the children, not serving as the primary caregiver.


60 E. Filippova, "Vtoroe rozhdenie 'Zaporozhstali'," Rabotnitsa, November 1947, 5.

61 For example see A. Preobrazhenskii, "Podgotovka detei k shkole," Rabotnitsa, August 1947, 18-19; A. Preobrazhenskii, "Vse li vy znaete o svoikh detiakh?" Rabotnitsa, June-July 1946, 12-13; B. Beilinson, "Materi nuzhna pomoshch'," Rabotnitsa, January 1947, 17; T. Klement'eva, "Vzaimnye otnoshenia roitelei i detei," Rabotnitsa, December 1945, 18-19; Elena Kononenko, "Otkrovennyi razgovor o bor'be za krepkuiu sem'iu," Sovetskaia zhenshchina, July-August 1948, 26-27; B. Aleksandrov, "Ob
In addition to childbearing and childrearing, propaganda assigned women responsibility for homemaking. Each issue of Rabotnitsa and Sovetskaia zhenshchina contained a couple of articles on beautifying the home, tips on housekeeping, skin care, exercise, gardening and recipes. One article in Rabotnitsa described the perfect housekeeper as a woman whose home was always clean, who was never too "lazy" to wash an extra set of sheets, an extra tablecloth, divan cover or a few extra

According to Vera Dunham, this role was also heavily emphasized in the literature of the period as a main ingredient of the "Big Deal" between the state and the middleclass. Dunham, 214-224.

The whole family benefitted from this "modest comfort," according to this article. On the other hand, the author warned against the kind of housekeeper who insisted that the house stay clean at all times, thus preventing her family from enjoying the home. In these homes, children would not learn proper table manners because the mother would not allow them to use a full setting of utensils. The family would have to huddle in the kitchen because the mother would not let them mess up the living room. True tidiness lay in using things but keeping them clean and orderly. To accomplish this, the author suggested that children should help their mother with household chores.64 Another article spoke directly to girls about their unique position in the world, living in a country where parents did not value boys over girls. The article went on to tell girls what was expected of them.

"We... want you to know how to cook and to manage the household. We also want you to dance beautifully, to be accurate and polite, attentive to elders and tender to boys. But to us this is not enough. We want more. We want you to practice hard and often so that you can ski and run and jump on skates as well as boys. We want you to set high goals and strive for them...You will grow up and come of age and no one will tell you that you don't have the right to choose the government because you are not a man. And whatever profession you choose, no one will tell you that it is not for you, that it is man's work."65

64"O kul'ture v bytu," Rabotnitsa, March 1949, 6.

Clearly the state wanted to inculcate early in a girl's life the idea that all work was open to her but did not want her to lose sight of her roles as a nurturer and a homemaker.

There was some acknowledgement in the press that women had a heavy burden. In addition to the occasional suggestion that children could do some of the housework (no one thought of husbands), there was also some discussion of labor-saving devices and expanding communal services. In 1949, Sovetskaia zhenshchina introduced what they described as the first good washing machine for the home. The machine was still in the prototype stage, but the article promised production within the year. An article in Rabotnitsa three years later reported that several communal laundries in the Ukraine had been very successful and advocated opening them around the country.

Not surprisingly, the state did not live up to its promises of support. As will be discussed later, housing, child care and other support services continued to be grossly inadequate throughout the postwar period, despite the state's demands on industry and regional housing


authorities to build such facilities. A short story in Rabotnitsa portrayed the trials and tribulations of a Minister of Communal Management who was left alone while his wife was in the country. He became so frustrated with the difficulty of doing the simplest tasks—such as laundry and shopping for clothes—that he launched a full-scale investigation into communal support services and production of home appliances. The story ended with the Minister’s speech to the Ministry on how much time women were forced to waste keeping the household running.

Other articles discussed the poor quality of Soviet mass produced clothes and lack of variety, particularly for children; the need to improve communal dining halls; and the need for better child care facilities. Letters from readers also contained complaints about the difficulty of finding high quality goods. The complaints about goods

Union organizations and the Ministry of Health reported severe problems with housing, child care and other communal services throughout this period. For example see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv russkoi federatsii (GARF) f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1132, l. 8-24; d. 1185(1), l. 7-12; d. 1582, l. 33-42; GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 65-70; GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 71-199.


"Po sledam neopublidovannykh pisem," Rabotnitsa, September 1952, 32.
and services, however, were sporadic and easily lost amid the deluge of articles extolling the virtues of the Soviet system and the support and opportunities it provided for women.72

All of the women I interviewed agreed that a distinct division of labor existed in the home—women were responsible for the children and the housework. Natasha said that women tried to do everything, but that they had to do everything "fifty-fifty" so nothing was perfect.73

All the women except one lived in a communal apartment or a dorm, and they all described the crowded condition of their apartments and the difficulties of doing laundry in these conditions. None of them had a washing machine and the laundry had to be done in the communal kitchen in a large cauldron with boiling water. Women were also responsible for the cooking. Elena said that she did not know how to cook until her husband taught her, but she took it over, "because he felt it was my job."74


73 Interview with author, 10 March 1993.

74 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
the women and their families had some access to a cafeteria at work or school, but these were only operational during work hours.\textsuperscript{75} A few women did not have access to communal dining facilities at all and had to prepare all meals for themselves and sometimes their families as well.\textsuperscript{76}

Only Marta said that her husband had helped with household chores, and she noted that his friends had laughed at him.\textsuperscript{77} The other women who had husbands or fathers at home during this period stated emphatically that men did not help with the laundry, despite the fact that it was a very heavy job. Daria said that in the countryside there had been a division of labor—women did housework and men did heavy work like cutting wood and carrying in water—but in the city there was no more men's work.\textsuperscript{78} Men reportedly studied, drank or slept while their wives did the housework, and this leisure time, in

\textsuperscript{75}Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 16 March 1993; interview with author, 29 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 16 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{76}Interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 13 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 24 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{77}Interview with author, 24 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{78}Interview with author, 8 April 1993.
women's opinions, enabled men to get ahead at work more easily than their wives.  

It is clear that in addition to her duties at work and her obligation to have children, a woman was also responsible for cooking, sewing, gardening, making the home pleasant and, of course, looking good. An entire magazine devoted to fashion, Zhurnal mod (Fashion Magazine), appeared sporadically during these years. While the overall emphasis was on neat and sensible dressing, these magazines also highlighted the feminine—dresses cut to fit the figure, high-heeled shoes, styled hair and makeup. The articles on fashion's role in a socialist society stressed that it was necessary to move away from western bourgeois fashions that were too restrictive for good workers. One article argued that

79 Interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993; interview with author, 13 April 1993; interview with author, 14 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993; interview with author, 7 May 1993; interview with author, 9 May 1993.


socialist designers had to meet the demands of the public but should also develop the taste of the consumer by propagandizing the beauty of socialist activities, morality and the inner aspect of Soviet people.82

Despite claims of socialist superiority, the clothes pictured in the magazines closely resembled western fashions of the day. One article claimed that as the economy improved more women could dress well, creating a need for evening clothes. This article recommended long dresses for theater premiers and shorter dresses for dancing. Evening dress, it instructed, should be very individual and set off the personality and figure of the woman. It was most important that evening dress be simple, elegant and give a good silhouette of the figure—the authors recommended tafetta and chiffon.83 Other issues featured evening gowns and fur coats that were far from practical.84 Such articles presumed that women had the time and means to attend cultural events, and that they could obtain the appropriate clothes—neither of which was within most women's reach. The pictures of stylish and elegant clothes contrasted strongly with women's existence, which centered around survival rather

84Pictures of fur coats, Zhurnal mod 3 (1946): 11.
than fashion, highlighting the deep disparity between Soviet propaganda and reality.

These articles also assumed that women were interested in fashion and in "improving" their appearance—presumably to make themselves more attractive to men—but women's responses to the clothing issue reveal a much more practical attitude. Ogonek, a magazine for the general public, asked women what they would like to see in clothing stores and reported requests for more variety and better quality, especially in children's clothes. Women also wanted Soviet clothes to be different from western clothes, which were designed to beat the competition rather than to provide practical clothing. All of the women responding agreed that the clothing should be modest and severe (skromnyi i stroqii) rather than pretentious and showy.85 Rabotnitsa also reported receiving letters from readers demanding "pretty" clothes for themselves and their children, although no one asked for evening dresses or high-heeled shoes.86 These articles indicate that women were not nearly as interested in high fashion as they were in providing basic clothing for themselves and their families.

Articles about the difficulty of finding clothes for the family did not begin to reflect the actual shortage of

affordable quality goods during the postwar period. The women agreed that during the first two years after the war, clothes and consumer goods were virtually unavailable. After the rationing system ended in 1948, life got easier and more clothes were in stores, but no one could afford them. Lilia saw it as part of the equality of socialism—no one could look any better than anyone else.87 None of them commented on the fashions that the press advertised.

The Soviet supermom, then, was an outstanding worker and dedicated party or union member, who had a spotlessly clean home, sewed, cooked and spent a lot of time with her children. In her spare time, she read good literature—Quiet Flows the Don seems to have been a favorite—went to the theater, shopped for the family and exercised.88 Women had two primary responsibilities—to work and to raise children. These two duties were the most important functions from the state's point of view and both had to be not only fulfilled but, in Soviet jargon, over-

87Interview with author, 16 April 1993.

fulfilled. Women should be stakhanovites, they should inspire others to work hard, try to find new ways to increase production, and be willing to work overtime. In addition, they should make sure that their children were doing well in school, that they became involved in socially productive activities, that they felt loved. Women also had secondary obligations: to be active in the party or a union, to be a superlative housekeeper and to be attractive. The picture that Soviet propaganda paints of the postwar woman is not a meek person ready to relinquish her wartime accomplishments to men, but an independent and resourceful person, dedicated to improving the future through production, reproduction and parenting.

The perfect women who appeared in propaganda did not exist in reality but provided the models that real Soviet women sometimes tried to emulate and sometimes rejected. They saw work as important both to themselves and to the country as a whole but did not internalize the high level of political and social consciousness that the state tried to inculcate. All the women believed that children and family were important and felt themselves responsible for the family’s welfare. Yet my interviews suggest that women formed their own ideas especially about their lives outside the work world. Women had to juggle their roles as worker, mother and housekeeper as well as deal with the difficulties of postwar life—inadequate housing, support facilities and consumer goods. The problems of
insufficient child care and housing led some women to
disregard the pro-natalist policy when necessary and to
have illegal abortions. They ignored messages that were
obviously ridiculous such as those trumpeted in the
fashion magazines. Despite the state’s ability to control
public images, it could not simply mold women to meet its
needs—economic and social conditions played an equally
important part in shaping women’s lives. Propaganda
depicting the ideal Soviet woman in the postwar period
foreshadowed the American "supermom" image that emerged
thirty years later, and Soviet women began their struggle
with idealized public images of their lives during one of
the most economically and emotionally difficult periods in
Soviet history.
Women in Moscow had great expectations following the war. Although all were exhausted and many were heartbroken from the rigors of the war and the losses they had suffered, they were intoxicated by the news of their glorious victory over Germany. The atmosphere was electric with pride and exhilaration as everyone celebrated and heaved a collective sigh of relief that the terrible ordeal was over. Life could now get back to normal—perhaps something even better than normal. Women hoped that after the enormous effort they had expended fighting Germany, they would be rewarded with shortened work days, improved supplies of food and consumer goods, and the lifestyle that the dominant ideology promised them. While no one expected a "workers' paradise" to appear magically with the defeat of Germany, they at least anticipated that the country would begin moving in that direction.

The press nourished these hopes to a certain extent. For months after the war, newspapers and magazines were full of articles and speeches, hailing the great Soviet people and their tireless devotion and sacrifice in the war against Germany. Although "our great leader Stalin"
was always credited with masterminding the war’s conduct, the primary focus was on the people’s victory. Despite this acknowledgement, articles were quick to point out that the struggle was not over yet. Rest had to be deferred as there was great work to be done. The new task was not as grim as the war had been, but the thankful and joyful work of rebuilding socialism and taking the Soviet Union to its glorious destiny as a true workers’ paradise.

The message, shorn of its rhetoric, was that the Soviet people must not stop to rest on its laurels, but work even harder if possible. The war had been a disastrous setback to building socialism, but the interruption only suspended the goal of building up the country’s heavy industry to attain incredibly high production quotas that led to socialism. The overriding theme of the postwar period was "work for future happiness."

Women quickly realized that their lives were not going to change much immediately after the war. The workday was not shortened, penalties for absenteeism and lateness were still severe. For many women, the only real changes lay in what they were producing as the country’s industries moved from the war to a peacetime footing. Some women, whose education had been interrupted by the war, were now able to return to school, but most were still forced to work. Living conditions actually worsened in Moscow as demobilized soldiers and evacuees returned to the already
overcrowded city along with displaced persons who had nowhere else to go. The housing shortage, already a problem before the war, became especially acute. Support facilities such as stores, communal dining halls, laundries, child care and medical care, were all stretched far beyond their limited capacity. The pressure to work combined with the lack of support facilities and consumer goods turned women's daily lives into a continuous round of chores.

The descriptions of daily life offered here are based on interviews with the fifteen women who lived in Moscow during the postwar period. They lived in a variety of places, some alone in dorms, others with families in communal apartments. Their postwar experiences were very different as their disparate ages and occupations suggest, but their daily lives were strikingly similar—the main differences were between women who lived alone and women responsible for families, which included single women who lived with elderly parents or younger siblings. While fifteen women do not constitute a representative sample of the female population of Moscow, they illuminate a broad spectrum of women's experiences. The war was a great leveling event in Soviet history, and at least for a few years afterwards, all but the very highest officials suffered from the economic hardships brought on by its devastation. The few lives described here do not encompass the experiences of all women in Moscow during
the postwar years. Instead, these stories describe the kinds of difficulties that everyone faced during this period—poor housing, lack of consumer goods and communal facilities, and the endless round of daily tasks that all women shared.

Women's daily lives were structured around work and survival. The loss of manpower in the war meant that most of the burden for rebuilding industry lay on women's shoulders. In addition, women were responsible for bearing and raising children and caring for their families. Poor housing, scarcity of basic necessities, lack of support facilities and the overriding imperative to work combined to make women's lives an endless round of exhausting and often frustrating tasks. Even the simplest duties—such as buying food—became long, involved and difficult chores.

Since the housing shortage was responsible for much of the difficulties involved in postwar life, it is important to understand the environment in which people actually lived. Almost everyone in Moscow lived either in a dorm or a communal apartment—only the elite had private self-contained apartments, with individual kitchens, lavatories and baths. While single people more often lived in dorms, families frequently had to be content with this type of housing as well. Dorms varied in quality depending on what institution they serviced—for example, the one at Moscow State University, provided both cafeteria service
and kitchens for the students to use. While cafeteria food was not of the highest quality, it was cheap and available. This dorm had small rooms that housed two to four people with communal toilet, bathroom and kitchen facilities on some floors.\(^1\) Other dorms, one at an asphalt factory for example, did not provide either cafeteria food or kitchen facilities for their inhabitants, and the people who lived here were forced to cook over a grill in the courtyard—summer and winter.\(^2\)

The barrack-type of dorm, reminiscent of tsarist Russia, was the least desirable, with one or two large rooms filled with beds. In some of the most crowded conditions, people had to share beds, and sometimes, families with children and single people would all be packed in together. Toilet facilities were often outside and the entire complex might be serviced by one bathhouse. Dorms did not provide laundry facilities.

Of course, there were various permutations on these models—single-sex barrack dorms, coed dorms, dorms with kitchens but no cafeteria, or vice versa. There was also a "corridor" type, which resembled a residential hotel. Individuals or families occupied one room off of a central corridor with common toilet and kitchen. Tania, who lived in the corridor type, reported that on her hallway there

\(^{1}\)Natasha, 10 March 1993; Galia, 4 April 1993.

\(^{2}\)Anna, 4 April 1993.
were eleven families with fifty people who shared the communal facilities.³

Most people in Moscow at this time lived in communal apartments. These also varied in size and quality, but they all had one common characteristic—communal toilets and kitchens. Very often large, single family dwellings had been converted into these communal apartments, so that one family would live in what used to be a parlor, another in a bedroom, another in the dining room, etc., which meant that the rooms were not the same size and did not necessarily have the same structural amenities, such as windows, shelves or cupboards. Mariia’s family of three lived in a communal apartment that was fourteen square meters.⁴ Kitchens, toilets and bathrooms (if any) had been designed for one family and were not altered when the house converted into a communal apartment, so everyone shared one stove, one sink, one toilet.

Communal apartments grew to be more crowded as children married and, unable to find housing, brought their spouses to live with the family and began to have children of their own. Relatives who had lost housing during the war or who moved in from the country might also share the room, so that it would not be uncommon to have a mother with her grown daughter and son-in-law, their children and perhaps an aunt and/or uncle with their

³Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
⁴Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
children all living in one room. For example, Alla lived with her husband, mother and small daughter in a communal apartment which they shared with her brother and his wife. One old woman who had lived in the house before the war had a family of six put in with her.\(^5\) In an apartment house that had five such families each living in its own room and vying for use of the kitchen and lavatory, the atmosphere could easily be extremely tense and strained, if not actually violent. Before the war, four people had lived in Alla's house and after the war, twelve people lived there.\(^6\) Olga, who lived with her parents in a relatively large house outside of Moscow, talked about the cramped living conditions in Moscow and the tensions that this caused. She also said that conditions were so bad that many people committed suicide, including a good friend of hers. She attributed the high suicide rate to the difficulties of postwar life.\(^7\)

All adults in the Soviet Union, with the exception of disabled people and pensioners, worked, but not all adults took responsibility for their own maintenance—that was the province of women. In the hypothetical family outlined above, one woman, probably the married daughter, would be primarily responsible for caring for the family—shopping, cooking, cleaning and child care—in addition to

\(^5\)Interview with author, 5 April 1993.

\(^6\)Interview with author, 5 April 1993.

\(^7\)Interview with author, 9 April 1993.
her full-time job. Older women, whose children were grown, helped with these chores, sometimes assuming full responsibility for running the home, but not usually. Women who were pensioners typically only took on part of the responsibility, such as caring for the children or occasionally cooking. Older women were often sick or disabled and could not do heavy household work. Of course, many times the older woman also held a full-time job, and had no more time than her daughter or niece to devote to the household. Men, when there were men in the family, did not assume any household tasks except occasional repairs. Men did not cook, clean or care for the children, although sometimes, particularly during the years of rationing (1945-1947), men would shop for food.

Housework in the crowded conditions of the communal apartment was difficult and frustrating. Women commented on how dirty their apartments were—not everyone cleaned up after themselves in the communal areas. Women did housework without the help of labor-saving devices—even small appliances were sometimes hard to find as evidenced by a letter to Rabotnitsa, which complained that steam irons were nowhere to be found in Moscow. By 1955 only one person per thousand had a washing machine, 1.5 people per thousand had vacuum cleaners, four people per thousand had refrigerators, and thirty-one had sewing machines. These figures, contrasted with the sixty-six people per

thousand who had radios, indicates that priorities in the production of consumer durables did not lie with making women's lives easier—radios disseminated propaganda, making them a necessity from the state's point of view.\textsuperscript{9}

The absence of these "luxury" items increased the strained relations between neighbors since women had to spend even more time in the communal areas to cook and do laundry. Alla, the legal psychiatrist, said that her neighbors always fought over access to the communal facilities. The kitchen did not even have gas and they had to cook with kerosene.\textsuperscript{10} Probably the biggest headache for the housekeeper was laundry, which had to be done by hand, usually in the already overcrowded communal kitchen. Mariia described how the women in her apartment had a schedule for who could do laundry each night. On her night to do laundry, she would put two large bowls on a chest of drawers in the kitchen and fill them with boiling water. Fresh water was constantly boiling on the stove to replenish the bowls. Late at night, after everyone was asleep, she would lock the doors so that no one could come in the kitchen to disturb her and then she would do all the family's laundry for that week. The laundry was hung in their apartment to dry.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{9}Sacks, 48.

\textsuperscript{10}Interview with author, 5 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{11}Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
The housework problem was closely tied to the difficulty in finding consumer goods, especially during rationing. Women spent hours shopping for very basic necessities for their families. During the ration years, people stood in long lines for bread, sugar and milk. The stores did not have enough soap for the population after the war, and women spent hours looking for soap both for cleaning and bathing. In the years after 1948, these basic products were easier to find, and other foodstuffs—tyrofog (a cross between cottage cheese and cream cheese), cheese, milk, sausage, even caviar—were also readily available to those who could afford them. Although these goods were expensive, the people who worked in stores would cut cheese and sausage as thin as paper so that 100 grams would go further. In these later years, the expense of clothing and shoes and keeping them in repair were the chief headache, and many women sewed for their families to compensate.

All the women agreed that life was hardest immediately after the war under the ration system. Mariia described how the ration system worked for her family. Her father had a "white collar" ration card, she had a student's card and her mother, who suffered from a chronic illness, had a dependent's card. None of them had a worker's ration card, which was the best. She did most of the shopping

12 Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 24 April 1993.

13 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
and had to learn how to "work" the system when the stores did not have the items that were on the ration card for that week. For example, for the same number of points she could buy 100 grams of sugar, 200 grams of candy or fifty grams of honey. If the store did not have sugar, she had to buy one of the other items or lose that ration—unused cards could not carry over to the next week. She said that she always bought candy because it was more useful than honey. Her father also got a "litrernyi" card occasionally from work. This was a ration card shared by the people in her father's office, which allowed them to shop in special stores. The employees passed the card to a different person each week and in this way, supplemented their rations. Because her father was a high ranking officer, Marta also had the opportunity to shop in special stores, which, she said, always had the items that were listed on the ration card. But most people did not have access to these exclusive shops and simply had to learn how to live with rationing.

Life improved for most people when rationing ended in 1947. Manufactured goods were still scarce but more food was available. Galia remembered that there were many good cheap restaurants that women who lived in dorms with

14 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
15 Interview with author, 24 April 1993.
16 Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
no cooking facilities could afford to patronize. Some women, especially students, were simply too poor to benefit from the end of rationing. Sasha would buy bread in a store near the dorm, because she could not afford to eat in the cafeteria. The loaf of bread would have to last the entire day. She occasionally went to the market to buy potatoes, and her mother would send her pork, lard and innards from the collective farm where she worked. Only two women talked about growing their own food. Anna said that the women in her dorm cleaned out a vacant lot nearby and planted potatoes in order to supplement their rations. The next year she bought a pig and all her friends helped to feed and care for the pig. They eventually got five chickens, which provided them with eggs. Elena’s mother had relatives outside of Moscow who would allow them to grow vegetables on their land. Even with the end of rationing, women had to work hard to find the means to feed themselves and their families, and while the difficulties involved in shopping fluctuated throughout the Soviet period, finding food and goods for the family continued to be a frustrating and time-consuming process—and one that has only worsened in recent years.

17 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
18 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
19 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
20 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
During rationing and after, people had an alternative to the dismal state stores—they could shop in kolkhoz markets. Collective farmers brought their own produce and homemade items in from the farm to sell, and several women reported that it was the best place to buy certain scarce goods such as meat and cheese. Some women claimed that these markets were cheaper than the stores after rationing ended.21 Mariia’s family bought milk from a vendor—young women who came into Moscow each morning with milk cans and tin measuring cups and went from house to house to sell milk.22 By taking advantage of these options, women could sometimes make their lives easier or obtain better or cheaper produce, but state stores continued to be the source of most food for Muscovites. The stores were not necessarily conveniently located, nor did their hours of operation cater to all segments of the population, but they were certainly more accessible to most busy women who could not always find the time to get to the markets. Consequently, most women used these alternative vendors to supplement their family’s diet rather than as their primary suppliers of staple goods.

After shopping for food, women had to cook it. Prepared foods did not exist during the postwar years, so all food had to be made from scratch—a long process,

21 Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 24 April 1993.

22 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
particularly in a communal kitchen with four or five women all trying to use the same stove. Overcrowding was alleviated somewhat by the different shifts that women worked, but in general, women reported rushing to the kitchen to get there before another woman took possession. Some women tried to cook enough for two or three days in order to minimize preparation time, but in the absence of refrigeration, this was not always possible. Since the family had to be fed every day, cooking was constant drudgery--an endless chore that could not be ignored or delegated, requiring, as it did, a certain level of skill.

To avert the difficulties of shopping and caring for a family, a woman was obliged to avoid marriage and pregnancy. However, propaganda discouraged women from making this choice and argued that one of women's primary responsibilities to the Soviet state was bearing and raising children. The propaganda assured working mothers of state help in the form of child care and communal facilities; although, in fact, where child care facilities existed, they were universally overcrowded and sometimes rejected applicants. In addition, any time a child was sick, he or she could not be admitted to child care, leaving women with the choice of missing work or leaving the child home alone. Some women had mothers who would stay with their children, and others were able to hire

23 Natasha, 10 March 1993; Alla, 5 April 1993; Sofiia, 19 April 1993; Elena, 7 May 1993.
nannies, but these were unusual circumstances. Occasionally, couples would work opposite shifts to avoid the child care issue completely. Most women, however, had to struggle to find a nursery or kindergarten that would take their child, even if the facility was not convenient either to her home or work.

A mother's second major burden was to supervise her children's progress at school. The Soviet press stressed that women were responsible for rearing the next generation of dedicated citizens, and mothers were held responsible whenever their children did not perform well or caused trouble in school. In the Soviet propaganda and mindset, children were considered to be little more than lumps of clay for the parent and school to mold presciently into perfect communists. In order to accomplish this, women had to make sure that their children were clean, well-fed, healthy, and practiced a daily regimen that included set hours for sleeping, eating, studying and playing. The press urged mothers to become involved in their children's schools and to stay in close contact with teachers in order to identify and rectify possible problems with their children. An article in *Sem'ia i shkola* outlined the chores that a child should do at home, counselled the parents to teach the child good work habits, and admonished mothers to follow the school's

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25 See Chapter V.
lead in all things.26 Another article took the position that a good family was like "a little socialist collective."27 A sickly child or a child who did not keep up at school was simply a reflection on the mother.28 One article went so far as to condemn women who hired domestic help, saying that these women filled children’s heads with "old wives tales."29 An occasional article would argue that both parents were responsible for the children, but did not elaborate on the father’s responsibilities.30 These articles all assumed that women had unlimited amounts of time to devote to their children, despite the fact that the authors must have known that mothers were


universally swamped with too many responsibilities. This type of propaganda simply placed yet another obligation on women's already tired shoulders.

In addition to work and family responsibilities, some of the women interviewed were also active in party or komsomol work and this demanded a considerable amount of their time. Olga joined the party during the war while she was at the front and remained very active after the war at MGU. She said that she often stayed on campus until eleven at night to get all her party work done.\textsuperscript{31} Students had to do some form of unremunerated socially useful work through the komsomol. Natasha taught the biography of Stalin to factory workers as her contribution. She also reported going out to help bring in the harvest.\textsuperscript{32} Ira said that students at her medical institute went on building projects in the old Finnish territory for their summer holiday. She was also vice president of her komsomol organization and spent a lot of time organizing.\textsuperscript{33} None of these women had children at this time.

Despite the fact that women were kept frantically busy trying to fulfill all their obligations to work, home and state, some women managed to find an occasional free evening to go to the theater or a concert. These events

\textsuperscript{31}Interview with author, 9 April 1993.
\textsuperscript{32}Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
\textsuperscript{33}Interview with author, 9 May 1993.
presented their own problems, necessitating as they did either great outlays of money, which most women did not have, or standing in long lines to obtain tickets. Students apparently had an easier time getting tickets through the university, and they took advantage of this opportunity. Most of the women, however, when asked about leisure time, responded that they did not have the money or time to go to concerts and used their time to sew or read magazines, newspapers, and sometimes literature—usually the Russian classics.

Some women talked about going to the bathhouse as a part of their leisure time activity. Since most apartments and dorms did not have bath facilities, many people were able to bathe only when they could get to a public bathhouse. A good bathhouse would have a steam room, showers and a cool pool. People would shower off and then sit in the steam room for as long as they could stand the heat. Then they would rinse off again and jump into the cool pool. This was followed by another vigorous shower and then the process could be repeated several times over a two hour period. Marta said that she could only manage to go to the bathhouse once a week on Saturdays when there was always a long line, and then she spent all day waiting in line and using the bathhouse.

34 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.

Other leisure time activities included going for long walks, visiting a park, spending a day in the country, and visiting with friends. Several women commented that people did not "date," but instead went out with groups of friends, and sometimes couples would emerge from these groups.\textsuperscript{36} Anna said that the men and women in her dorm had parties almost every evening—they would sing and dance in the courtyard and sometimes couples would "find" each other.\textsuperscript{37} Galia said that the women in her dorm at MGU would get together in the evenings. One of the women worked in a pharmacy and could get alcohol, so they would pass the bottle around. No one got drunk, she was quick to add, but just a little tipsy. In general, young people went about in mixed groups as friends rather than breaking off into couples, and often groups of women went out or had parties without men.

Women did not talk about these activities very much—either they did not have time to engage in them often, or they are overshadowed in their memories by the day to day drudgery that characterized most of their lives. Still, several of the women emphasized that this was a happy time for them—it was their youth. Anna said, "It was jolly, such an interesting way to live. Of course there was very

\textsuperscript{36}Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 13 April 1993; interview 16 April 1993; interview with author, 24 April 1993; interview with author, 7 May 1993.

\textsuperscript{37}Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
little time left to rest. We rarely went to the movies. In general we were always working."³⁸ Natasha agreed that she was happy despite the hardship, because she was young and full of energy.³⁹ Elena said, "Life after the war was complicated. You had to work to live...but young people meet and nature calls whether you’re married or not and by twenty or twenty-three you have a child. And then you’re a mother and a worker and you can’t be depressed because you’ve never seen another life."⁴⁰ Most of the women stated that people were friendlier then, because everyone endured the same hardship, and that they could enjoy this difficult life because they were young.⁴¹ Whether the women were really happy then or simply remember it as a happy time in comparison with the present situation in Russia is an open question, but certainly they coped with daily hardship in their youth in a society that promised improvement more easily than they are as senior citizens in a country with a very uncertain future.

A composite typical day, based on the fifteen interviews, consisted of an early start—most women reported getting up around seven. They would then prepare

³⁸ Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
³⁹ Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
⁴⁰ Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
⁴¹ Interview with author, 10 March 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 4 April 1993; interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 19 April 1993.
breakfast for their families, in 1945 they breakfasted on bread and weak tea, possibly with saccharine, and occasionally had potatoes or kasha, but by 1953 many women reported that they had eggs, cheese or milk to supplement their diet. Mariia described how they divided their bread ration into three equal portions for the three meals and then divided each portion again for the three of them. Her father got the largest piece and she and her mother took the same size, a practice reminiscent of the peasant household where the bol'shak (head of the family) got the largest portion.42 Women with children would then take the child to school or day care and go on to work. Many of them prepared a lunch for themselves and other members of their families to take with them. After work, they shopped, picked up the children and went home to make dinner for the family. After dinner, they would do some housework, check the children's homework and go to bed around midnight. When asked what their husbands did while they worked in the evenings, most women reported that their husbands read or slept or that they consistently worked very late or studied. A few women said that men drank in the evenings.

The endless grind that characterized women's lives contrasted sharply with the life pictured in the media and with men's lives. Propaganda bombarded women with the "supermom" images of themselves as productive workers and

42 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
caring mothers supported by child care facilities and communal services. Men did not have these extra expectations to fulfill and were affected less by the lack of communal facilities—they had wives to perform these services. The state's inability to provide the support it promised did not alter its expectations of women, but it did affect women's perceptions of their duties to their families and society and the strategies that women employed to meet these obligations. The following chapters will examine the disparity between state promises and harsh reality and explore the ways in which women coped with the problems of daily life.
CHAPTER IV
Women and Work

Work was the top priority for both women and men following World War II. The state insisted that the country meet and surpass prewar levels of production as quickly as possible. For women, this meant staying in the jobs that they had entered during the war or possibly moving out of a factory and into an institute where they could learn a highly skilled job while they worked. In addition to working, women were expected to bear and raise children, and in order to facilitate these two functions, the state enacted protective legislation designed to remove women from jobs that were deemed hazardous to women's reproductive capacity. Enterprises were also required to make certain allowances for pregnant women and nursing mothers so that they could continue to work without endangering the life or health of their children.

The ideology surrounding women and work in the Soviet Union contrasted sharply with western notions of women's roles in the postwar period. In Western Europe and the United States, policymakers, industrial managers and unions all believed that women would happily turn over their wartime jobs to returning veterans and formulated propaganda as well as management and union policies to
this end. Women in these countries did not necessarily want to give up their jobs, although many were forced to do so, particularly in the months immediately following the war. Despite the united front that the state, management and unions presented regarding women's employment, many women returned to work as quickly as possible, although not always to the higher paying industrial jobs they had occupied during the war. In Great Britain, the labor shortage following the war was so great that assumptions about women's work changed to permit women without small children to enter the workforce, but this change was not reflected in postwar propaganda, nor did women enter non-traditional fields in great numbers—women continued to work primarily in lower status occupations. Although the number of women working continued to rise and women slowly gained admission to new fields, the dominant ideology still emphasized women's domestic responsibilities as their most important contribution to society, limiting women's opportunities in the workplace.

The Soviet state held the opposite view of women's employment, and propaganda emphasized at every turn women's great contributions to the war effort and their self-sacrifice in taking over jobs for men who went to

1See Anderson, 161-178; Higonnet, et al., eds., 10; Milkman, 99-152; Rupp, Mobilizing Women, 160-166; Rupp and Taylor, 12-13; Pat Thane, "Visions of Gender," 114.

2Pat Thane, "Visions of Gender," p. 114.
war. In an address to a meeting for International Women's Day in 1946, Popova, secretary of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council, praised women who took over men's jobs during the war as the basis of the light, food, and textile industries. Throughout the postwar period, propaganda called upon women to take an active role in fulfilling the five year plans and increasing production, promising new opportunities for women with each successive five year plan. The press emphasized that women could work in all areas of the economy, including railroad work, automobile production, machine building, construction and metal working, although the textile industry continued to employ more women than any other industry. A cartoon in Krokodil showed a woman as an academic, hero of labor, ship's captain and carpenter. Articles often profiled

3"Obshchemoskovskoe sobranie posviashchannoe mezhdunarodnomu zhenskomu dniu," Moskovskii bol'shevik 8 March 1946, 3.


6"8 marta mezhdunarodnii zhenskii den'," Krokodil, 10 March 1953, 7.
stakhanovite women, urging other women to emulate them by becoming stakhanovites themselves.\footnote{Sovetskii sport, 26 November 1946; "Anna Vasil'evna Luk'ianova," Krasnaia zvezda, 12 January 1947; Zinaida Tritskaia, "Zheleznodorzhnitsy," Sovetskaia zhenshchina, July–August 1948, 10.} Propaganda encouraged women to engage in socialist competition in their efforts to raise production and stressed the importance of worker honor and discipline.\footnote{"Otlichnitsy prazdnichnoi vakhty," Vecherniaia Moskva, 8 March 1946; M. Sulakova, "Dorozhit' svoei rabochei chest'iu," Rabotnitsa, November 195, 27–28.} Other articles emphasized the need for women to study to improve their work skills, the importance of increasing mechanization to open up jobs that were physically too difficult for women, and the need to adapt the skills women learned during the war to meet the requirements of peacetime production.\footnote{"Posle voina," Komsomol'skaia pravda, 26 October 1947; "Sovetskaia zhenschchina borite's' za novyi rastsvet nashei rodiny," Trud, 7 March 1946; K. Kongrashov, "Molodoi novator Anna Kuznetsova," Bloknot i agitator 27 (1947): 31–39; E. Shchukina, "Brigada Ani Kuznetsova," Pionerskaia pravda 2 December 1947; M. Ovsianikova, "Mеждународный женский день—8 марта," Bloknot agitator 5 (1948): 8–27.} The clear purpose of such propaganda was to impress upon women the importance of their labor in rebuilding socialism and to encourage women to continue to take an active role in the workforce.

In this case, state interests coincided with women's needs. In the difficult postwar economy, women had to work to survive, but most women also considered work to be an important part of their lives on many levels. Women...
had been reading and hearing for over a decade that work was important to building socialism and also an important part of Soviet citizenship. People who did not work were parasites—even worse, they were not full-fledged participants in society, and women expressed belief in this work ethic. Natasha, a history professor, claimed that she and her friends despised women who did not work outside the home saying that, "Work showed that you were capable of more than sitting at home and making soup." In her mind, a woman who did nothing but raise a family contributed little to society. She also compared herself to the avant-garde poet Mayakovsky, saying that she did not work for her own good, but for the good of her country.\textsuperscript{10} Anna, a typist, also believed that her work was important to society, stating that she helped her country by typing up the information from her institute.\textsuperscript{11} The state actively fostered the belief that work was a public duty, and endeavored, apparently successfully, to make women feel that they made important contributions to the nation's development.

But notions about work went beyond civic duty. Natasha believed that it also shaped her identity, "In my group of friends the chief thing was work. Work [was] for self realization of your character traits, your talents and your possibilities, as well as for the support of the

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with author, 10 March 1993
\textsuperscript{11} Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
family." Tanya, an engineer, emphasized how work grew in importance as the years passed: "Work was my life. At first I worked in order to live, later it was more, it went deeper inside and as a result it turns out that I cannot imagine myself without work." Several of the women reported that work had become such an important part of their self-image that they either refused to retire or that they regretted retiring from their jobs. In a society that placed such a high value on working and also identified and evaluated people primarily in relationship to their jobs, it is not surprising that women based their concept of self so much on their work. Both their public reputations and private images relied on their ability and willingness to engage in non-domestic labor.

Women had good reason to believe that their work was important to the postwar economy, since they had constituted the majority of workers during the war and continued to do so in the postwar period. Moreover, they

12 Interview with author, 10 March 1993.

13 Interview with author, 16 March 1993. Other women who reported that their work was an important part of their lives included Katia, a doctor, 29 March 1993; Galia, an economist, 4 April 1993; Olga, a mathematician; and Sofiia, a lab worker (no academic degree), 19 April 1993.

14 Interview with author, 10 May 1993; Interview with author, 16 March 1993; Interview with author, 9 April 1993.

became visible in leadership positions after the war. Even the governing bodies of the economy, including Gosplan RSFSR, Gosbank and the Ministry for Local Industries, maintained a female workforce of over fifty percent throughout the postwar period (figures 1 and 2). Only a few administrations, including the River Fleet, Gosplan USSR and the Office of Labor Reserves consistently employed less than 50 percent women. Although it is not clear what jobs women had in these administrations, women's involvement in these top bureaucracies indicates that women were important participants at all levels of the economy.

Despite their importance to the economy, even the press admitted that women were not adequately represented in industrial management. An unusually vitriolic article in the December 1947 issue of Partinaia zhizn' complained that so many women had left management positions in the Ivanov region textile industry over the preceding two years that while 75 percent of workers in this industry were women there was only one female section head left. The author dropped the blame squarely in the lap of the party, citing opposition to the promotion of women to leadership positions and lack of concern for women's family responsibilities.


17Ibid., 50.
Figure 1

Women in Selected Economic Sectors
1945, 1947, 1951, 1953

Sources: 1945: TsGAORssgM f. 126, of. 14, d. 872, l. 12, 39, 41, 46, 48-49, 71, 73-75, 78. 1947:
TsGAORssgM f. 126, op. 14, d. 1150, l. 27, 53, 55, 59, 110, 79, 84, 73, 30, 36. 1951:
TsGAORssgM f. 126, op. 14, d. 1657, l. 9, 17, 19, 21, 40, 48, 44, 30, 28, 10-11. 1953:
TsGAORssgM f. 124, op. 14, d. 1717, l. 1, 20.
Women in Selected Economic Sectors

Figure 2
for its direct and uncompromising attack on the problem of women leaving or losing leadership positions, other articles approached the issue more subtly. In Bol'shevik an article on party work among women noted how far women in the Soviet Union had come and how much the party and state had done to help and support women, but went on to say that the party needed to strengthen its efforts to get more women involved and to move women who were already active and prepared into leadership positions.\textsuperscript{18} It is important to note that these two articles appeared in limited-circulation journals published for party members. Not for general consumption, they could presumably go a little further in their criticism of party policy. Nevertheless, such criticisms were rare, and no follow up pieces appeared, indicating that the party was not ready to discuss this issue even with a limited audience. Articles in the popular press apparently had to be more careful. Pravda ran an article in 1949 that discussed the problem of women moving up in the new fields they had entered during the war, citing two reasons for women's lack of mobility: that women were still not as dedicated to socialist competition as they should be, and that some enterprises had not realized that many of their workers were now women who had important family

\textsuperscript{18}"O rabote partiinykh organizatsii sredi zhenshchin," Bol'shevik, January 1951, 9-14.
responsibilities.\textsuperscript{19} *Pravda* made no mention of possible discrimination as the articles in *Bol'shevik* and *Partinaia zhinz'* had done, but blamed women's lack of initiative and inadequate support facilities for their failure to move up. Usually the popular press did not go even this far, occasionally merely placing brief demands for more women in leadership roles at the end of an article.\textsuperscript{20}

Certainly the percentage of women in leadership positions was not commensurate with the percentage of women in the rank and file, as illustrated in the records of the Ministry of the Textile Industry. In 1948, the Deputy Minister of the Textile Industry was a woman as well as three of the deputy ministers of the republic ministries, twelve of the Ministry's department managers, and seven of the deputy department managers.\textsuperscript{21} In the Russian republic fourteen women were promoted to directorship posts in 1948, including the head of the inspectorate for the Ministry, the head of the sector of wool production for the planning section of the Ministry, chief engineer of the "First of May" Factory, and the head


\textsuperscript{21}GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 53, l. 93.
of the organization of labor section of the Sverdlova factory. This report also included the information that in 1947, nine women were made directors in the Ministry and Chief Administration of the textile industry, three became managers of factories, three became heads of sections, one was promoted to the head of the planning section of an enterprise, three to chief accountants for enterprises, and six to the head of the section of cadres.²² The textile union also reported on the number of women in leadership positions in the industry in November 1948.

²²Ibid., 1. 76.
Table 1

Women in leadership positions in the textile industry in 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>All workers</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works Management</td>
<td>14679</td>
<td>5097</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Production</td>
<td>23242</td>
<td>7557</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of sections</td>
<td>5709</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift supervisors</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master and senior workers</td>
<td>10409</td>
<td>3149</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers in prod.</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians</td>
<td>3420</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of construction bureaus and labs.</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy heads of const. bureaus and labs.</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 53, l. 77.

Women composed around thirty percent of the leaders in the textile industry—a far cry from the eighty percent of rank and file workers that were women. But the underrepresentation of women leaders was not a result of the returning veterans (table 2).

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23GARF, f. 5458, op. 23, d. 789, l. 66.
Table 2

Women in leadership positions in the textile industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>1940 Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>1946 Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>1947 Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise director</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy director</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head engineer</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of section</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master worker</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>2081</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief admin.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy chief admin.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of admin. section</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy head of admin.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1281</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>3253</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>3470</td>
<td>1072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total percent women</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 53, l. 78.
Both the number and percentage of women in overall leadership positions in the textile industry continued to rise following the war, demonstrating that in this industry at least, women who attained the top jobs were not replaced by men even at the highest levels. The table also indicates, however, that despite the fact that women composed over 80 percent of the workers in the textile industry, for the most part men dominated in the highest positions such as factory directors. The sewing sector of the textile industry had a larger number of women bosses. The sewing and knitting union reported in 1952 that out of 657 heads of sections, 475 were women and 85 percent of all master workers were women. Out of the 110 presidents of factory and local committees, eighty-six were women.\textsuperscript{24} Despite the fact that women were important leaders in the economy, men continued to hold most management positions before, during and after the war.

Women were only slightly more prominent in union leadership positions in the textile industry, despite the XVII Plenum of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council's decree that more women should be leaders in the union.\textsuperscript{25} A report N. V. Popova, secretary of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council, noted that the president, the secretary and six of the section heads of the Central

\textsuperscript{24}GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 796, l. 36, 39.

\textsuperscript{25}GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 53, l. 81.
Committee of the textile union were women. In the republic and oblast committees, seventeen women were presidents, nine women were secretaries, and four women were section heads. This same report stated that of the 220 members and candidates of the Plenum of the Central Committee of Trade Unions, 152 were women. While women were still not proportionally represented in the union leadership, they formed over 69 percent of the members of the Plenum—a much higher percentage than served in leadership positions in the industry. Women's greater success in the union hierarchy may be attributed to the fact that many positions were elected rather than appointed and the female membership may have been more likely to vote for women leaders than the male-dominated industrial apparatus was to promote women.

Despite the propaganda campaign that insisted that women in the Soviet Union could attain any heights in their professions, women clearly had less chance of professional advancement than did men. When women were asked why more men tended to be in management positions, they generally responded that women had too many family responsibilities. Women stayed home with sick children, were less likely to be available for overtime work, disappeared for weeks of maternity leave, and were

26 Ibid., l. 92.

27 Natasha, interview with author, 10 March 1993; Sasha, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Marta, interview with author, 24 April 1992.
generally more exhausted than men, and therefore more inclined to make mistakes at work. Natasha said that she was able to do well at the university only because she did not have children until later. She hastened to add that she did not put off having children in order to have time for school, she was simply "unlucky" and did not get pregnant until after she finished her degree.28 Tanya reported that the only time she did not try to improve her qualifications as a construction engineer was when her daughter was small, but after her daughter started school, she had the time to acquire more credentials.29 Galia stated that only single women could be nachal'niki because they were the only women who had the time to devote to their work.30 Sasha had ambitions to be a nachal'nik but decided to get married instead.31 These women believed that it was virtually impossible for women to raise a family and hold a leadership position at work. The added burdens of childcare and family meant that women with families simply could not dedicate as much of their time and energy to work as men or unattached women could. Because women were solely responsible for the welfare of their children, they had to choose between family and professional ambition.

28 Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
29 Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
30 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
31 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
Despite the continuing rise in the percentage of women in leadership positions reported in the textile industries, the percentage of women in some areas of the industry dropped immediately after the war. The textile union reported that women in engineering and technical work dropped from 40 percent in 1942 to 35 percent in 1947 to 34.7 percent in 1948, although the actual number of women in these jobs increased from 8600 in 1942 to 11400 in 1947. The number of female directors of enterprises and head engineers dropped slightly despite the fact that the overall number of these positions increased between 1940 and 1947 (table 2). The difference in the loss of women and the increase in the number of these positions indicates, however, that most women did not lose their jobs, but men filled new positions. Two women commented on this in interviews, noting that women in powerful positions could keep their jobs but new positions would be created above them and given to war veterans who might not know anything about the work. The woman would do the same job for the same pay but would report to a man who was a figurehead. In this way, the state was able to give returning war veterans appropriately honorable work without losing the experienced women.

32GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 53, l. 78.
Women in leadership positions were not the only women to suffer discrimination at work. Alla stated that discrimination had always existed—men were administrators and comprised the upper echelon in all areas of society. Natasha reported that the head of the history department at Moscow State University, where she completed her undergraduate and graduate training, preferred male students, saying that women would only get married and quit. Galia went to the university after the war and said that men, particularly returning veterans, were given preference for admittance. She also reported that women received less pay than men. The salary range for each job was set by the state, but in her experience as an economist in an institute, men tended to be paid the upper end of the range, while women were paid the lower end. She further observed that professions dominated by women, such as medicine, had lower pay ranges than those dominated by men. Darya and Olga also reported discrimination, but attributed it to women's double burden of housework and profession, claiming that men could devote all their time to work while women were distracted by household cares. Olga went on to describe the covert

34 Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
35 Interview with author, 10 March 1993.
36 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
37 Interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993.
discrimination that went on at the university where a professor would shame a male student who could not answer a question by pointing out that a female student knew the answer. She also remembered that very few women attained administrative posts in the mathematics department.

On the other hand, women did not resent the discrepancy between the state’s assertion of women’s equality and the reality that men and women led very different lives. Sofiia said that she never thought about this contradiction, she was just happy to live reasonably well.\(^{38}\) Marta asserted that discrimination did not exist, but then said that men always got the best jobs and advanced more quickly than women.\(^{39}\) Several women attributed men’s rise in the workplace to the fact that more men were party members than women, but did not attribute men’s higher party membership to sexism. Men certainly did compose most of the membership of the communist party, with women making up only 18.7 percent in 1946, 20.7 percent in 1950 and 19 percent in 1952.\(^{40}\) Most women simply did not have time to become party members, and other factors—the fact that many men were recruited into the party at the front and sexism in recruitment in general—also contributed to women’s low involvement. Despite men’s clear dominance in the economic and

\(^{38}\) Interview with author, 19 April 1993.

\(^{39}\) Interview with author, 24 April 1993.

\(^{40}\) Lapidus, 210.
political spheres, the inherent contradiction between the state's reassurances of absolute equality and the stark reality that women could not advance in public life did not occur to these women. Their lives were busy enough without adding extra party work to their schedules, and they simply did not consider the possibility that they were systematically excluded from power because of their sex or that their burdens could be eased by shifting household responsibilities to their husbands or to the state.

Despite the state's efforts to convince women that they could be in any job, so long as it was not listed as hazardous, it seems clear that some stereotypes about men's and women's work persisted. As already noted, men were more often bosses than women, but other divisions of labor existed as well. Sofia, who worked in a metallurgical institute and factory in the laboratory, said that both men and women worked in the lab, but the factory employed mainly men in all areas except the laboratory.41 Sasha, who worked in the textile industry, noted that almost all norm-setters and economists were women, while all mechanics were men. She believed that women did not study to become mechanics because it was dirty, greasy work.42 Women who engaged in heavy, dirty labor were unskilled workers, while women who obtained any

41Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
42Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
kind of training or education avoided this kind of work, leaving the skilled but dirty jobs to the men.

While a breakdown of statistics on the numbers of women in various types of work for this period is not available, Sasha's reasoning seems sound and can be verified to a certain extent using statistics from 1959. In 1959 women constituted 16 percent of all metallurgical and metal workers but only 6 percent of all mechanics, machine setters, and equipment regulators in this industry, while 64 percent of the forge and press operators were women. In that same year, women composed 39 percent of all engineering and technical personnel, but within that category, only 20 percent of coal mining foremen were women while 86 percent of all laboratory personnel were women. In these skilled professions, women avoided the dirtier jobs, choosing less physical occupations. It is also clear, however, that women were not steered out of professions that involved the "hard" sciences such as math, chemistry and physics. Educated women avoided grimy work, possibly because they felt it was unfeminine or simply distasteful, but they had no compunction about hard intellectual labor, nor were the sciences, such as engineering, categorized as "masculine" fields as they have been in the United States.

43Dodge, 293.
44Ibid., 299.
Propaganda tended to glamorize women’s work and seldom showed urban women in hard or dirty physical labor, although women on collective farms were sometimes pictured doing the more physically demanding aspects of farm work. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that women predominated in unskilled manual labor, even in the dirtiest and heaviest work. Mariia reported that in the postwar period, women often took on hard unskilled labor, such as janitorial work, in order to have more flexible schedules that would allow them to care for their children. Ira remembered that her aunt worked on the railroad, where the women laid tracks and did much of the lower-level manual labor, but all the trained mechanics were men. While this evidence is far from conclusive, it suggests that in the public consciousness, at least, women would do heavy, dirty labor only when no other occupations were open to them. Women who had the opportunity to train for highly skilled professions shunned dirty work. While the women who engaged in unskilled heavy labor did not lose their claim to femininity, the distinction between trained and untrained women is clear, indicating that social and educational distinctions retained importance even in the postwar period.

45 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
46 Interview with author, 9 May 1993.
Women certainly engaged in heavy physical labor. In a 1945 report to the union of communal services, a delegate from the laundry workers reported that women in laundries were forced to lift and carry too much and had to wash everything by hand. She argued that this heavy work crippled the women working in the laundries and charged that Narkomat had not provided the motors that it had promised in order to mechanize the laundries.47 Another report to the union of communal services argued that the industry needed to move women out of several areas of communal services, including the diesel and sewage management sections.48

All women were excluded from some jobs, deemed too difficult or hazardous for women. In 1949, the Ministry of Light Industry passed a resolution on measures to improve protection of women.49 These measures were implemented slowly. The sewing and knitting union reported in 1949, that there were still 337 women working in proscribed jobs—only ninety-four less than in 1948. Most of these women were employed as stokers or in the ashpits—two highly dangerous areas. This report promised that all of the women would be transferred out by October of 1949. In 1950, the industry reported that most of

47GARF, f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1132, l. 32-33.
48Ibid., l. 41-42.
49GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 61.
these women had been transferred on time, but by July of 1950, twenty-eight women remained in hazardous work.50

The textile union issued an expanded list of jobs in the industry to which women should no longer be admitted. This list included operators of the cleaning and grinding machines in wool production, fullers and cloth washers in wool production, dockers on cargo vehicles, pressing raw materials and preparing goods for hand presses, greasing transmissions, and any work with ethylene benzine. Several women in these areas had been retrained to take jobs with higher salaries.51 The report went on to suggest measures to improve working conditions for women in the textile industry, including the development of more comfortable uniforms for those women who were in jobs where they had to wear men's clothes.52 Sewing and knitting enterprises had reduced the level of physical difficulty in some jobs by installing trap doors and inclines to eliminate the need to carry heavy loads up stairs, and through these measures, the women did not have to be transferred to lighter work.53 All of the reports

50Ibid., l. 60-61.
51GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 912, l. 17, 14.
52Ibid., l. 18.
53GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 61.
claimed that no women had suffered a loss in salary by being transferred.\textsuperscript{54}

Despite the Ministry's efforts, hazardous conditions continued to plague the textile industry. In 1950, a report to the Ministry of Light Industry revealed that 5089 women had been in difficult or dangerous work in 1948 and that by the middle of 1950, 4811 had been transferred to other areas, leaving 278 women in the proscribed jobs. Most of the women who had been transferred had been put in jobs that they had done before and the others were trained in new jobs.\textsuperscript{55} The report also included a list of measures—mainly mechanization of labor—to make work easier for women.\textsuperscript{56} Later in 1950, the textile union reported that no complaints had been received from women on violations of the labor laws—most women had been transferred from difficult or hazardous jobs without sharp cuts in their salaries. The union also reported, however, that it was impossible to move all women out of jobs that involved dying cloth because men refused to do such work, indicating that the problem was not always one of finding alternative work for the women, but finding men willing and able to replace them.\textsuperscript{57} This suggests that while

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., l. 62; GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 912, l. 17, 14.

\textsuperscript{55}GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 916, l. 10-11.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., l. 11.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., l. 78.
women might have been able to transcend traditional notions about the division of labor, men held more rigid views on what constituted "women's work."

Regardless of what kind of work women did, they still had the responsibility to have and raise children. In the postwar period, the Soviet state continued the aggressive pro-natalist policy that began with the Family Law of 1936. In order to facilitate women working and raising children, the state promised support in the forms of child care, communal facilities and protective legislation. Of these promises, the one that most directly affected women's relationship to work were the labor laws, which involved not only legislation that prohibited women from working in dangerous occupations, but also provided for certain health services at work and maternity leave. These laws focused on enabling women to work and raise children, so legislation concentrated exclusively on preserving women's reproductive potential, rather than on protecting women in general.

Most countries in the west also advocated natalism after the war, and some enacted maternity legislation designed to encourage women to reproduce. In France, for example, women were entitled to maternity allowances, free maternity care, and prenatal allowances.\(^{58}\) The Soviet

leadership, however, in its unique position of encouraging women to work as well as reproduce, went much farther in developing pro-natalist and pro-work policies. Maternity leave formed the cornerstone of the Soviet program, and enterprises had to allow women thirty-five days maternity leave before birth and forty-two days leave after birth. At the woman’s request, her annual vacation time could be added to the maternity leave.59 In 1949 the Ministry of Health proposed increasing maternity leave to 112 days for workers and 100 days for white collar workers, although it does not seem that this proposal was implemented.60

Salaries during maternity leave varied depending on length of time on the job, union membership and war work. Union members who had worked in the industry for over a year received 100 percent of their salary during leave, while non-members only received 90 percent of their salary. Union members who had worked for less than a year in the industry received 90 percent of their salary and non-members received only 80 percent. Any woman who had received a medal or order of the USSR, award of excellence, a degree, a scholarly title, or who was a stakhanovite, a disabled veteran, or had been a partisan during the war received 100 percent of her salary regardless of seniority if she belonged to the union. Non-members meeting the same qualifications received 90

59"8 marta," Rabotnitsa February 1949, 4.
60GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 172, l. 6.
percent. Women who suffered complications during pregnancy or birth were eligible for more paid leave. Upon the birth of a child, each woman whose salary was less than 1000 rubles, was supposed to receive a one-time payment of 300 rubles to help defray the costs of diapers and food for the child. This resolution also anticipated contingencies whereby the mother died with or without a husband.61 From 1945-1947, enterprises were also supposed to give pregnant and nursing mothers supplemental rations of food.

The 1944 Family Law mandated that pregnant and nursing women could not work night shifts or overtime, that they must receive supplementary food, that women's hygiene rooms must be opened and that rooms for nursing children had to be provided.62 In addition, the Ministry of Health resolved that women who were pregnant or had children up to one year of age could transfer to another job closer to their residence without losing their seniority, and that a woman's job had to be held for her until she finished nursing her child if working endangered her ability to nurse.63 Pregnant and nursing mothers could not be fired from their jobs without well-documented reasons, and women could not be sent on business trips after the fifth month of pregnancy. Nursing mothers had to be given a minimum

61 GARF f. 5508, op. 22, d. 175, l. 3, 7-8.
62 GARF f. 5457, op. 25, d. 132, l. 1
63 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 172, l. 6.
of a half hour break every three and a half hours in addition to their lunch breaks. If necessary, enterprises had to move pregnant women to lighter work if the jobs they were in jeopardized the pregnancy.

These laws illustrate the state's policy of protecting women's reproductive capacity and are in keeping with the contract the state made with women regarding support for working mothers. Many enterprises, however, had difficulty fulfilling these requirements, particularly in the first few years after the war. The union of linen and hemp workers reported that these provisions had not been met in their industries. To deal with the problem of implementation, the Central Committee of the textile union decreed in 1945 that each factory committee must see that the Family Law of 1944 was fulfilled and include this work in the plan of the factory. The factory committee and soviet of social conditions were required to meet periodically to discuss problems with child care, birthing help, medicine, and milk kitchens, and were supposed to insist that the director of the enterprise fulfill the law.

The textile industry was particularly concerned with protecting workers who were pregnant or nursing, because


65 GARF f. 5457, op. 25, d. 132, l. 1.

66 Ibid., l. 9.
of the high percentage of women it employed. In 1950, the union reported that out of the 730,000 women working in textiles, over 70,000 of them were either pregnant or nursing. The high levels of pregnant and nursing women were a particular problem since the entire industry operated on a three shift basis and pregnant and nursing women were prohibited from night work. This placed a greater burden on their co-workers who were not pregnant or nursing as they had to take up the slack for the exempted women. One report to the textile union requested that enterprises "do something" to relieve women who had to take over night shifts for pregnant and nursing women. Many of these women had complained to the Central Committee of Unions about the difficulties of night work, including the heavy work on the night shift, lower productivity and the difficulty they had in working extra nights and caring for their families as well. The only concessions made to these women were some extra (unspecified) vacation time and the added proviso that no women with children in nurseries or of pre-school age could be transferred to night work. The report then went on to affirm that pregnant and nursing women were exempted from night work as well as any work that involved dying, bleaching and finishing cloth, yarn or fibers and the scutching sections of the industry. The textile union

67 GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 912, l. 38-44.
68 Ibid., l. 19-20.
leadership understood that its job was to encourage women to have children by implementing the protective labor laws, not to guard the interests of all women workers. The complaints of women who were not actively engaged in reproduction were ignored in order to cater to their pregnant and nursing co-workers.

Even the privileges of pregnant and nursing women were sometimes overlooked. In 1950, the textile union reported that not all directors were willing to comply with the union’s request to give nursing mothers normal working hours (as opposed to night shifts) and also reported that there had been violations of the protective labor laws for women including: not giving them breaks to nurse their children, forcing pregnant women and nursing mothers to work night shifts and overtime, firing single mothers with children under one year, and refusing work to women on the grounds that they were pregnant.69 The Ministry of Health reported that many directors simply decided to assign nursing mothers to the night shift after nine months—despite the fact that the law stipulated that a doctor should determine the length of time that a woman should be exempted.70 On the other hand, the textile union reported that out of the 449 complaints lodged concerning violations of protective labor laws for women in 1949, and the 315 filed in the first seven months of 1950, only five

69Ibid., l. 16.

70GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 73.
involved pregnant women. All of the petitions on violation of labor laws were decided in favor of the women. The low number of complaints does not necessarily reflect actual conditions, since some women may not have complained out of fear or because they were not acquainted with their rights.

The Ministry of Health occasionally stepped in to help women who were victims of violations of these laws—for example, the Ministry prosecuted officials in different industries for refusing to hire two women because they were pregnant. While these actions indicate that the Ministry and the union followed up on their directives to ensure their implementation, they also confirm that many enterprises were unable to comply—the laws governing women’s work were not compatible with the realities of the postwar workplace. Rather than altering the shift system or changing the laws to work with three shifts, the unions and Ministry simply insisted on directors fulfilling the laws within the existing routine. Directors, in their turn, either obeyed the laws, placing a heavier burden on other women who might still have older children to care for, or ignored the laws entirely, exposing themselves to the possibility of prosecution. This is only one example of the problems that arose when state policies reflected only an ideological position without taking into account the realities of postwar life. The bureaucratic response

71 Ibid., l. 72.
to these contradictions are even more pronounced in the areas of communal services and housing.72

The laws also dictated that enterprises had to provide material support to pregnant women and new mothers. This aid sometimes took the form of payment in kind—particularly in the years immediately following the war. The Ministry of Health issued a report on how various factories around the Soviet Union helped their workers who were pregnant or nursing. One factory gave each new mother ten to fifteen meters of cloth, a baby bed, a baby bath and a pail. Another factory reportedly had organized a service in the cafeteria so that pregnant and nursing mothers did not have to stand in line for their food. This factory also provided mothers with ten meters of cloth and one piece of soap each month as well as extra rations of vegetables and oil. In the Troznenskii oblast, most industries gave pregnant and nursing mothers extra rations of milk, vegetables and fish. Several factories reported that all women past the second month of pregnancy received extra food. For example, one factory gave all pregnant women special "diet food" as well as 1.5 kilos of meat, two kilos of groats, and .3 kilos of oil, while nursing mothers got two times the normal allotment of meat, 1.5 of groats and .5 of oil. This factory also claimed that all pregnant women, nursing mothers and mothers of large families received household items such as

72See Chapter VI.
basins, saucepans and baby baths. Another factory provided pregnant women with a hot breakfast and yet another gave pregnant women an extra twelve kilos of potatoes, eight kilos of vegetables, 1.8 kilos of meat, .4 kilos of oil, and 1.8 kilos of groats each month. Despite the work of these enterprises, the Ministry reported that many others had not fulfilled their obligations to pregnant and nursing women.73 As enterprise directors allocated their precious resources, pregnant and nursing mothers could not take a higher priority than production demands. Postwar shortages were simply too acute for many enterprises to help new mothers—once again, illustrating the gap between state policy and postwar reality. No matter how many directives Soviet policymakers issued to help working mothers, they could not force managers to privilege the reproductive rights of their workers over the necessities of production—and, in fact, policymakers had no intention of doing so. High levels of industrial production continued to be the most important concerns of managers and of state and union officials.

Women clearly played an important role in the postwar economy. Not only did they constitute the majority of workers, their expertise was needed in the economic governing bodies as well as in management and other leadership positions after the war. Official policy stated that women were to be promoted, and some women were

73GARF f. 5508, op. 2, d. 175, l. 58-63.
recognized with promotions. Most women, however, did not have the time or the energy that high-powered jobs required—they were too busy trying to survive. For women who were able to move up in the workplace, their victories were sometimes undermined by the state’s attempt to thank returning veterans by making them bosses in industries that they knew nothing about. Protective legislation for women was not much more effective. Although state policy was designed to ensure the safety of women’s reproductive capacity, enterprises often found that the labor laws were simply too difficult to implement in the harsh reality of the postwar economy. The problems of staffing the night shift, removing women from hazardous work without pay cuts, and granting time off for nursing children, without altering the demands placed upon industry, meant that women’s rights were sometimes ignored as directors concentrated on fulfilling quotas rather than complying with labor laws. The problems with implementing state policies on women combined with women’s already overcrowded schedule meant that men maintained their dominance of the economic hierarchy.

Despite women’s underrepresentation in management, their work was highly valued by Soviet society. While western countries sent women home, hoped for a "return to normalcy" after the war, and depended on returning veterans to form the basis of the postwar workforce, Soviet policymakers had other expectations. They realized
that women would still have to form the majority of workers as well as repopulate the country. In addition to these practical considerations, socialist ideology dictated that women take an equal role in production and rejected the western ideal of the housewife as a woman's sole occupation. These factors all contributed to the postwar attitude towards women working, which were diametrically opposed to the attitude of their western European counterparts and reflected the unique interplay of ideological stance and economic challenges that faced the USSR in the postwar period. These attitudes and expectations led women to view themselves first as workers and mothers, displacing all other interests. Despite the problems that women faced on the job and the contradictions inherent in their lives, they continued to believe in the importance of work and to rely on the roles they played there to form the cornerstones of their self-image and self respect.
Chapter V
Childcare

Despite the leadership's rhetoric that claimed that women had achieved full equality with men, officials had no illusions about the double burden Soviet women workers faced. While the state maintained its stance in the press that Soviet women had the best lives of any women in the world, the reports of union committees, investigation brigades, congresses, and meetings stated time and again that support systems for working mothers had proven inadequate and should be expanded so that women could fulfill the roles of worker and mother more efficiently. In order to reconcile the conflicting goals of production and reproduction, the state tried to convince women that it would support them in their role as mothers in order to enable them simultaneously to fulfill the role of worker. The most important aspect of the support system from a production point of view was childcare, because that was the most basic facility that would enable mothers to work and raise their children.

Childcare was also an important part of the state's struggle against abortion. In 1936 the state declared abortion illegal except for certain medical reasons.\(^1\)

\(^1\)For more information on the prohibition of abortion see chapter VII.
During the postwar era, the party, state and union organizations were acutely aware that abortion could only be wiped out if adequate childcare facilities existed. Although open discussion of abortion was usually avoided in the press by this time, an article in *Vecherniaia Moskva* in January 1946 stated that childcare facilities had been expanding steadily since the war, and that officials had been trying especially hard to provide more since the 1936 ban on abortion.\(^2\) A series of investigations of support facilities in the districts of Moscow in 1950 also resulted from the desire to lower the incidence of abortion—especially underground abortions. These investigations had a twofold purpose, first to report on the efficacy of measures against abortion in the various districts and, secondly, to report on the availability of support services, particularly healthcare and childcare. The fact that officials saw these two goals as so intertwined that they could be investigated together is a clear indication that the union organizations saw them as part and parcel of the same policy.

The Ministry of Health in particular felt that childcare was crucial to its anti-abortion campaign, and the brigades that investigated support facilities in various districts of Moscow drew clear connections between

\(^2\)L. Grechichnikova, "Zabota sovetskogo gosudarstva o matereli i rebenke," *Vecherniaia Moskva* 8 January 1946.
the lack of childcare and abortion. The report on the Kievskii district, for example, stated that poor living conditions and lack of childcare facilities led single women, especially, to seek abortions.\(^3\) In the report on the Stalinskii district, the brigade concluded that more housing, material aid for mothers, and especially adequate childcare were essential in the struggle to stamp out abortion.\(^4\) Finally, the report on the Baumanskii district went so far as to declare that the interdepartmental commission on abortion should consider the issue of more nursery space—the reclamation of old nurseries and the building of new ones—as a part of its anti-abortion activities.\(^5\) Probably because childcare facilities were so inadequate in this district, the Baumanskii brigade in particular saw a direct relationship between the availability of childcare facilities and the anti-abortion campaign. Despite these acknowledgements that childcare was an essential component of the campaign, the country did not manage to provide enough facilities to meet women’s needs, and the anti-abortion campaign relied instead on legal restraint.\(^6\)

\(^3\)GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222. l. 77.

\(^4\)Ibid., l. 128.

\(^5\)Ibid., l. 198.

\(^6\)See Chapter VII for more on the anti-abortion campaign.
Although some enterprises provided high quality care for their workers’ children, most did not. A 1952 meeting of workers in childcare facilities of the sewing and knitting union compared facilities in different enterprises. A model nursery at the Krasnyi Vostok factory in Moscow claimed to have four shifts that provided childcare services for every worker with small children—no waiting list was necessary. In addition to its large capacity, the nursery gave high quality care. Each nurse/childcare provider showered before each shift or was not admitted to work and, wearing a white uniform, welcomed children to the nursery with "a cheerful face." She quickly interrogated each parent to see if the child had slept well, ate well or showed any signs of illness. Then she examined the child, and, if nothing was wrong, the child was admitted; sick children were sent to the isolation room to wait to see the doctor. Every evening, the nurse demanded stool samples from the children to check for dysentery.7

This model nursery used what they called the "Pavlovian system" to acclimate new children to the nursery, allowing the mothers to stay for two or three hours for the first few days; on the fifth or sixth day, the child would ask the mother to leave. This system kept

7GARF 5458, op. 23, d. 789, l. 3-6. Even in Russia today, parents avoid putting their children in nurseries and kindergartens because these places are known as breeding grounds for infectious diseases.
children from crying when the mothers left. They also stopped taking pacifiers away from children. Again, they used the "Pavlovian system" and tried to divert the child's attention to something else so that in a few days the child would forget about the pacifier.\(^8\)

This nursery also offered in-home inspections to see that parents raised their children well. A nurse visited the children and mothers at home to explain to the mother that the child must have his or her own towel, bowl and bed. Even if the child had to sleep on the table, it was considered better than sleeping with the mother. The doctor controlled everything scientifically, and if necessary, children who would not eat the prescribed diet might be punished.\(^9\)

A representative from a Kosinskaia factory described a childcare center on the other end of the spectrum from this efficient, well-supplied nursery. Although she considered her facility well-equipped—it even had curtains—the only water was in the kitchen. The water was usable, although it contained a lot of iron and turned yellow when boiled. Neither did the nursery have the means to give supplementary food to the children.

\(^8\)Ibid., l. 9. While it is not clear why either of these methods is "Pavlovian," the "Pavlovian system" seems to refer to any and all behavior modification techniques that involved psychological manipulation rather than actual coercion.

\(^9\)Ibid., l. 13-15.
Nevertheless, the representative insisted, the children got a lot of sun and loving care and were very healthy.\textsuperscript{10}

The differences between these two nurseries are striking. The first exemplifies a highly organized, clean, well-equipped and efficient nursery, the second a more relaxed, less scientific approach to childcare with many material deficiencies. The representative of the second stressed the advantages of a good climate and loving, if not scientific, personnel, which contrasts sharply with the sparkling clean and impersonal laboratory image that the first representative evoked. These differences may have stemmed from the fact that the first nursery was in Moscow, which had better supplies than the rest of the country. However, since other nurseries in Moscow were not well-equipped and suffered many basic shortages, it is more likely that the union chose this particular nursery to feature precisely because it was better supplied than most—possibly as a showcase nursery for the industry both as an example for other enterprises to emulate and to prove that the industry did take care of its women workers. Conditions in the second nursery were probably closer to the norm.

The chair summed up the meeting by saying that the children of this industry seemed to be healthy, to grow normally and to reach desired weights. He was pleased to see that mothers could work serenely in the knowledge that

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., l. 35–36.
their children were well cared for, and that these nurseries managed to support working mother stakhanovites as the state demanded. Except for criticism of one nursery that served margarine instead of butter to its children, shortcomings mentioned earlier in the meeting did not come up again.\footnote{Ibid., l. 52.} Apparently the chair of this meeting was not willing to grapple with the problems in the second nursery, reflecting the attitude of most bureaucrats toward childcare issues.

Although the state recognized that women needed good childcare in order to fill their dual roles as dedicated worker and devoted mother, it did not have the necessary resources to devote to the restoration and expansion of childcare facilities, many of which had been comandeered during the war for other purposes. To offset actual shortages in childcare, the Soviet propaganda machine produced enormous amounts of material telling the population, and particularly women, that the Soviet Union provided an excellent support system to enable women to realize their creative potential in all areas. Soviet women, according to this propaganda, could take an active role in production, culture, society, and party life, and still be able to fulfill their most sacred duty—raising the future generations of the Soviet Union. In one article, a woman talked about her life since the revolution and how the Soviet government had made it
possible for her to progress in her career. The nursery, she said, was invaluable in helping her raise her children. There the food and care surpassed what she could have provided at home, and she was able to work, comfortable in the knowledge that her children received the best possible care. The Soviet childcare system, with some truth, was hailed as the best, most extensive system in the world, but it still did not meet the needs of working women.

For the most part, propaganda concentrated on extolling the virtues of Soviet life, and the state was not above fudging the statistics to make life look even better. For example, a 1949 article in Pravda reported that childcare facilities served over two million children

12A. Davydova, "Blagodarnost' materiei," Moskovskii bol'shevik 5 August 1946. For more articles on the excellence of Soviet childcare see "0 mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Pravda 6 March 1946; "0 mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne—8 marta," Vecherniaia moskva 6 March 1946; "Sovetskii zhenschchiny borites' za novyi rastsvet nashej rodiny," Trud 7 March 1946; F. I. Zborovskaja, "Okhrana materinstva i mladchenstva k 30-letiiu sovteskoi vlast'," Meditsinskaia sestra 11 (November 1947): 4-7; M. Lysenko, "Chto meshat ydvizeniu zhenschchini na rukovodashchchuiu rabotu," Partinii zhisn' 24 (December 1947): 48-51; "Mezhdunarodnyi zhenskii den'," Pravda 7 March 1948; "0 mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Pravda 3 March 1952; "O mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Pravda 1 March 1953. For more on propaganda, see Chapter 1

13Childcare in the United States and Western Europe was dismantled after World War II, see, Rupp Taylor, Survival, 16; Margaret Randolph Higgonet, Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars (New Haven, 1987), 8; Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in Behind the Lines, 34; Denise Riley, "Some Peculiarities of Social Policy Concerning Women in Wartime and Postwar Britain," in Behind the Lines, 262-267.
in the USSR, but the official statistics for 1950 reported only 1,788,000 children in childcare. The article went on to promise that over 760 million rubles would be spent in the second half of 1949 to improve the food in childcare facilities, although there is no evidence that this actually took place. Nevertheless, the media occasionally pointed out the need for further help from the state and industry. The same article insisted that heavy industry should increase childcare to fifteen places for every one hundred women workers. Moskovskii bol'shevik declared in 1946 that help for women to raise the next generation should be of first importance to the state.

Another article of the same year in Gudok on International Women’s Day argued that the future of the USSR lay in the hands of its mothers, and that while the Soviet Union already helped mothers more than any other state, it could do more. It advocated increasing aid to mothers to improve their productivity, but there was no mention that the state should provide more in the way of support than childcare. In 1945, Trud reported on a

14"Zabota partii i gosudarstva o materi i deti," Pravda, 7 August 1949.

15Zhenshchiny v SSSR. Statisticheskie material (Moscow, 1969), 14.

16"0 mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne--8 marta," Moskovskii bol'shevik 6 March 1946.

17"0 mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Gudok 7 March 1946.
paper given at the fourteenth plenum of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council that asserted, "It is the sacred duty of unions to come to the aid of the working woman, to help her become an even more active builder of the socialist state." The paper went on to say that unions should seriously start to help parents raise their children by providing more day care facilities and more propaganda explaining how to raise children properly.\(^\text{18}\) In 1947, Partinaia zhizn' attacked the Ivanovo textile industry because many women had left leadership positions. At least part of the problem was the lack of childcare facilities in the district, which made it difficult for mothers to take on the responsibility of leadership.\(^\text{19}\) This theme, that the party and unions needed to provide more childcare facilities for women, recurred constantly throughout the postwar period, but came out most strongly immediately after the war from 1945-1947. During these years, there was a strong tendency in the press to remind the state that its most important duty was to help women fulfill their most important duty—raising the next generation.

Despite the huge amount of propaganda extolling the virtues of Soviet childcare following the war, it is clear

\(^{18}\)N. V. Popova, "Ob uluchshenii kul'turno-massovoi raboty profsoiuzov," Trud, 12 December 1945.

\(^{19}\)M. Lisenko, "Chto meshaet vydvizheniiu zhenshchin na rukovodiasshchuiu rabotu," Partinaia zhizn' 24 (December 1947): 50.
that the system was hugely over-extended and that the state recognized this reality. The lack of facilities especially concerned industries in which women constituted a large part of the workforce. For example, at the twentieth meeting of the Plenum of the Union of Workers in Communal Kitchens, officials pointed out that women formed 85 percent of their workforce, yet their childcare facilities would not meet women's needs. Women also composed over 80 percent of the workers in the textile industry, but a 1952 report to the Secretariat of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council stated that although childcare facilities in this industry were very important, they were insufficient and overcrowded. For example, in 1950 Moscow sewing factory No. 2 could support only one child for every twelve women workers (100 places in the nursery for all 1200 women); a Moscow knitting factory had only one nursery opening for every 11.5 women (150 places for 1300 women workers). These facilities were hardly adequate to support the number of children that the propaganda campaign encouraged women to have.

In an attempt to live up to its own propaganda, the state passed laws and resolutions, which attempted to increase the availability of childcare. The most important legislation concerning childcare was the Family

20 GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(2), l. 195.
21 GARF, f. 5458, op. 23, d. 789, l. 66.
22 GARF 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 50-51.
Law of 8 July 1944 which required the council of People’s Commissars of the U.S.S.R.,

To provide for the compulsory organization in factories and offices employing women on a mass scale of creches, kindergartens, rooms for the feeding of breast-fed children, and personal hygiene rooms for women. To instruct the People’s Commissariats to include in their plans of industrial construction the building of children’s institutions (creches, kindergartens, Mother and Child Rooms), calculated to cover fully all the children of the women workers and office employees of the given enterprise who require such services.23

The Family Law of 8 July 1944 increased state aid to single mothers and mothers with many children, increased privileges for all pregnant women and mothers and extended the network of support facilities for mothers and children; established the "Motherhood Medal," the order "Motherhood Glory" and the title of "Heroine Mother"; amended the taxes on bachelors, single women and small families; made divorce more difficult and expensive; eliminated de facto marriages; and forbade single mothers from getting child support from the fathers of their children. As a result, childcare services steadily improved in the postwar period, but never reached the grandiose proportions that the state promised. Women lost out somewhere in between the ideal and the reality, hearing about the extensive system and the wonderful resources it provided but usually unable to find the kind

of care that they needed and that the state continually promised.

One way the Soviet system tried to improve childcare was to require industries to devote a certain amount of their budgets to building kindergartens and nurseries. In this way, the state hoped eventually to provide childcare facilities in every enterprise that employed women. Unfortunately, industries and unions already staggered under the burdens of the Fourth (1946-1950) and Fifth (1951-1955) Five Year Plans, with their emphasis on huge production quotas. By giving the responsibility for childcare to various organizations, the bureaucracy appeared to be solving women's problems. But the quotas, directives and even laws on expanding and improving facilities often got lost in the bureaucratic shuffle as managers and directors constantly shifted implementation on to another department or organization.

Due in part to the bureaucratic shuffle, childcare facilities did not reach prewar levels until after 1950. In the Leningradskii district, the number of childcare facilities in 1949 was less than half what it had been in 1940 (table 3).
Table 3
Childcare facilities in the Leningradskii district

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 92.

In the RSFSR, pre-school facilities supported 1,266,000 children in 1940 but only 1,239,000 by 1950. In the USSR as a whole, there were 1,953,000 children in permanent pre-schools in 1940 but only 1,788,000 by 1950. Official statistics for the 1940-1950 period do not exist, but in 1947, Meditsinskaia sestra reported 2,764,175 places for children, however, these were not all permanent nurseries since two million of these places were on collective farms (seasonal facilities). Of the remaining 764,175 places, 462,523 were in city nurseries and 301,652

24Zhenshchiny v ssrr. Statisticheskie materialy (Moscow, 1969), 15.
were in the countryside. The increase of 1,023,825 permanent nursery places from 1947 to 1950 may be explained by the increased budget for childcare. The state raised this allocation from 8.9 billion rubles for the entire period 1944–1946 to 6.2 billion from January through November of 1947. Possibly, this increase resulted from the state’s recognition of the need for more facilities, but it was undoubtedly tied to the economic restructuring that occurred with the end of the ration system. Even so, these figures fall far short of the 1947 prediction in Trud that by 1950 there should be 2,260,000 children in kindergartens and 1,251,000 in nurseries.

Apparently by 1948 the state realized that it could not reach this goal, and Moskovskii bol’shevik reported that they hoped to reach the prewar number of nurseries by 1951—another goal not met.

Lack of facilities resulted in overcrowding and long waiting lists. The brigade that investigated the Kievskii district reported fifty-two regional kindergartens with 4500 places, which were overfull by 80 percent with 500 children on the waiting list. Factory operated

26 Ibid.
28 "Okhrana materinstva i detstva," Moskovskii bol’shevik 13 August 1948.
kindergartens were overfull by 25–35 percent with 250 children waiting for placement. The brigade reported that about 30 percent of those on the waiting list were placed within a year and that 70 percent of children in difficult circumstances—ie., with single mothers or from large families—were placed within six months.29 The problem in the Kievskii district was especially bad at Factory #23 where there were not only 200 children on the waiting list for the nursery, but another 280 pregnant women who would have more children on the waiting list within a year. In spite of this enormous overload, the factory did not plan to build any more facilities. At another factory, "Dorkhimzavod," the brigade was unable to obtain statistics on childcare, but reported that many children were waiting to be admitted to the nursery.30

At the FZMK machine building factory in the Krasnopresnenskii district, 22 percent of its workers' children were not able to get into the 120 child nursery.31 The brigade for the Proletarskii district did not provide statistics for the district as a whole but reported that there were 1035 places in nurseries with thirty-five children on the waiting list, but only twenty-one places in kindergartens with 400 children on the waiting list in the raiispolkom (district executive

29GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 155.
31Ibid., l. 117.
committee) and raizdravotdel (district health department). In the factory "Stalin" there were 240 places in the nursery and 700 in the kindergarten with 250 children on a waiting list. The factory "Dinamo" did not have a nursery but had one kindergarten with only ten children on a waiting list.32

A few brigades included statistics on childcare in the district as a whole (table 1). None of the districts provided adequate facilities, although the numbers of children waiting for placement varied widely. Several of the districts, including Molotov, Leningradskii, Baumanskii, and Frunzenskii brigades, reported that despite serious shortages in childcare, no new facilities had been built in recent years.33 The Krasnopresnenskii district had not met its goals in building new facilities with only nine regional nurseries providing 1075 places instead of the ten they had planned to have with 1250 places and only seven regional kindergartens instead of the eight planned.34

32Ibid., 101-104.

33GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 80, 90-91, 195-196, 118, 131.

34Ibid, l. 110.
Table 4
Childcare in selected Moscow districts, 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Waiting List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molotov</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leningradskii</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frunzenskii</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4630</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalin</td>
<td>4220</td>
<td>&gt;1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5820</td>
<td>1208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumanskii</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 80, 92, 118, 126, 164, 186.

The problem of overcrowding reached into all industries and areas of the country. A 1952 report to the Secretariat of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council on childcare facilities in the enterprises of the sewing, knitting, weaving, and haberdashery industries stated that there were 134 kindergartens in this industry with 9795 places in them, but that they were all overcrowded by 4–6 percent. The report went on to say, however, that a check of twenty-five kindergartens in Moscow and Moscow oblast showed that most kindergartens provided such conditions that the mothers could work, comfortable in the knowledge that their children were well cared for.35 The report pointed out that since over 80 percent of all workers in these enterprises were women, it was very important to

35GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 789, l. 58.
provide childcare facilities. However, there were 114 enterprises where over 500 women worked that did not provide kindergartens—these enterprises were not following the directive in the fifth Five Year Plan of the Ministry of Light Industry to build more facilities. In 1952, twelve enterprises planned to build kindergartens, but the first quarter of 1952 showed that they had not met even this inadequate quota. Only four enterprises had begun to build kindergartens. In all there were sixty-six nurseries supported by the Central Committee of this union and forty-three new nurseries planned for 1952, but only seven had been built. There were 158 enterprises in this industry that had over 500 women working in them with no nursery—a violation of the fifth Five Year Plan for building.\(^{36}\)

Part of the problem with achieving prewar levels of childcare was that during the war, many kindergarten and nursery buildings had been taken over for other uses or closed due to labor shortages or during the evacuation of Moscow. In spite of government orders that these buildings be reconverted, many were not, and organizations denied responsibility for this work. The 1950 Ministry of Health investigations into support facilities for women in the various districts of Moscow illustrate the difficulty in pinpointing which institutions were supposed to take charge of childcare. Several brigades reported difficulty

\(^{36}\)Ibid., l. 66-67.
in reconverting the commandeered childcare facilities. None of the reports contained an explanation for the delays, but it is likely that the various bureaucracies simply decided to avoid dealing with the hassle of forcing reconversion by ignoring orders or sending directives on to another office for another bureaucrat to handle. The Baumanskii district raiispolkom ordered the reconversion of former nursery space, but it did not have the responsibility for carrying out the plan—instead, the orders were sent on to the department in charge of non-housing space, which prolonged rendering a decision on this issue. In a similar situation, the courts in the Molotov district ordered a building that had been used for other purposes since 1942 to be released to childcare—not only had this order been ignored, but it was unclear which bureaucracy was supposed to implement the decision, so no one could be blamed for the delay. The Leningradskii and Frunzenskii districts also lost childcare facilities to other organizations during the war, and these facilities had not been returned despite orders to release them—again, with no indication of which organization had failed. In each of these cases, every organization denied responsibility for implementation of childcare directives and passed the order on to another office—

37 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 195-196, 90-91, 131.
effectively ensuring that no new facilities would be built.

Most unions were also unable to provide twenty-four-hour childcare facilities. The brigade for the Leningradskii district commented that the need for twenty-four-hour facilities was especially acute in this district.38 A report on living conditions of women workers in the textile industry stated that in Moscow oblast only 24.6 percent of nurseries provided round-the-clock service, and usually these facilities only admitted older children—so night work was a terrible problem for many women. This was a particular problem, as the report noted, for nursing mothers and single mothers.39 A report to the All-Union Central Trade Union Council in 1950 from the Moscow Trekhgornaia Manufaktura combine "Dzerzhinskii" went into great detail about the difficulties of arranging a work schedule for a nursing mother that allowed her to feed her child at the intervals specified by law when the nurseries were only open for one shift of the workday.40 The report suggested that the nurseries would have to operate for two shifts to allow nursing mothers to work either shift.41 Finally, a 1950 report on the

38Ibid, l. 90-91.

39GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 916. l. 2-3.

40By law, nursing mothers were allowed one half hour off of work every three hours to nurse their babies. Dodge, 68-69.

41GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 912, l. 88-89.
Leningradskii district stated that the lack of twenty-four-hour facilities was especially bad for women who had to work two shifts. The only way working mothers could work as effectively as men and unencumbered women was to provide childcare for all shifts, but the facilities and personnel for such an undertaking simply did not exist.

The state's next step in the bureaucratic shuffle was to direct enterprises to build facilities for their workers and to use the press to shift blame for childcare shortages on to industrial bodies—unions and managers. In January 1949, after hailing the state as a paragon of support of women's equality, Pravda stated that unions failed to deal with the childcare shortage and tended to ignore the problems rather than address them. The article pointed out that the greatest necessity to improve women's productivity was to free them from so many domestic responsibilities—a sound argument for industry to accept the task of providing childcare since it would be the greatest beneficiary of women's increased productivity. The article deplored the lack of new building for childcare facilities and the fact that local authorities had not yet reclaimed childcare buildings from other organizations and ended in the fine tradition of an appeal to a higher authority—Lenin—for confirmation that local

42GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 91.
authorities and unions were not doing enough for women.43 Perhaps in response to this kind of criticism, a July piece in Pravda stated that the party demanded support for mothers and children—in particular expanded childcare—from all local organizations. This article admonished factory directors to look at their childcare facilities to make sure that they were adequate and if they were not, to do something about it.44 In one fell swoop, these two articles managed exonerate the party—which demanded more facilities—and to confuse the issue of responsibility further by pointing the finger at local authorities and industrial managers as well as unions—effectively dispersing the blame among so many institutions that it was impossible to know where to look for childcare support.

This confusion over which organizations were responsible for furnishing childcare facilities is reflected in the reports of the the Molotov, Krasnopresnenskii and Baumanskii brigades. The Molotov report expressed concern that many women had quit their jobs because they could not find childcare—especially women who lived in another district and worked in enterprises in this district that did not provide


44"Zabota partii i gosudarstva o materi i detiakh," Pravda 8 July 1949.
nurseries. The regional pediatric community refused to take responsibility for organizing childcare for these women. Some factories had kindergartens attached to them, but none of them had nurseries—which left it up to the local authorities to provide nurseries and led to the usual bureaucratic shuffle. The brigade for the Krasnopresnenskii district reported that childcare problems resulted from conflicts between health care providers and enterprises over deciding questions of aid and support. The competition for nursery space was so keen in the Baumanskii district, that the Social Law office conducted nearly two hundred investigations especially to determine those who most needed to get their children into nurseries. Since it was not clear whose responsibility it was to build new facilities, each organization tried to argue that it was another's responsibility, and none of these organizations built anything.

An article in 1949 placed the blame for inadequate facilities squarely on the industrial administration, lamenting that there were still enterprise directors who could not or would not understand the great political importance of childcare for the progress of the country. This article pointed to the Ministries of light industry, metallurgy, and the forestry and paper industries as having particularly poor records of building childcare

45GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 87, 80, 112, 190.
facilities. For example, the Ministry of Light Industry had planned to build new nurseries for 1445 children, spending 4,276,000 rubles but had only spent 1,597,000 and built nurseries for 290 children. The article also attacked directors who put off construction of childcare facilities. The author gave the example of the director of the Velikorusski linen trust who had been given the means to build a nursery a year earlier but had still not started construction. She called on party and union organizations to investigate these delays in construction as well as reports of poor conditions in existing nurseries. She also demanded that the party require enterprise directors to fulfill all instructions related to support facilities, which would help women become more involved in building socialism. Here again, the party was called on as the protector of the people and the industrial bureaucracy, from ministries on down to managers, was blamed for problems.

In fact, the responsibility for childcare was dispersed throughout the bureaucratic structure with no one administration carrying sole responsibility. The Soviet of Ministers had accepted at least some of the burden for childcare facilities in October of 1948, when it passed a resolution requiring ministries and departments to build medical institutions, nurseries and

apartments for personnel whenever they built new or expanded existing enterprises. In addition, all enterprises with five hundred or more women were required to provide twelve nursery spaces for every one hundred women. This resolution was amended in May 1949 to require new enterprises with five hundred or more women to have fifteen nursery spaces for every one hundred women. The government also assigned 761 million rubles for the second half of 1949 to provide food for children's institutions and birth homes and required ministries and departments to budget 43.8 million rubles for inventory and supplies for kindergartens. To further ease the burden on single mothers, the presidium of the Supreme Soviet decreed in May 1949 that single mothers who earned less than 600 rubles a month would only have to pay half the fees for childcare. Judging from the continued complaints in the press, these laws were not enforced any more than previous resolutions had been, but since every major government organ had issued some kind of directive, they further muddied the waters, confusing the issue of responsibility even more, while simultaneously demonstrating that even

47 Ibid., 7.

the highest officials were concerned about childcare. 49

While unions and the state discussed and passed many resolutions on childcare, solving the problem was clearly very difficult—not only because of the lack of material and labor resources, but also because it was not always clear who had the responsibility of meeting the demand for more facilities. Providing supplies for these operations posed yet another problem. For example, in Moscow oblast only 30 percent provided diapers for all the children, 50 percent only provided two changes per child, and 20 percent provided 1.5 changes. 50 In 1945 the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Union of the Flax and Hemp Industry reported that most kindergartens were in need of repair and most in their industry did not have enough linens, dishes or toys for the children. In addition to this, the Presidium charged that most directors of enterprises did not help nurseries with food or supplies. 51 In order to rectify this situation, the report called for factory committees to fulfill the Family Law of 1944 and include this work in the plan for the factory. Additionally, the factory committees and soviets


50GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 916, l. 4.

51Only the Saranskii hemp combine director fulfilled his responsibilities in this way.
of social conditions (sovet sotsstrakha) had to meet periodically to hear about the work of children’s organizations, birthing help, medical care and milk kitchens and demand that the director of the enterprise fulfill the law. It further suggested that the director of the Saranskii thermal electric power station be arrested for giving supplementary food intended for the children to the workers. In this case, the union leadership was willing to accept responsibility for union oversight of provisioning childcare, but placed the responsibility for actually providing resources squarely in management’s lap.

In 1950, the Central Committee of the Sewing and Knitting Union reported that union organizations were working to improve childcare facilities and that the Central Committee of Trade Unions was conducting a massive investigation and would impose measures to this end. In order to improve support for working women, the Central Committee called for constructing kindergartens and nurseries in all enterprises where more than 500 women worked; the organization of regional kindergartens, nurseries and stations for medical isolation; and an increase in places in children’s medical facilities for preschool children. This would enable mothers—especially single mothers—to continue to work when their children were quarantined. They also planned to improve staff in

52 GARF f. 5457, op. 25, d. 132, l. 9-10.
childcare, in particular to increase the pedagogical staff, night nannies and kitchen personnel. After passing this resolution, the union leadership neatly avoided the difficulties of finding the resources to implement it by calling on the Ministry of Light Industry to assign construction of new kindergartens in enterprises in accordance with the fifth Five Year Plan, to provide twenty-four-hour support beginning in 1951, and to get all childcare buildings released from other uses. In other words, the union leadership clearly defined the problem and devised a solution—all the Ministry had to do was put the plan into practice.

While Soviet society was not able to provide adequate childcare for women, some industries did better than others. Sovetskaia zhenshchina announced in 1948 that the railroad industry had 770 nurseries caring for 39,000 children and 100,000 children in kindergartens. In the Frunzenskii district, the textile factory "Krasnaia roza" had two nurseries that held 100 percent of the children in the factory and there were only fifteen children on the waiting list for kindergarten. Obviously, this factory met its obligations to its female employees better than most. Factory no. 156 in the Baumanskii district cared for 175 children in its kindergarten, thirty in its

53 GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 58–60.
nursery and no waiting list. The Proletarskii district offices, which had already provided numerous services, were not planning to build any new facilities, but the factory "Stalin" was planning to open two new kindergartens during 1950. It seems clear from the statistics on this region that the district authorities felt that they had done their share by providing such an extensive nursery system and that the rest was up to enterprises. In this case, the factories seem to have accepted this responsibility and had plans to deal with the problem.55

Basic childcare was only the first step, however, in making it possible for women to work and have children. After all, even older children required supervision when they were not in school. Several articles suggested more after school and holiday activities for children. In 1952 Pravda reported that the 100 million rubles went each year to pioneer camps and children's sanatoriums was inadequate.56 Mothers complained that they had a hard time caring for their school age children and working at the same time, because school often got out before they were off work and the children's holidays did not coincide with the mothers'. In a 1951 article about parenthood, one mother said that schools should be able to keep

55GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 131, 195-196, 101-104.

56"O mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Pravda 3 March 1952.
children until mothers got off work, and that they should serve hot breakfasts and lunches. A candidate for the Supreme Soviet suggested organizing activities for school children during the holidays. The candidate consulted with teachers, stakhanovites, artists and officials and came up with a series of lectures by prominent figures, field trips to laboratories, and other activities to occupy children while their mothers worked.

Another approach to the problem of latchkey children was the boarding school type of nursery. In this situation, the children stayed in the nursery all week and were only taken home on weekends. An article in Vecherniaia Moskva claimed that the children got tasty and healthy food four times a day and had a loving relationship with the teachers. It emphasized that these children "developed normally." The cultural department of the sewing union arranged for children to receive New Year's trees and gifts and organized concerts, films, museum and planetarium field trips, ski trips, etc., for children during the winter holidays. In each instance, the articles made it clear that these were model programs.

57 Irina Pechernikova, "Roditel'skaia konferentsiia na fabrike 'Krasnyi oktiabr'," Rabotnitsa, August 1951, 21.
59 "V osobniake na elektrozavodskii," Vecherniaia Moskva 8 March 1946.
60 GARF 5458, op. 23, d. 462, l. 11-12.
that should be imitated. The fact that these special cases had to be showcased suggests that they were in fact isolated programs to which most women did not have access.

In addition to efforts to provide care for children on holidays, some programs attempted to provide care in the hours between the end of the school day and the time mothers returned home from work. Pravda cited the example of Ivanovo, where eleven schools provided places where children could go after school to do homework until their mothers could pick them up.61 The same article mentioned that in many factories, women's societies took an active part in the work of children's organizations and schools. In an effort to provide more such facilities, the secretary of the Central Committee of the sewing and knitting Union wrote to the secretary of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council in 1950, insisting that the industry should provide a children's room and library in each enterprise with over one thousand workers; a room in each school where children could stay late to do homework, rest or play; an affordable pioneer camp for each enterprise; organized vacations for students at a rest home during the winter holiday; and more lectures for mothers on how to raise children.62


62GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 67.
Presumably as a response to this kind of plea, the Presidium of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council passed a series of resolutions in January 1952 designed to improve after school and vacation care. In order to meet these resolutions, the sewing and knitting union undertook to provide practical help in factories and local committees to organize a commission for work among children; to write letters to all factory and local committees about strengthening work among children and parents by 20 February 1952; to conduct meetings with the president of the governing body of clubs and the head of the children's sectors of Moscow and the Moscow oblast on the directives of the Secretariat by 10 February 1952; to hold quarterly meetings to exchange ideas on the work of children's commissions and children's sections of clubs; to conduct investigations of the work of children's homes and offer practical help to improve their work; to verify the work of children's sectors of clubs and to give the result of the investigation to the presidium by 15 April; to send letters to factory and local committees on the preparations for the children's summer health campaign and launch a plan for the campaign for children's health in

63"On improving the work of unions in giving aid to workers and white collar workers in raising children," "on the work of the Central Committee of the union of primary and secondary schools," 3 January 1952, GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 797, l. 1; "on strengthening the work of unions in giving aid to workers and white collar workers in raising children by the Central Committee of the textile industry," 8 January 1952, GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 797, l. 3.
pioneer camps by 1 March; to strengthen the work of the Central Committee of Unions on pioneer camps of Moscow and Moscow oblast, to systematically visit the pioneer camps to ensure their proper running and to offer help to the camps; and to offer help in factory and local committees to organize vacations for kids who were staying in the city for the summer.64

In addition to these resolutions, the Presidium of the Central Committee of trade unions proposed to expand the work with children outside of school in clubs, red corners, and libraries; to conduct regular lectures, matinees, concerts, art lessons, technical and fine arts circles for children; to improve the work of libraries by filling libraries with children’s literature, helping children select books that would connect with school work and teaching children to read in a systematic manner; to strengthen work among parents on raising kids by regularly conducting discussions on raising children in clubs, red corners, libraries, sections and dorms and to do this in close contact with schools; to improve children’s homes; to have all factory and local committees organize children’s commissions; to develop preparations for the summer children’s health campaign; and to ask the All-Union Central Trade Union Council to consider a meeting with the union kultotdel on work among children.65

64Ibid., l. 3-4.
65Ibid., l. 1-2.
From these sorts of resolutions, it is clear that as of 1952, the childcare system still left much to be desired. If these programs had been put into action on a wide scale, they would surely have eased the burden on working mothers, but there is no evidence that these plans had immediate or widespread consequences. Considering that plans to provide very basic childcare for infants and toddlers met with limited successes, it is unlikely that these more grandiose plans for taking care of children who were at least old enough to go to school, would have received any more attention from officials.

How did women cope with this problem? In an interview, Katia said that women often had to leave children at home alone because of the lack of facilities. Most of the women who lived with their mothers or their mothers-in-law could not rely on them to watch the children since most grandmothers worked as well—only one woman out of fifteen said that her mother was able to watch her children. Katia, Olga and Lilia had nannies who cared for their children until they were old enough to go to school, and one nanny lived with the family and took care of the children and the house until the children were nearly grown. Most of the women who

66Interview with author, 29 March 1993.
67Alla, interview with author, 5 April 1993.
had children during this period found some sort of nursery or kindergarten for them, although none of them expressed satisfaction with the conditions. Elena said that she put her daughter into a kindergarten when she was two weeks old. The kindergarten was near her home, but she worked across the city. She had to nurse her daughter in the morning and leave bottles for her at the kindergarten. Elena eventually had to quit her job at the veterinary clinic because the child was too weak to stay in the kindergarten.69 Sofiia said that the head of her institute understood the difficulties of finding a nursery, so he had one built at the institute.70

It is significant that the only women who said that childcare was adequate had no children during this period. Mariia said that the schools and pioneer clubs had afterschool activities for children that kept them busy and productive while their mothers were at work.71 None of the women with children mentioned this service. Most of the women said that women would help each other with children as much as they could, but that most people did not have time to do much.72 Sasha said that if she needed to run out to the store, she could probably rely on a

69 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
70 Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
71 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
72 Katia; Galia, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Alla; Mariia.
neighbor to watch the child for a few minutes, but if her child were sick, she either had to leave it home alone or stay home herself.\textsuperscript{73} Tania said that her daughter’s nursery had an outbreak of mumps and decided to send all the healthy children home for forty days. This meant that the mother would have to stay home with her child until the quarantine was over. So she asked a nurse to say that her daughter was already infected so that she could stay in the quarantined nursery. This way, when her daughter caught the mumps, Tania stayed home with her for one week instead of forty days and her daughter was able to stay in the nursery.\textsuperscript{74} The problems of childcare affected all of the women who had children to a greater or lesser extent and most had to find alternatives to childcare at one time or another.

None of the women had husbands who helped much with the children, and, indeed, it was not expected that fathers would be of much help. Traditionally, Russian men did not do housework or help raise the children, and the propaganda and union proceedings on helping women to work outside the home did not suggest changing that tradition. It was clearly up to women to care for children and the state’s responsibility to provide support facilities.

Men’s work in the Soviet Union did not include caring for the children, cooking, cleaning, laundry or sewing. While

\textsuperscript{73}Interview with author, 4 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{74}Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
an occasional article mentioned the importance of fathering, these were few and far between. In a very unique article in Pionerskaia pravda on International Women’s Day, 1946, a boy in the sixth class told the story of how he began helping his mother with the housework when she was sick. During this time he realized how much work she had to do in addition to her regular job. He added that he continued to help her even after she got better, despite the fact that he had heretofore considered it "girls' work" to help around the house. He said he did this out of love and appreciation for his mother and because he wanted her to have a good life. This article was unusual in its appeal to boys to stop looking upon helping at home as girl’s work, but its appearance on International Women’s Day and the fact that no follow up articles making the same appeal appeared indicates that it was merely a nice gesture to mothers on this holiday and not in any way a serious campaign to make housework an equal opportunity job.

A more typical article appeared in Rabotnitsa in January 1951. A woman wrote that her husband never helped her with their three children. When she asked for help, he would respond, "So what will you do? I’m busy!" The woman wanted to know if this was the way it was supposed to be, if, in fact, "raising children should fall entirely

75Mitia Fedichkin, "Moia Mama," Pionerskaia pravda, 8 March 1946.
on the mother's shoulders." In response to this question, Rabotnitsa said that the father should help make his wife's job easier whenever he could. "Whenever he is not busy" a father should take time to spend with his children. This time was important to the child's happiness and development. The article emphasized that the quantity of time was not important, but that some time was necessary. The father should help bathe the baby and take it for walks whenever he had time. When the child was old enough, the father should play with it and help teach it to walk and talk. Finally, with older children, it was important that the father teach them about the world around them, in particular the history and achievements of the Soviet Union with an emphasis on the heroism of the Bolshevik party and its leaders. In other words, this article argued that the father was an important part of a child's life in the sense that he should be a mentor. It is also clear in this article that the father's primary responsibility was not to the children, since every suggestion was prefaced by "when he has time" or some statement to that effect. At no point did this article suggest that the father help with some of the practical side of child raising, such as changing diapers or cooking and cleaning for the child.76

76V. Kolbanovskii, "Otvety na pis'ma materei. Otets kak vospitatel'," Rabotnitsa, January 1951, 26-27.
Another article in *Sem’ia i shkola* from 1947 touched on the same theme. In this piece, the author stated that raising children used to be a mother’s job but was now the job of both parents, and then went on to talk about support facilities that relieved *mothers* of some of their housework so that both parents could work.77 In this society, the idea that the man should take a truly equal part in the work of providing a home for the family was non-existent. Even in the articles that talked about a father helping with the children, this help did not include housework.78

Although the childcare problem was never satisfactorily solved, the issue stayed on the public agenda throughout the postwar period. In the absence of real facilities, the authorities substituted propaganda in an attempt to convince women their needs were on the agenda, but ultimately, the needs of working women were simply not as important to the state as other aspects of the economy. In fact, women’s needs were never the issue. The childcare problem rose to prominence only because of the state’s need for women to work and have children. But although the state realized that more childcare facilities were needed in order for women to fulfill both these roles, it was not very effective in carrying out this


78The dynamics of family life will be discussed at greater length later.
goal. In the struggling postwar economy with so many demands for workers, building space, medical help and material goods from every possible part of society, it is not surprising that childcare was slow to recover.

But the lack of resources does not fully explain problems in childcare during this period. The most fundamental problem with the Soviet approach to childcare was clearly implementation of directives. The state and union governing bodies came out strongly in support of expanding childcare facilities in the most innocuous way possible. Rather than allocating funds to build the facilities themselves, these bodies simply mandated that their subordinate organizations—factories and local committees—build them. But they were as vague as possible about assigning responsibility so that it was relatively easy for factory directors and committee chairs to ignore them. To make matters worse, these organizations were already stretched to the breaking point trying to meet productions quotas. In general, they had neither time nor resources to fulfill vague directives that did not immediately help them produce their assigned output.

Lack of accountability created the perfect atmosphere for bureaucrats to pass the buck and to use their own limited reserves for other projects. Officials had many demands upon them, and the state expected them to fill any and all gaps in the local economy with these resources.
So when policymakers decided to require factory directors and union officials to build more childcare facilities, they simply made it a part of the Five Year Plan. Once the construction was mandated, it was up to the lower bodies to carry out the orders. Unfortunately, there were far more projects than resources, and the factory and local officials could not hope to meet all the requirements of the postwar Five Year Plan. This period of Stalinism followed the pattern of the prewar years—the most important aspects of the Five Year Plan were clearly understood to be production quotas, not consumer demands or even workers' needs. The bureaucrats in charge of building space, construction projects and supplies, and material goods knew full well that they must first meet the production demands of the state and resources were directed to that end rather than to childcare. Despite these deficiencies in the system, women continued to work and have children, and in the end, this may explain why the state did not enforce its orders more vigorously. As long as women managed to fulfill both roles without support, the state had no reason to follow through on its promises.
A discussion of women in the postwar period would not be complete without giving due consideration to communal services and housing. While bombarding women with the "supermom" image, the Soviet state heaped on women's double burden the additional difficulties of inadequate housing and shortages of consumer goods and communal services. The latter fell on women more than men, because women spent hours every day searching for food, clothing, and other goods and carried sole responsibility for cooking and cleaning the home. The inadequacies of communal services were exclusively a women's problem since women were obliged to provide these services for their families when the state failed to do so. Consequently, the state's policies had profound consequences for women, and women's experiences with communal services illustrate the contradictions inherent in postwar Soviet policy and contribute significantly to understanding the complex relationship between state policy and women's lives.

The lack of resources adequately to house the population and to free women from household drudgery placed the state in the anomalous position of having to affirm its basic ideology without actually spending any of
its resources to do so. Faced with this dilemma, state and union organizations engaged in an intricate bureaucratic shuffle that allowed them to demonstrate their concern over these problems without taking commensurate action to solve them—just as they had done with childcare. Policymakers demanded that new housing and support facilities be provided even though they knew that there were no funds to implement such orders. Organizations at all levels—unions, factories, and city and district committees—were starved for funds and could not hope to find money and resources for the widespread construction and supply network needed to meet the state’s demands. Since real solutions were impossible without funds, these organizations launched investigations and collected thousands of pages of information on the housing shortage and communal services, giving the appearance, at least, of concern. The result was that these problems continued to plague Soviet society throughout the Stalinist period, despite the mountains of paperwork under which the bureaucrats attempted to bury them.

The most basic problem was the lack of adequate housing. Housing had been neglected before the war and the devastation caused by the war and the influx of population to Moscow turned the prewar shortage into an acute problem for postwar society. The fourth Five Year Plan stated that the most important task unions had was to provide housing and communal support for workers. It gave
factory and local committees control over filling the housing plan and maintaining dorms and communal housing. It stipulated that central, oblast and factory committees must increase control over the worker supply departments, cafeterias, stores and shops and must control production and dissemination of consumer goods. It also required the Central Committee of the Union of Public Food Workers to open more stores, cafeterias and cafes. Since there were not enough resources to meet all the quotas set by these plans, all capital was diverted to industry while housing and other consumer services suffered. To make matters worse, the few resources that were available were not always used. In 1945, Trud reported that 17,400,000 rubles had been assigned to build housing for textile workers for that year and that 2,000,000 more had been set aside for individual housing, but not all of this money had been used. The article gave no indication of what happened to the unused funds.

Union reports on workers' living conditions graphically documented the housing problem. According to the president of the Twentieth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communal Workers Union in 1946, most workers lived in apartments that had been severely damaged

1For full text see "Ob usilenii raboty profsoiuznykh organizatsii v oblasti uluchshenii uslovii truda, bytovogo i kul'turnogo obsluzhivaniia rabochikh i sluzhashchikh," Trud 7 September 1945.

2"Pomoshch' proforganizatsii individual'nyi zastroishchikam," Trud 5 September 1945.
during the war.³ A 1950 report to the sewing union noted that there were twenty-four women and six children from ten to fourteen years old in one dorm room, and children had to share a bed with their mothers. This industry had 322,464 square meters of living space occupied by 69,278 people. The average living space for a person was 4.7 square meters—too little to meet the demands of the industry. The report went on to estimate that the sewing industry had only enough housing for 6 percent of the workers, all provided as single dormitories. In almost all enterprises, single mothers lived two, three or more to a room without basic necessities and with the mother and child sharing a bed. In the Tishino-Sokol’nicheskoi factory dormitories, single women, single mothers with their children, and entire families lived in one room. In one case it was noted that, thirty people—eight children, four men and eighteen women—shared living quarters.⁴

The report from the sewing union gives a particularly vivid illustration of the housing problem for those people who lived in dormitories. Most people lived in communal apartments, however, which were not the unions’ responsibility. Much of the discussion concerning these apartments took place in the health organizations. After the war, the Ministry of Health primarily focused on improving health care for women and children and

³GARF, f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(2) l. 187.
⁴GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455 l. 64.
considered issues of housing and support to be important to its work, believing that women and children who had adequate housing, health care and hygiene facilities were healthier than women and children who did not. Furthermore, women who had sufficient housing were less likely to seek an abortion than women who did not have room for a child. As a part of its campaign to stop illegal abortions, the Ministry of Health conducted a series of investigations into living conditions in nine regions of Moscow in 1950. These brigades closely examined the housing problem.

The Molotov, Leningradskii, Krasnopresnenskii, Frunzenskii and Baumanskii districts all reported that no new housing had been built for several years, which meant that housing could only be obtained when someone left the district or died. Only three districts reported recent construction: Enterprises in the Stalin district were responsible for the few new dorms built in that district.

In the Kievskii district, the Office of Sanitation Education (Dom sanprosovet) had the most impressive record, having built 51,281 square meters of new housing from 1947-1949 and renovated 1770 square meters of living

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5For a discussion of health care facilities and abortion, see chapter VII.

6GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 86, 90, 117, 132-133, 192.

7Ibid., l. 124.
space, but had planned no new construction for 1950. The Proletarskii district opened a new housing complex in 1948 with 800 square meters of living space. In 1949, the factory "Dynamo" opened fifty new apartments, Motozavod opened forty-five, Avtogenniy thirty, and the "Stalin" factory opened two hundred new apartments. The Scherbakovskii investigators could not report on housing because the district raiispolkom refused to release any information. As these reports indicate, housing was still a severe problem by 1950, and new construction was rare.

While the housing shortage affected virtually everyone who lived in Moscow, state policies on distribution of housing singled out mothers. As a part of the effort to encourage working women to have children, the Council of People's Commissars passed resolution No. 1571 in June 1944, which required that each year not less than ten percent of the housing fund should go to mothers of large families and single mothers with nursing babies. This resolution remained in force throughout the postwar years in an attempt to remove one obstacle to women having children—lack of space. Not only was this resolution not backed up by funding, it was clearly not implemented as

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8Ibid., l. 174-75.
9Ibid., l. 101, 105-106.
10Ibid., l. 142.
11GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 271-272.
demonstrated by the Ministry of Health investigations of 1950. Reports on the Frunzenskii, Stalin, Baumanskii, Proletarskii and Kievskii districts of Moscow all stated that industry managers as well as local and union official ignored the law. In 1949 the Leningradskii district issued 197 orders for apartments of which nineteen were given to mothers of large families, indicating that for one year, this district enforced the law. While the acute housing shortage in Moscow made it impossible to give these women ten percent of all existing housing, it should have been possible to carry out the law with new housing and newly assigned housing, but the two districts that had new housing--Proletarskii and Kievskii--also ignored the law. The unions, in other words, mandated that these women be assigned housing, thereby creating the illusion that they were attacking the problem, but by not enforcing their decision or demonstrating how it was to be carried out, it simply generated more paper to add to the bureaucratic shuffle.

Ministry of Health reports from 1950 also included information on the few mothers who were given housing. The Molotov district had issued only two rooms to single mothers and eleven to mothers of large families in the preceding two years. The Krasnopresnenskii raiispolkom

\[12^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{l. 132-133, 128, 198, 105-106, 174-175.}\]

\[13^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{l. 90.}\]

\[14^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{l. 86.}\]
gave rooms to twelve single mothers and five mothers of large families in 1948-1949. The Frunzenskii raiispolkom issued apartments to only two pregnant women in 1949, and out of the 194 pregnant women who applied for housing that year, four more were given rooms in dorms. All together in 1948-1949, the raiispolkom gave four rooms to mothers of large families and one to a single mother. The factory, "Krasnaia Roza," found dorm rooms for twelve single mothers in 1949. These districts were far behind the Baumanski district, which reported that in 1947-1949, they assigned living quarters to five heroines of motherhood, fifty-eight mothers of large families, and twenty-nine mothers with nursing babies. The officials in these districts all kept track of how many mothers they helped to find housing, demonstrating that they understood that this was an important function despite the fact that they did not manage to implement the ten percent rule.

Other reports from the Ministry of Health reveal that officials perceived the housing shortage as a motive for women to have abortions, and therefore an obstruction to its pro-natalist policy. In 1949 the Ministry investigated the social law office of women's consultation

\[15\] Ibid., l. 111, 115.

\[16\] Ibid., l. 132-134.

\[17\] Ibid., l. 195.

\[18\] See chapter VII for a discussion of this policy and the ant-abortion campaign.
No. 57. Social law offices were supposed to provide help and counselling for women but also to keep an eye on them, reporting any signs of criminal activity—such as illegal abortions—to the proper authorities.\(^{19}\) This office reportedly gave out housing to women who had been refused a legal abortion in an effort to dissuade them from turning to underground abortionists. Makhova, a single mother who had been refused an abortion, was given a room of seven square meters, and Kechker, a woman who seemed likely to have an illegal abortion, was given two rooms of twelve square meters and 250 rubles to send her son to pioneer camp.\(^ {20} \) This office also stopped evictions that would leave mothers and children homeless. Smerdova lived with a man who was still married to another woman. After the birth of her second child, he wanted to kick Smerdova and her children out of his apartment, which he had the right to do since they were not married. The social law office intervened and stipulated that he could not evict her until she obtained an apartment of her own.\(^ {21} \)

This Ministry's policies were based on the assumption that it was important for women to have adequate housing in order to raise the birth rate, but it could not supply enough housing without new construction. Since the

\(^{19}\)See chapter VII for a fuller discussion of the activities of these offices.

\(^{20}\)GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 71ob.

\(^{21}\)Ibid., l. 72.
Ministry had to depend on other bodies—district housing authorities and factory management—to construct new dwellings, it could only conduct endless investigations into the shortage and try to intimidate local officials into giving mothers top priority. But the housing situation was simply too desperate for these tactics to meet with much success.

Despite the fact that the resources for housing construction were scarce, state and union bodies continued to make promises and issue demands for more housing, and the press occasionally discussed the issue, especially with reference to working mothers. One article in Pravda mentioned housing in a list of other facilities women needed in order to be more productive in the workplace.22 In 1950 Feld’sher i akusherka suggested that trade unions systematically investigate the living conditions of mothers of large families, single mothers, families of casualties of war, and disabled veterans and find housing for them if necessary.23 The housing shortage was also occasionally the subject of jokes in Krokodil in the late 1940s, with pictures of houses that were falling down, housing administrators who did no work, and houses so poorly built that nothing worked in them.24

22"Mezhdunardnyi zhenskii den’," Pravda, 7 March 1948.
24Krokodil, 20 March 1948, 6.
The state and unions adopted several tactics to improve the housing situation, at least for a part of the population. For example, the All-Union Central Trade Union Council passed a resolution to help workers build individual homes, asking union organizations to help these workers by ensuring that they received a loan and land in good time and by helping with preparation and transportation of building materials. The Council also suggested that, in enterprises where ten or more people were building homes, the unions train these people to form a brigade of carpenters, stove setters and roofers. These measures reflect the continuing problems that plagued construction—lack of money, materials and workers. In this instance, the suggestion was that people should do as much for themselves as possible with primarily administrative and financial help from the unions. No follow up articles appeared on how many workers availed themselves of this help so it is impossible to say how effective these measures were—in the absence of any corroborative evidence from union reports, it is likely that this was simply a public relations campaign and that these measures were not implemented at all.

It was impossible to implement most of the housing plans, because utilizing the same limited resources, unions were responsible for both increasing worker

25"Pomoshch' proforganizatsii."
productivity and promoting workers' well-being. In principle, these two responsibilities were considered to be inextricably linked, since workers who were comfortably fed, clothed and housed could be expected to be more productive than workers who lived in destitution. In reality, however, there was more pressure on the unions to maintain and increase production through whatever means necessary, and the advocacy role primarily served public relations. Constrained by the saturation propaganda images, unions could not ignore the latter and dedicated significant amounts of time and paperwork to it. Of course, without added resources, such efforts could not lead to any real results. Instead, union and state bodies engaged in an elaborate game of bureaucratic shuffle among themselves, involving frequent investigations into defining the problem and blaming each other for the paltry results. Each claimed that the other had the responsibility for new housing construction and resolution of the problem.

For example, the delegates to the Fourteenth Plenum of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council used this tactic when debating the housing shortage. The main issue was lack of building supplies and each union blamed another for the problem. The stone workers said that the timber workers were not carrying their weight, the communal workers said they could not do their jobs because the construction workers built inadequate buildings, and all
the unions complained that they were not supplied with the necessary uniforms and equipment to do their jobs well.  
In his speech to the plenum, Kuznetsov deflected primary responsibility for problems away from union organizations and placed it squarely on supply industries and state bodies—Narkomstroii (People’s Commissariat for Construction), Glavpromstroii (Directorate of Industrial Construction) and Narkomat (People’s Commissariat). He then called for the unions to step in and work with these organizations to ensure speedy production and timely shipment of supplies. This highly publicized speech suggested that union involvement could solve the problems caused by other organizations by cleaning out the elements that slowed housing construction. These suggestions all ingored the root cause of the housing shortage—starvation for resources—and therefore construction continued to move very slowly.

Housing was also an issue at the meeting of the Twentieth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communal Workers Union in 1946. The chair charged the union Central Committee with the responsibility for housing workers. She then chastised this committee, saying that it did not even have an exact list of the individual


27V. V. Kuznetsov, "Ob uluchshenii raboty profsoiuz-
nykh organizatsii v obalsti udovletforenia material’no-
bytovych nuzhd rabochikh i sluzhashchikh," Trud 7 December 1945.
builders. She stated that the committee was obliged to create such a list and keep track of the builders in order to help them with materials, transportation and labor.\(^2\)

Rather than posing solutions to the housing problem, the meeting ended with a call for more meetings to discuss construction of new housing and improvement of existing housing. Unions often adopted this strategy—they discussed a problem and at length ascribed blame and responsibility to another group.\(^3\)

Another typical tactic was for organizations to document and discuss problems constantly, but to take no real action because of the lack of resources. A report on the living conditions of workers in the Shetruskii peat industry revealed that despite a directive from the Secretariat of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council that all workers get a bed, the women peat cutters still slept two to a bed in filthy dorms without adequate lights, baths or linens. Management and union officials argued that the peat workers were used to sharing beds and would not use separate beds. The men's dorm was even worse and did not meet basic sanitation requirements.\(^4\)

While these reports gave graphic descriptions of the terrible living conditions workers suffered, they did not suggest ways to improve them. In this case, ensuring

\(^2\)GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(2) l. 187.

\(^3\)Ibid., l. 194-195.

\(^4\)GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1582, l. 33-34.
cleanliness would not seem to be an expensive undertaking, but providing adequate basic necessities—such as beds, linens, blankets and baths—required money. Assuming these items were available for purchase, it is unlikely that the enterprises had the extra funds to obtain them.

A classic example of the bureaucratic shuffle over housing and all other support facilities came out in a 1950 report from the sewing union. It pointed out that despite the resolution passed by the Central Committee of Trade Unions to improve living conditions for working women in large industries, the Ministry of Light Industry had not assigned enough money to build living quarters in the Five Year Plan for 1951-1955. The report suggested that more living space for women must be included in the Ministry's future Five Year Plans.31 In this instance, the union governing body passed the resolution to expand housing, but this organ had no authority over the ministry that had to provide the funds to build the housing. When the higher officials began looking for an organization to blame for the housing problem, the union could point to its resolution and claim that it had attacked the problem, while the Ministry could argue that housing was the union's responsibility. In other words, by constantly throwing the problem to one another, both organizations could avoid committing themselves to solving the problem.

31Ibid., l. 65.
The fact that the authorities were unwilling to divert resources from basic industry to housing meant that Muscovites had to cope with the housing shortage as best they could. In interviews, women discussed the crowded conditions in communal apartments. Out of fifteen women, only Lilia lived in an individual apartment instead of a dorm or a communal apartment. Before the war, her father had been a political worker who had gone to the countryside to agitate among collective farmers and then helped to build the Palace of Congresses.³² Lilia said that it was normal for a family to live alone in a three room apartment, but this was clearly not true. Other women from prestigious families had to live in small communal apartments. One example was Marta, the daughter of an army officer, who spent most of the postwar period in Germany with his wife and left Marta and her younger sister alone in Moscow for several months. Marta admitted that as the daughter of a high ranking officer, she was in a privileged position in many ways, but she still had to live in a communal apartment and said that no one had a private apartment during this time.³³

A couple of women had rather unusual living situations. Olga lived with her parents outside of Moscow in a small house. They had four rooms with seventy square meters—an enormous amount of space by postwar standards.

³²Interview with author, 16 April 1993.
³³Interview with author, 24 April 1993.
She felt that the extra living space offset the drawback of the hour-long commute to the university and did not envy her friends who lived in Moscow in crowded communal apartments. Daria began school at Moscow State University (MGU) in 1950. Her parents did not live in Moscow, but since they made too much money for her to receive a dorm room, she boarded with an old woman. She could not work or eat at home, because she and the woman lived in one room, and she only had a couch to sleep on. When asked if it was legal for her to rent a "corner" from a private citizen, she said she was not sure, but thought that it was probably a special arrangement to accommodate students who could not get dorm space. Later, the university put her in a dacha with ten other women students. They lived two and a half hours from the university, but she did not mind the commute because the university paid her rent.

Several of the women lived in dorms during part of this period. The dorms varied in quality depending on what enterprise or school they were attached to. The women who lived at MGU reported that the dorms there were good, with a decent cafeteria and cooking facilities for the students. In 1953, when the new building was

34 Interview with author, 9 April 1993.
35 Interview with author, 8 April 1993.
finished, everyone got a private room. Anna lived in a dorm attached to an asphalt factory. These dorms had no running water, no cafeteria and no indoor cooking facilities. Still, Anna, like the students at MGU, reported that life in the dorm was very jolly with lots of parties and dances.

By far the most common home was the communal apartment, and all the women who lived in them talked about how crowded, dirty, noisy and uncomfortable they were. Mariia lived with her parents in one room, and after she married, her father built a divider to make two rooms. She said that she felt very lucky that the room was constructed in such a way that they could have a door and a window in each half. Sofiia had a relatively large apartment—she lived with her family in two big rooms until 1967—but they had no conveniences and only two small windows. When they finally got central heating, their apartment was as damp and hot as a steam room. In addition to physical discomfort, the cramped conditions led to conflict between family members and neighbors. Katia, whose husband had been arrested and executed during the 1930s, said that the other people in her apartment

36 Galia, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Daria, interview with author, 8 April 1993.
37 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
38 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
39 Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
treated her and her children very badly, locking them out of the kitchen and shouting insults at them. This was an extreme case of poor relations between neighbors, but most of the women talked about the strained atmosphere that was inevitable in such crowded conditions. Alla said that only four people had lived in her apartment before the war but after the war, twelve people lived there. She said they always fought. Sofiia said that she never argued with her neighbors, but her neighbors fought amongst themselves.

All the women experienced the difficulty involved in obtaining housing, but two of them had especially noteworthy experiences. Elena, who lived with her mother, uncle and husband in one room, said that she and her husband divorced primarily because of the lack of privacy. Her mother and her husband fought all the time. She also complained that she could not have sex with her husband because they all slept in the same room with only a curtain for privacy, and her mother and uncle would complain if they made any noise. She thinks that if they had been able to obtain an apartment, their marriage might have worked. Lack of privacy for young couples was a

40 Interview with author, 29 March 1993.
41 Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
42 Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
43 Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
widespread problem that lingered throughout the Soviet period.

Tania lived with her mother, father and brother in such a small room that she and her mother had to share a bed—and they quarreled a lot. She studied and worked at a construction institute and asked to be sent out to a construction project so that she could move away from her mother. Her boss, surprised that she had not already received housing, asked her supervisor for an explanation. The supervisor complained that he had three grown daughters of his own still living at home, and he did not want to give Tania an apartment when his own daughters could not get one. The boss insisted that she get an apartment and she was finally allotted one room in a women's dorm.\textsuperscript{44} This is a classic example of an insignificant bureaucrat abusing his power for no better reason than to work out his own frustrations. He delayed giving this woman her housing out of spite—he could not divert her housing to his daughters, but he could prevent her from enjoying comforts that his own family could not get. Even on a small scale, this kind of petty tyranny created widespread problems.

Clearly the housing shortage posed a serious problem to Moscow society in general and to women in particular. But as long as the state continued to emphasize industrial production over all other considerations, the housing

\textsuperscript{44}Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
problem could only grow worse. Unfortunately, housing was only one aspect of postwar life that presented problems for women. The cramped living conditions of the communal apartments and dorms were exacerbated by the lack of good support facilities. The Soviet government recognized, at least in theory, that women could not work outside the home and perform all of their traditional household tasks. Despite their place in the fourth Five Year Plan, consumer goods and other support facilities suffered even more than child care. The press did not carry much about the lack of consumer goods until 1948, after the rationing system had ended, and many articles concentrated on the difficulty in finding clothing—especially for children.45 Krokodil and Rabotnitsa lampooned the problem. One cartoon showed a woman and her little girl looking at a doll in a store. The woman said, "We finally found a doll with the right size dress [for the little girl]," indicating that it was easier to buy the entire doll in order to get the dress than it was to find a dress that would fit her child.46 Another contrasted the abundance of goods produced for state exhibitions with bare shelves in stores.47


46"Neveroiatno i ne fakt, no...," Krokodil, 30 June 1949, 5.

In May 1949, the Soviet of Ministers passed a resolution on expanding production of children's goods. According to Rabotnitsa, production of clothes for children had risen significantly since 1947, but this resolution would increase production still more and ensure a wider variety of styles and colors in children's clothes.\footnote{N. Chesnokov, "O detskoi odezhde i obuvi," Rabotnitsa, May 1949, 10-11.}

The press indicated that consumer goods were easier to find by 1953. Krokodil ran a cartoon called "The Evolution of the Market Bag, 1947-1953." It had six frames showing the progression of the availability of consumer goods. The first frame showed a young woman poorly dressed, wearing a kerchief and carrying an empty string bag. In each successive frame, the woman became better dressed with larger and fuller shopping bags. By the last frame, she was wearing a business suit and hat and carrying two large, full bags.\footnote{"Evoliutsiia ‘avos’ki’ 1947-1953 gg.," Krokodil, 30 April 1953, 8-9.} Bloknot agitatora also stated in 1953, that the same amount of money bought twice as much as it had in 1947.\footnote{"Mezhdunarodnyi zhenskii den’—8 marta," Bloknot agitatora, February 1953, 30.}

The women interviewed supported this claim. They all agreed that the first few years after the war were the hardest. Under the ration system, which lasted until 1947, shopping was very difficult. People on the ration...
system in Moscow were allotted a certain amount of bread, sugar, meat, margarine, milk, flour, etc.\(^5\)1

Unfortunately, stores would not always have the products that were allotted for that week. Mariia gave the example of sugar, saying that she could get 100 grams of sugar, 200 grams of candy, or fifty grams of honey. If the store did not have sugar, she would have to decide which was better, candy or honey. Sometimes the store would not have any of the sugar items, and she would simply lose the sugar that she was supposed to get that week—ration cards could not carry over to the next week.\(^5\)2 But by the 1950s, the women agreed that life was easier. Several said that the stores were full of things—caviar, meat, cheese, clothes—but no one could afford to buy more than the basic necessities, and the lack of refrigeration meant that they still had to shop daily for fresh food. The problem of finding quality clothes for children was never satisfactorily solved.\(^5\)3

The lack of consumer goods created more work for women and poor communal services added to the problem. Support facilities were especially important given the housing

\(^5\)1 For a full discussion of the ration system, see Chapter III.

\(^5\)2 Interview with author, 13 April 1993.

\(^5\)3 Natasha, interview with author, 10 March 1993; Tania, interview with author, 16 March 1993; Katia, interview with author, 29 March 1993; Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993; Lilia, interview with author, 16 April 1993.
shortage. Most people lived in communal apartments where several families shared one kitchen. This made it difficult for women to cook and the lack of refrigeration exacerbated the problem. In addition to cooking, laundry was done in the kitchen by hand. Consequently, women spent hours shopping for food, waiting for their turn to cook and then waiting their turn to do laundry—and this was on top of a full day of work and all the other housework, which also had to be done by hand. The state did not produce labor-saving devices (such as vacuum cleaners) or prepared foods in the postwar years.

The trade unions recognized that the most basic element of the support system was the communal dining hall. A good network of communal dining facilities would not only free women from cooking, it would also relieve them of much of the daily shopping and cleaning that ate up most of their free time. At the Fourteenth Plenum of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions, Kuznetsov called for unions to improve workers' living conditions, emphasizing the need to develop better communal dining services and admonishing unions to pay more attention to workers' ideas and complaints. Shortly after the war, Trud began calling for better food in communal dining services and pointed out that a greater variety of food could be made since the war ended. It mentioned a model cafeteria where workers were taught how to make ten

54 Kuznetsov, "Ob uluchshenii."
different vegetable dishes. Most dining hall workers were not so well trained, however, and the article went on to describe a cafeteria that served nothing but cabbage as a first course. Another article in Trud reported on their investigation of a bad cafeteria. They discovered that the chef was stealing produce and that greens were never delivered to this cafeteria. They also found that the cooks needed new recipes and did not have proper utensils.

Krokodil lampooned dining halls that produced inedible food and were staffed by rude or incompetent workers. In one such cartoon a man asked the waitress if they served bad food everyday. She replied, "No, we're closed on Mondays." In the next frame, he asked her whether his bowl contained soup or slops. She replied that it contained neither, it was borshch. In the third, a woman asked the waitress how the cook could take good food and turn it into such bad food. The waitress replied that the cook had a lot of experience—he had been doing it for twenty years. In the fourth frame a woman asked the chef why her kissel tasted like onions and the bread like

55M. Kondrashova, "Vkusno i khorosho gotovit' pishchu v stolovykh," Trud 8 September 1945.

56N. Popova, "Pochemu nevkusny obedy v nashei stolovoi?" Trud 6 September 1945.
herring. He replied, "I don't understand it, yesterday it was just the opposite!"\(^57\)

In 1948 Moskovskii bolshevik reported on conditions in factory cafeterias, claiming that public eateries were an important factor in the material development of the USSR.\(^58\) It found that although cafeterias had improved in Moscow since the war and hundreds of thousands of Muscovites used them, the quality of the food varied greatly. The article compared the cafeteria at the Sokol'nicheskii train repair enterprise, which provided good food and a nice atmosphere for its workers, with the Krasnyi bogatyr cafeteria, which did not meet even the most elementary sanitary regulations. In the poor cafeteria, there were not enough chairs and the food tasted bad—the article claimed that workers could buy better stuff in any store. Food should not only be good, this article continued, but it should be prepared well and politely served. Finally the author argued that if a factory's cafeteria was bad, it probably meant that all its other public services were poorly run as well, including buffets, canteens and storehouses.

The most powerful reason to improve dining facilities was not to make women's lives easier—they would also help working women raise children and fill their roles as

\(^57\)"Smeshnye zarisovki iz plokhoi stolovki," Krokodil, 10 March 1949, 11.
\(^58\)"Zavodskaiia stolovaia," Moskovskii bol'shevik 23 October 1948.
"supermoms." This rationale was developed in a 1946 article in Pravda, which argued that the state should focus its attention on building more canteens to help women perform their most respected duty to the state—raising "courageous builders of communism." 59 Another 1948 Pravda article suggested expanding the support system so that women could raise children while they worked and called for communal dining halls in apartment buildings as well as factories. 60 This was a radical idea for the postwar period, hailing back to the utopianism of the 1920s and suggesting that women might be relieved of all cooking duty entirely. Canteens in the workplace might reduce some of women's cooking and shopping tasks by providing the main meal for their families at work, but women still had to prepare the other two meals in crowded communal kitchens. Canteens in apartment buildings could eventually replace women as cooks for the family.

Unfortunately, this idea never got further than the pages of Pravda. From the state's perspective, apartment dining halls were not feasible since it could not shift the responsibility for funding and building them to industry, as it could factory dining facilities. The state did not even consider this approach, possibly because it seemed such a natural part of a woman's duties.

59 "O mezhdunarodnom zhenskom dne 8 marta," Pravda, 6 March 1946.

60 "Mezhdunarodnyi zhenskii den'," Pravda 7 March 1948.
to provide food for her family. Single people who lived in factory dorms often could not cook and had to rely on canteens. A woman who worked could not be expected to cook while she was at work, but there was no reason that she could not cook and shop for her family during her off hours. Therefore, factory and dorm canteens were necessities, but apartment dining halls were considered superfluous.

Resistance to the idea that women should not have to cook for their families was strong. Rabotnitsa reminded the reader that dining halls were an important service for busy mothers who had to work, raise children, and keep house and called for women to be freed from the yoke of the kitchen, suggesting that more prepared food should be available. In a later issue, it showcased a cafeteria in Kiev that made partially prepared food for women to take home to their families—women could leave their dishes in the morning, order what they wanted, and then pick up the prepared food after work. Rabotnitsa argued that this service could be mechanized, pointing out that it would greatly improve support for workers’ families and asserting that this service should be available in every enterprise and public dining hall. Unfortunately, the article reported, many directors did not want to provide prepared food, feeling that they were only responsible for

feeding workers during their shift and that they should not have to provide food for the entire family.62

Despite its pro-natalist stance, the state was much more committed to feeding single people than helping to provide for families. A 1949 article in Pravda discussed this attitude and asserted that although women wasted much time preparing food for their families, the state had done nothing to build canteens that would ease their burden. According to this article, the state was so concerned with feeding single people that it had no time to consider the needs of families.63 This author went on to complain that the few prepared foods that had been available in stores before the war had not yet reappeared. If the Ministries governing food and products would place a greater emphasis on providing mass support facilities for families of workers, this article asserted, they could accomplish much in a few months. The charge that the state was concerned primarily with the needs of single people indicates that where a wife or mother was present, the state saw no need for further help—"supermoms" were able to work and care for their families. Despite the propaganda campaign on state support for mothers, single childless women who


lived in dorms were, in fact, often better supported than working mothers.

The system of communal food service was so profoundly flawed that it was difficult to find one organization or group to blame. Moskovskii bol'shevik suggested that low political consciousness among workers in communal dining facilities was the root of the problem rather than lack of resources, and advised the party, union and komsomol organizations to improve factory dining halls by conducting political work among cafeteria workers and listening to factory workers to get their input. The problem was not, apparently, poorly skilled workers, but apathetic workers who did not care enough about the political significance of providing good communal services. This author was sure that if the importance of their work were explained to them, the workers would begin to produce better quality food. More common sense solutions to the problem, such as replacing poor managers with more qualified people or requiring the cooks and servers to undergo intensive training, received no attention in this article.64 Rabotnitsa, on the other hand, blamed factory directors, not apathetic workers, for poor communal services. In 1950, it published a short story about a woman who stood up in a meeting and pointed out that directors of enterprises too often did nothing to

64"Zavodskaiia stolovaia," Moskovskii bol'shevik 23 October 1948.
ease women's burden. She demanded that such directors be replaced with people who would attack this problem.65

Unions also had ideas to improve dining facilities. In 1945, the Union of Workers in Communal Services noted that the Fourteenth Plenum of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council had paid a lot of attention to the issue of public food services and demanded that the union organizations improve and develop food service for the workers. The union reported that its committees were improving the quality of food in cafeterias and taking steps to see that workers got a good lunch. They called on the union's Commission for Worker Support to demand that cafeterias quickly, attentively and politely serve their clients.66

In many cases, however, the unions simply complained about poor food service and found someone to blame for it. For example, in 1946 at the Twentieth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Union of Workers in Public Food Services, a delegate noted that consumers were making new demands on the workers in communal dining facilities. Customers wanted better prepared food, better service, greater comfort and nicer decor. He argued that the communal services were losing customers because they failed to live up to these higher expectations and not


66GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1132, l. 19.
because people had more private gardens, as the communal dining workers claimed. He noted that when consumers were questioned, they responded that they could cook better and tastier food at home and keep the leftovers for later consumption. This was a more economical use of their ration cards than eating in the cafeterias where the food was poor and they received less of it for the same ration points. This speaker insisted that consumer demands should be considered and their complaints addressed in order to improve communal dining halls.\(^67\) The head of the Section of Cadres of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council was more direct in his condemnation of the poor quality of work in the communal services industry and concentrated on blaming workers and leaders for poor sanitation, supplies and organization.\(^68\)

Although problems with dining facilities received the most attention in the press, another equally difficult problem for women was laundry. This issue was not discussed very widely, but *Rabotnitsa* attacked the problem in 1950, prompted by a new resolution from the Soviet of Ministers on increasing production of labor-saving appliances for the home, which called for more communal laundries and the production of washing machines for apartment buildings. It also required production of 5000 electric motors for large washing machines to put in

\(^{67}\)GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(2), l. 156-157.

\(^{68}\)Ibid., l. 177-181.
Rabotnitsa admonished that too many directors had ignored the need for more laundry facilities and called on the women deputies to the Supreme Soviet to work hard to make sure that directors carried out this resolution. Three months later, the magazine reported that although some ministries were fulfilling the resolution, others were falling behind. In later years, Rabotnitsa reported that attempts in the Ukraine to develop mechanized washing machines were not going well because the factory directors did not believe that women would use the machines. The Kharkov city committee on women's activities had to demand that directors fulfill the plan for the washing machines. The article called for more laundries to be opened all over the country and described how a communal laundry would operate.

The Central Committee of the Sewing and Knitting Union reported to the Secretariat of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council that conditions were very poor for workers living in the dorms. Despite the fact that it was forbidden to do laundry in a bathhouse, some baths had to be used as laundries because no laundries had been provided. Some enterprises had laundries, but they were of

very small capacity and could not meet worker demand. Usually workers ended up washing linens in hallways, kitchens and living quarters. This report suggested that the dormitories should provide washing machines for linens in order to improve women's lives.\textsuperscript{72}

Pravda pointed out that women suffered hardship doing the laundry, claiming that there had been many washing machines and laundries before the war, and it was time to provide them again. It gave the example of a large textile combine that had only one room with hot water as its laundry for the workers, so that women wasted a lot of energy washing clothes by hand. The article asserted that factory directors ignored this problem, which could easily be solved with washing machines, and suggested that the state begin producing cheap and convenient individual washing machines for dorms and apartment buildings instead of heavy complex machines for factories.\textsuperscript{73}

Washing machines were only one labor-saving device that women needed—the state did not produce refrigerators either. Since women had no place to store their food, they had to shop and cook every day—particularly in the summer. Pravda pointed out that refrigerators would not only free women from shopping so often, they would improve hygiene and sanitation. The article insisted that industry could and should resolve the problem of producing

\textsuperscript{72}GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 65.

\textsuperscript{73}Kozlova, "Nekotoryi voprosy."
refrigerators to meet wide demand.\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Rabotnitsa} also called for production of more labor-saving devices, claiming that although many industry managers and directors had considered these items to be of secondary importance, "It is time to understand that the further growth of our women, the still more impressive flourishing of their creative strength and organizational talents depends a great deal on significantly easing women's labor in the family." To this end, the article stressed the need to produce labor-saving devices— from such basic items as dish brushes, dish drainers and mops to vacuum cleaners, irons, and a "universal cooking machine," which had gadgets that would knead dough, mince meat, chop vegetables, grind coffee, stuff sausages, cut dough, and beat eggs.\textsuperscript{75}

In all these articles, the authors argued that the state was not doing enough to help its women workers, but there was no suggestion that men could do something to help out at home. No "superdad" image appeared to complement the "supermom." Articles on raising children perpetuated the division of labor in the home, stressing that girls should learn household chores at an early age. One article in \textit{Sem'ia i shkola} outlined the necessity for girls to be good housekeepers:

\begin{quote}
Our Soviet girls should know how to sew, embroider, prepare dinner, wash dishes, wash clothes, clean
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75}"Bol'shaia zabota," p. 12-13.
floors and, in general, understand how to do all housework. For our girls there is no limit to their cultural growth. Equally with men, they can choose any profession and perfect themselves in any job. But we have one area of life, which mothers should continually remember. Every girl is a future mother, family organizer and rearer of children. Girls need to know much in order to fulfill this high calling and within this knowledge an important place is occupied by practical skills, without which a girl feels herself tied by the hands and feet as soon as she begins an independent life."

In another article, a mother of eight discussed the importance of teaching all children household skills—her girls could sew and darn while the boys knew how to repair various household items. In this family, the boys "helped" the girls prepare dinner—indicating that the girls actually knew how to cook, while the boys simply followed instructions. Propaganda did not encourage men to help at home, but instead continued to stress the "marriage" between women and the state as embodied in the state’s contract to free women from household drudgery and to help her fill the multiple roles that made up the Soviet "supermom" model. The state turned out to be another deadbeat father—rather than actually providing support services, it used propaganda to express its recognition of women’s needs and to suggest to women that the state was doing something to help them. Having established the state as an advocate for support

76A. P. Semenova, "Pis’ma chitatelei," Sem’ia i shkola January 1948, 35.

facilities, articles would then go on to blame nameless "directors" for the poor quality of existing services and the slow pace at which new ones were being built. In reality, however, the state continued to do little to minimize women's household duties, and the press usually relegated these discussions to the Women's Day issues, when articles pointed out that the state already did much to help women and briefly called for increased support for women in order to raise their productivity.78

Despite the sketchy coverage in the press, state and union bodies recognized that problems with communal services were widespread. These services experienced many of the same problems that plagued child care and housing but were also an even lower priority both for the state and for enterprises. Communal facilities required more equipment and supplies than child care, which only needed space and personnel in order to organize very rudimentary but functional facilities. Mechanized laundries required buildings with special plumbing, machines, and skilled workers. Dining halls also required special equipment and

workers as well as adequate food supplies. Producing labor-saving devices for the home diverted production supplies from other industries that had a higher priority. As exemplified by the housing shortage, building space was at a premium during this period and supply and production problems were a constant worry for the state. Since women could not be expected to work well if they were worried about unsupervised children, child care was a necessity, but the cares of housework could be put aside while women worked without endangering their families. Dining halls and laundries were not vital to productivity and they were difficult to supply, so they had a much lower priority than child care.

The provision of communal services also bogged down in the bureaucratic shuffle. For example, in 1945 the Presidium of the Central Committee of Workers in Communal Services developed a series of practical measures to improve workers' lives, which included organizing a housing fund, improving medical support for workers, increasing places in kindergartens, and building new stores.\footnote{GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(1), l. 12.} According to the 1946 report on living conditions in the Shetruskii peat enterprise, these measures were never implemented. Aside from the terrible conditions in the dorms and absence of laundry facilities, the food in the cafeterias was all of one type and did not taste good. Furthermore, there were not enough places for

\footnote{GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1185(1), l. 12.}
everyone to sit, so workers carried food to the dorms in dirty pots to eat it there. To make matters worse, there were not enough spoons in the cafeteria—there were plenty of spoons in the storehouse, but the head of the dorms pointed out that there were spoons in the stores too, and the workers could go and buy their own.80

The investigators for this report followed the same pattern that the brigades on housing had used. They documented the problem, found one petty bureaucrat to blame, and then suggested that some other organization—in this case, the union's committees on workers' lives—call for improved conditions. As usual, no action was suggested—the brigade simply charged the union with the task of charging another group with the task of issuing demands for improvements. Herein lies the heart of the bureaucratic shuffle—no organization took direct action, and, indeed, no organization was supposed to take action. This brigade was so dedicated to maintaining inactivity that it did not even suggest replacing the spoon-hoarding dorm director. The problem with the spoons also reflects one of the primary causes of poor living conditions in this period—apathetic bureaucrats who deliberately withheld goods and services from the public—and got away with it.

The language that speakers used was an integral part of the bureaucracy's inaction. One speaker at the

80GARF f. 5451, op. 25, d. 1582, l. 37.
Presidium of the Central Committee of Workers in Communal Services said that during the war, cooks had forgotten how to prepare sauces which would add flavor to the food and called for this issue to be "raised in all areas to improve the flavor of dining hall food."81 Another speaker was the only one to mention the important point that 80 percent of workers in communal food service were women, whose lives were most affected by poor communal services. He suggested that they needed to improve the lives of these women in order to improve the quality of their work and called for the union's Central Committee to "bring the necessity of providing for the daily needs of the workers in food service to the directors' attention."82 In both cases, after clearly and directly pinpointing a problem in the industry, the speakers switched to more ambiguous speech when discussing possible solutions. Instead of a straightforward demand for cooks to begin using sauces or for more support facilities for women workers in the communal services industry, both speakers simply suggested that these issues be discussed or brought to someone's attention. Undoubtedly, these speakers were aware that no resources would be diverted to communal services for the purposes of training cooks or improving support facilities within the industry. The suggestion that these issues be raised "in all areas" or

81 Ibid., l. 158-159.
82 Ibid., l. 185-186.
be "brought to the directors' attention" was an easy way to dump the problem in another's lap and avoid calling for obvious, albeit impossible, solutions.

Poor support facilities affected all women, but in most cases, union delegates concentrated primarily on the problems of people living in dorms. Since dorms were the responsibility of unions and factory directors, it is not surprising that the delegates were more concerned with dorm conditions than with the living conditions of their workers who lived in apartments. Despite the fact that apartment dwellers were less likely to attract official attention, it is clear that their living conditions were not much better than those in dorms. While people who lived in apartments could cook for themselves, and so escape some of the worst canteen food, the housing shortage meant that most people were crowded in communal apartments with a shared kitchen, no laundry facilities, and often without the option of even poor dining hall food.

While union bosses discussed the lack of good communal services and issued endless calls for more meetings on the subject, women coped daily with the lack of communal facilities and the absence of labor-saving devices. Most of the women interviewed had some access to communal
dining services at work. Schools, however, only provided the poorest children with meals, so most children either had to take a lunch or wait to eat when they got home. Alla said that there was no hot food available at work, so she would snack on "dry food" during the day. Her husband ate at his cafeteria. Ira, a student, said that she always prepared lunches for her husband and herself to take with them. A couple of students remembered that during the first years after the war, they did not have enough money to buy lunch in the cafeteria, so they would go to a store and get 100 grams of sausage or a loaf of bread to eat. Galia who lived in the dorms at MGU said that at first the food in the cafeteria was pretty good, but it got worse, and they began to shop in stores and to cook for themselves. Anna reported that there was no cafeteria in the dorm at her asphalt institute, so the students would pool their resources and cook over a barbecue in the street. In this case, all the

83 Katia, interview with author, 29 March 1993; Galia, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Daria, interview with author, 8 April 1993; Lilia, interview with author, 16 April 1993.

84 Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993; Marta, interview with author, 24 April 1993.

85 Interview with author, 5 April 1993.

86 Interview with author, 9 May 1993.

87 Tania, interview with author, 16 March 1993; Sasha, interview with author, 4 April 1993.

88 Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
students cooked together—men and women. She remembered these daily picnics as jolly parties with the other students and, in retrospect, did not see the absence of a cafeteria as a hardship. In the mornings, the girls would pool their resources and make breakfast together.\textsuperscript{89}

All of the married and some of the unmarried women said that they were solely responsible for cooking all meals not taken in a cafeteria. Alla said that she always prepared enough food to last for three days.\textsuperscript{90} Mariia said that since they did not have a refrigerator, she could only make enough food for one extra day.\textsuperscript{91} Two women lived with other women—Daria with her mother and sister and Lilia with other female students—and in these situations, everyone shared the cooking and housework.\textsuperscript{92} Men did not cook. Natasha said that she and her husband were both students, but they decided that it was more important for him to finish his degree first, so he studied all the time and did no work around the house. She said that she got along well with the other families in their apartment, and the other women would often try to

\textsuperscript{89}Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
\textsuperscript{90}Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
\textsuperscript{91}Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
\textsuperscript{92}Interview with author, 8 April 1993; interview with author, 16 April 1993.
help her by doing some shopping for her or by preparing extra food for them.\textsuperscript{93}

Elena, who lived with her mother, an uncle and her husband, said that she did not know how to cook before she was married. Her mother, a dedicated worker who did not believe in wasting time preparing fancy dishes, taught her daughter only very rudimentary cooking. After Elena married, her husband taught her how to cook more interesting food. When asked why he did not do the cooking himself, she responded that he felt it was her job to cook for him.\textsuperscript{94} These last two women, one a graduate student in history and the other a factory worker, divorced these men who expected their wives to wait on them. Neither woman admitted that they divorced their husbands for this reason, but Natasha implied that her husband was just too self-centered to live with comfortably. Elena said that her mother resented the fact that her husband expected his wife to wait on him, and their constant fighting over the wife's role caused serious problems in their marriage.

Men did not do housework either. All of the women who had husbands or fathers at home said that the men studied, drank, read or slept while their wives took care of the

\textsuperscript{93}Interview with author, 3 March 1993.

\textsuperscript{94}Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
family.\textsuperscript{95} Only Katia, the doctor, had a nanny who also did all of the housework.\textsuperscript{96} A couple of women used communal laundries. Alla remembered using a laundry for linens after 1949, but said that they were not available before that time. She said that laundries cleaned linens well and were not expensive, but she would not trust them to wash clothes without destroying them.\textsuperscript{97} Lilia said that there were no laundries after the war because the reconstruction did not include support facilities but concentrated on factories, the metro, farms and construction.\textsuperscript{98} Two women had laundresses who came in and did the heavy laundry for them.\textsuperscript{99} Elena took in laundry to make extra money, and did it all by hand.\textsuperscript{100} Sofiia talked about the difficulty of doing laundry in a communal kitchen.\textsuperscript{101} Mariia said that the women in her apartment had a schedule for laundry—she did hers on Monday, another woman on Tuesday, etc. They would wait for

\textsuperscript{95}Sasha, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993; Sofiia, interview with author, 19 April 1993; Elena, interview with author, 7 May 1993.

\textsuperscript{96}Interview with author, 29 March 1993.

\textsuperscript{97}Interview with author, 5 April 1993; Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{98}Interview with author, 16 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{99}Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993; Marta, interview with author, 24 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{100}Interview with author, 5 May 1993.

\textsuperscript{101}Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
everyone to go to sleep and lock the kitchen door in order to do the laundry without interruption.\textsuperscript{102} The wet clothes and linens would then be hung in the apartment to dry.

These women all described long days filled with work, shopping, standing in lines, cooking, cleaning, laundry and child care. They were united in their dismissal of both communal services and men as partners in their efforts to care for their children. The state had more pressing needs to consider than women's double burden, while men were simply not expected to care for the home or children. By maintaining the public fiction that it provided support services for women, the state could justify imposing the conflicting roles of worker and mother on women and continue to expect women to fulfill these roles. Women accepted these additional duties as a part of their natural function—they showed no signs of resentment that the state and their men took for granted their enormous contributions as workers, mothers and housekeepers.

The contradiction between how life was and how life was supposed to be affected women's lives profoundly. Conflicting duties to the state and family, combined with economic and social pressures, shaped women's lives, consciousness and relationships in ways which the state did not foresee or desire. Rather than a "supermom,"

\textsuperscript{102}Interview with author, 13 April 1993.
capable of working, raising a family, and being socially active, the postwar Soviet woman never felt that she did anything completely or fulfilled any of her responsibilities adequately. Women were exhausted and distracted by the many roles they played, affecting their performance at work and at home.

Housing and communal facilities suffered from the same problems as child care—bureaucratic incompetence and confusion, lack of supplies and apathy on the part of the people who were supposed to provide these services. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union was the only country that attempted to provide housing and services for its population on this scale, the press spent little time on these issues—the campaign for better support facilities and more labor-saving devices fizzled out fairly quickly, unlike the child care campaign, which kept going strongly throughout the period. The bureaucrats attacked the housing problem more consistently than most, possibly because it affected everyone, not just women. But the lack of funding, the diversion of all possible resources to heavy industry, and the bureaucratic paper mill all contributed to the failure of efforts to improve housing and social services. Women dealt with the deficiencies in the system as best they could. The daily frustrations of living in overcrowded apartments and the added burden of cooking and cleaning in primitive
conditions took its toll in the form of divorce, family arguments and an exhausted female work force.
CHAPTER VII
Health Care and Abortion

The state articulated its pro-natalist policy most clearly and supported it most effectively in the area of health care. While this campaign ostensibly covered all aspects of health care, its primary purpose was to promote reproduction, and it quickly centered on the areas of gynecology and pediatrics. In order to increase the birth rate, the Ministry of Health mobilized its resources to build more obstetric/gynecology clinics, maternity clinics, sanitoria, and women's and children's clinics. Through these institutions, the Ministry hoped to register all women of child-bearing years in some medical facility. Registration served two purposes: women who received regular gynecological care had better chances of detecting pregnancy early and, with prompt medical attention, carrying the baby to term; secondly, by keeping an eye on all women through these clinics, the medical community could monitor patients for underground abortions and either prevent the latter or catch those who had them. The medical community, therefore, provided aid and support for women while acting as a spy network for the public prosecutor. While this covert and paternalistic role created problems for medical workers both in their
relationships with patients and with justice organs, health care itself suffered from the universal problems of under-funding, staff shortages, and lack of equipment and supplies.¹

As with the other support networks, health care facilities could be provided in two ways—either directly through the Ministry of Health or through enterprises. The Ministry preferred to shift responsibility for health care to industry whenever possible, and consequently, enterprises that employed many women were required to provide gynecological help and education for their employees.² As for the other support services—childcare and communal services—the press acted as the chief de facto advocate for increasing and improving health care for women. These other services, however, lacked a clear single sponsor, and consequently, state and union organizations passed the responsibility for them back and forth between themselves, accomplishing very little. Although unions and local committees were expected to provide some health care facilities, the Ministry of Health had no other purpose but to provide health care. This fact alone demonstrates the importance that health care enjoyed in the state's priorities. With this kind of

¹Records from the Ministry of Health, GARF f. 8009, op. 22.

²Records from the Central Committee for the Textile Union, GARF f. 5457, op. 25, d. 132 and the Central Committee for the Textile Union, GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455.
support behind it, the health care campaign was more successful than others, but it still fell far short of the country’s needs. The health care facilities that did exist were often inadequately supplied and staffed, and the health care providers were often very insensitive to women’s needs or feelings. Furthermore, women suffered even more from incompetent treatment, which affected their decisions about pregnancy and child rearing and, consequently, their choices concerning marriage and sex.

Despite their shortcomings, health care facilities for women and children carried a high priority in the postwar reconstruction. In September 1945 the Presidium of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council issued a directive that called for all central, oblast, factory and local committees to use the assigned budget of state money for social insurance for rest homes, sanitoria and medical food, for the support of children, and for material aid to members of the union. It also required these committees to work with health organizations to increase the number of polyclinics, hospitals and health points, to increase the number of rest homes and sanitoria for workers, and to strengthen control to fulfill the 1944 Family Law.3 A statement from the United Plenum of the Soviets of Health Protection for Children, Newborns and Gynecology of

3"Ob usilenii raboty profsoiuznykh organizatsii v oblasti uluchsheniia uslovii truda, bytovogo i kul’turnogo obsluzhivaniia rabochikh i sluzhashchikh," Trud 7 September 1945.
Narkomzdrav (Commissariat of Health) of the USSR and RSFSR announced measures to fulfill the 1944 Family Law by increasing the network of health organizations for children and newborns and improving medical support for women and children.⁴

Both unions and the Ministry responded to these calls. The Ministry reported that in 1946 there were thirty-three maternity clinics and only .32 gynecological beds available in Moscow for every 1000 women.⁵ In January 1946 Vecherniaia Moskva reported on the great efforts to build maternity clinics in Moscow in the preceding year and promised that three more would open up with 600 places that year.⁶ In addition to this, the Ministry of Health planned to build at least two gynecology hospitals and several centers to fight infertility and to increase efforts to improve medical care for children and pregnant women.⁷

Unlike other plans for support facilities, these efforts apparently succeeded. In 1951 Bolshevik counted 6570 women’s clinics with 112,520 beds for pregnant women in the country,⁸ surpassing the 77,000 birthing beds,

⁴"Pomoshch' detiam i materiam," Trud 21 November 1945.
⁵GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 87, l. 53, 7-8.
⁷Ibid.
⁸"O rabote partniinykh organizatsii sredi zhenshchin," Bol'shevik, January 1951:12.
which the fourth Five Year Plan had promised by 1950.9 Meditsinskaia sestra also reported 63,061 birthing beds in cities in the USSR in 1947 and 38,454 in the countryside and claimed that in 1947 nearly 25% of the total health care budget, or four billion rubles, had been assigned to organizations for the protection of mothers and children.10 As early as 1948, Moscow managed to reach prewar numbers of birthing beds and surpassed prewar levels of women’s and children’s clinics with 128 in 1940 and 144 in 1948.11 The journal Akusherstvo i ginekologia reported in 1950, that the number of birthing beds in all cities had almost reached prewar numbers. It also stated that much research was being done in gynecology, that the state was spending more money on improving the health of women and children, and that more doctors were being assigned to gynecology.12 In 1953, Meditsinskaia sestra promised that the fifth Five Year Plan would increase hospital beds by at least 20 percent, sanitoria places by

9"Zakon o piatiletniia plane bosstanovleniia i razvitiiia narodnogo khoziaistva RSFSR," Trud 27 June 1946.


11"Okhrana materinstva i detstva," Moskovskii bol’shevik 13 August 1948.

15 percent and rest homes by 30 percent. Rabotnitsa reported that the sewing and knitting unions had six rest homes and sanitoria in 1953 and forty-one night infirmaries where women could rest and receive medication without missing work. This article claimed that these institutions serviced 27,000 people each year. The industry reportedly spent twenty million rubles a year on these health care facilities.

Clinics and hospitals constituted only one facet of the health care campaign. In order to increase a newborn's chances of survival, the Ministry instituted a network of milk kitchens, which served milk, kefir and cereals to children whose mothers could not nurse, or older children whose parents could not buy milk. A 1946 article reported on the construction of milk kitchens and donation centers for breast milk. In 1941 there had been twenty-three such places in Moscow serving 60,000 children and by 1946 they served 64,000 children. In the country as a whole, milk kitchens gave out 411,807,000 portions in cities and 22,446,900 in the countryside to children under two years of age in 1946. The Ministry of Health reported that 174 metric tons of breast milk had been collected and disbursed in 1947 in the Soviet Union, and that twenty-one


14Anna Igupina, "Zabota o zdorov'ye trudiashchikhsia," Rabotnitsa, January 1953:14

15Grechichnikova, "Zabota sovetskogo gosudarstva."
milk kitchens distributed 38.5 tons of milk to 76,000 young Muscovites, or two times more than in 1940. The widespread use of these milk kitchens not only helped poorer women, they also enabled women who knew they could not nurse to have children. In addition, poorer women who could lactate could sell their breast milk either to the milk kitchens or privately to wealthier women who could not nurse their babies. In an interview, one woman claimed that she made six rubles a bottle for the milk that she sold to a relative who could not nurse her son. The removal of this obstacle to having babies was certainly a boon to women who could not nurse, but it also eliminated inability to nurse as a recognized excuse to have a legal abortion. Women who petitioned for an abortion on these grounds could be refused an abortion and directed to the milk kitchens or a wet-nurse.

The health care campaign also encompassed medical personnel. As of 1947 there were 152,273 doctors in the USSR and of these 18,028 were pediatricians. There were 508,142 middle level medical personnel and of these 32,587 worked in nurseries. The Ministry of Health records reported that in Moscow oblast alone there were 310 obstetrician/gynecologists in 1946 as opposed to the 341

16"Okhrana materinstva i detstva," Moskovskii bol'shevik 13 August 1948.

17Interview with author, 7 May 1993.

18Zborovskaia, "Okhrana materinstva," 5-7.
there had been in 1940. They had surpassed prewar levels of midwives with 1548 in 1946 as opposed to 1472 before the war. A 1949 article in Akusherstvo i ginekologija said the 1944 Family Law gave gynecologists the task of developing future protection for mothers and children by organizing birth help and improving gynecological health. They must set up maternity clinics, gynecology clinics, rest homes for pregnant women, and so on. Akusherstvo i ginekologija reported in 1950 that much research was being done in gynecology, the state was spending more and more money on improving the health of women and children, and more doctors were being assigned to gynecology.

Despite the emphasis on improving services in the postwar period, medical facilities were nevertheless grossly inadequate and often of poor quality. Reports from unions as well as the Ministry of Health complained of the lack of bedspace. The Ministry of Health report for the Kievskii district in 1950 stated that the maternity clinic was overcrowded by 15-20 percent. The brigade for the Stalinskii district reported that women who needed to go into a hospital for gynecological care often had to wait fifteen to twenty-five days to get a

19 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 87, l. 54.

20 "K piatiletiyu ukaza prezidiuma Verkhnogo Soveta SSSR ot 8 iulia 1944 g.," Akusherstvo i ginekologija 4 (1949):3-4.

21 Smirnov, "Zadachi organov," p. 4.

22 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, 171.
bed. It went on to say that no industry had a fully equipped gynecology office.23 The Krasnopresnenskii district also reported a shortage of beds in Gynecology Clinic No. 4, which had sixty-six beds but housed 100 women.24 The sewing union reported in 1950 that the union’s control over the work of medical institutions for women and children was not adequate and needed to be improved.25 In 1945 the Central Committee of the Textile Union stated that the medical facilities, in particular the maternity clinics, children’s clinics and milk kitchens, in the Kostroma linen enterprises and the Saransk hemp enterprises were so poor that they should be closed down.26 The textile industry reported in 1950 that out of 353 enterprises with over 300 workers each, there were 263 health and medical clinics and only ninety-four were equipped to deal with women’s illnesses. For the women in the rest of the enterprises, there were regional women’s clinics which periodically sent doctors to them to do preventive exams. This industry sent 133 women to rest homes for pregnant women in 1949.27

In spite of the Ministry’s efforts and the propaganda that Soviet health care was the best in the world, there

23Ibid., l. 124, 128.
24Ibid., l. 113
25GARF 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 59.
26GARF f. 5457, op. 25, d. 132, l. 10.
27GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 58.
was still a significant amount of press on the problems in this area. While doctors had decreased the number of post-natal deaths in recent years, some maternity clinics still had high levels of post-natal sickness and death. One article blamed doctors, charging that they did not always fully register pregnant women or adequately examine them, that they recognized difficult pregnancies too late and did not hospitalized these women early enough, that they examined pregnant women and collected their case histories too quickly and therefore did not spend enough time with them before birth, and that they did not pay attention to signs of post-natal illnesses. Furthermore, this article claimed that often the simplest things that could pinpoint possible problems were not done, giving the example that a woman with a narrow pelvis could be easily spotted with an external examination and measurements. The article charged that one of the most common reasons for doctor's mistakes was that gynecology was neglected in the medical institutions, which assigned the poorest teachers to this field. 28

Doctors were attacked on several fronts. Akusherstvo i ginekologiya argued that heretofore, obstetricians had seen the health of the mother as their main concern, but they needed to direct their attention to the children as well and decrease death and sickness in newborns. This article then went on to take the unusual position that it

was also important not to forget about the health of women as women. Women’s health, it argued, was not limited to the sphere of obstetrics. It suggested that the most important questions of gynecology were malignant growths and inflammatory illnesses in women’s sexual organs and endocrine disorders. This article contended that obstetricians should continue to use time-honored methods but should not be afraid to try new methods—like those of Pavlov.  

The Ministry of Health also planned to raise the qualifications to become a gynecologist and to train more doctors in gynecology.  

Certainly not all doctors were competent. Tania was sent to the hospital when she was pregnant, because she had had a "miscarriage" a few years earlier. She accidentally got into the line of women waiting to have their wombs "cleaned out" after a miscarriage or abortion. When her turn came the doctor asked if she wanted to keep the baby. When she responded in the affirmative, the doctor called a student over and explained to the student that Tania had a "dead womb," and invited all the other students over to examine her. They asked her if she wanted to be cleaned out then or wait until the next day. She asked to wait and was placed in a ward for the night.

30Ibid., p. 4.
31See pages 244--246.
The next morning a doctor came in to examine the women, and asked Tania why she was crying. Tania explained that her "womb was dead." The doctor examined her and told her that her womb was not dead, her baby was fine. They moved her into another room where "everything was normal." When asked how a doctor could mistake a live fetus for a dead one, especially when the Ministry of Health was so concerned with the birth rate, she replied that since this doctor only dealt with abortions, "she could not recognize anything else." She added that these doctors had not wanted to work in gynecology and were sick of seeing terrified women all day.  

In other words, the doctors were apathetic about their work or were angry at being forced to go into gynecology and so took out their frustrations on their patients.

In answer to the calls to improve gynecological care, the Ministry of Health set down new guidelines in 1950. Their broad goals were to reorganize clinics; raise doctor's qualifications; strengthen management and control over the quality of clinical care; carefully and completely analyze each incident of death of the mother during childbirth, premature births, still births and all other birth-related traumas; involve research institutes and scientific societies in the effort to reorganize and improve qualifications of cadres.  

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32 Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
33 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 209, l. 27.
measures followed, including dates for completion and the organizations responsible for each measure, which ranged from improving doctors' training to conducting mass meetings on the prevention of abortion.

Most of the discussion of women's health centered around preserving her ability to have healthy children. These ranged from cleanliness in the workplace to teaching women personal hygiene to improving the level of obstetric and gynecological medicine. Unions were also concerned with preventative health care as a part of the campaign to improve health conditions in the workplace, and the press joined in voicing concern over sanitation in the workplace. The Central Committee of the sewing and knitting union reported to the secretariat of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council that women in their industry did not have adequate hygiene care, with only 112 personal hygiene rooms in 353 enterprises with 300 or more female employees. Thirty-two of these rooms were established in 1949, but not all were up to standard. This speaker suggested that personal hygiene rooms be provided in dorms with thirty or more women in them to improve the health of the workers. 34 Akusherstvo i ginekologia stressed the need for clean and hygienic bathrooms and personal hygiene rooms for women at work to protect their reproductive organs. These rooms were especially necessary in enterprises where industrial dust

34 GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 65.
could soil the external sexual organs and "introduce infection to the wounded superfices of the menstruating uterus," such as the textile, tobacco, coal and metallurgy industries. The personal hygiene room would enable women to clean this dust off the external sexual organs and thus avoid endangering their ability to have children.35

The Ministry of Health dictated that every enterprise with 300 or more women must have personal hygiene rooms, and it set down specifications for these rooms. Each personal hygiene room was to have at least two stalls with bidets for the women to use. The construction materials, size of rooms, specifications for the bidet and water temperature were also set down by the Ministry. The requirements also stipulated that a nurse be posted in each hygiene room to ensure that the women used it properly and to keep track of each woman’s menstrual cycles so that pregnancy could be spotted early. Finally, the Ministry urged enterprises to keep literature and pamphlets on personal hygiene and health care in these rooms.36 Women and girls were encouraged to use the hygiene room at all times but especially when they were menstruating, during gynecological illnesses, while


pregnant, and after giving birth. In 1950, the Central Committee of the textile union proposed that the law requiring personal hygiene rooms in enterprises with over 300 women on a shift should be changed to include all enterprises.

In addition to the personal hygiene rooms, many factories in the textile industry had night sanitoria. Workers could go to these sanitoria after work and have dinner and attend lectures or discussions on personal hygiene, health care, exercise, and diet; read new magazines and books; or go to the theater or movies and then sleep in the sanitoria. Rabotnitsa reported that there were forty-one factories with night sanitoria in this industry with twenty-five beds each. These sanitoria were economical—workers could get five free passes each year and after that the union would pay two-thirds of the cost. The article reported that one factory's output went up 16 percent after beginning a night sanitarium and ended with the slogan, "Raising health raises productivity!"

In 1950, the sewing union reported that night infirmaries and sanitoria were effective in improving the health of pregnant women workers, largely because women used them.

38 GARF f. 5457, op. 18, d. 912, l. 17.
39 Anna Ilupina, "Zabota o zdorov'e trudiashchikhsia," Rabotnitsa, January 1953:15.
40 GARF f. 5458, op. 23, d. 455, l. 59.
In 1950 the sewing union suggested that to improve support for women in its industry, the Ministry of Health should provide prophylactic gynecological exams for women, require the head of the factory health and ambulance services to keep a list of women with gynecological illness and oversee their treatment, provide systematic health education on women's illness and on the war with abortion, and require the state sanitary inspector to control the building and equipping of personal hygiene rooms. It further suggested that the Institute of the Protection of Labor work with the Institute of Physical Culture to develop a set of exercises for women and youngsters in the textile industry, taking into account the special work in each industry.41

Most of these plans apparently never came to fruition. While some enterprises built personal hygiene rooms, night sanitoria and developed exercise programs for women, most simply did not have the funding for such projects. Since these ventures were financed not by the Ministry of Health but by industrial management, they had to compete with other demands, such as childcare and communal services as well as the basic costs of production. The areas of health care that the Ministry controlled and financed grew at a much faster rate than those that depended on management and union officials.

41Ibid., l. 59-60.
Inefficiency and bureaucracy in health care also came under attack. Immediately after the war, Trud reported that pregnant women had too much bureaucracy to deal with and suggested cutting it back. Later in 1945, a speaker to the All-Union Central Trade Union Council complained that health care was inefficient and that people had to wait too long for health services. This speaker went on to describe one factory where the supplemental income for children was so over-extended that women were on a waiting list that stretched back to 1944. While he said that this was not typical, it demonstrated that Narkomtorg (Commisariat of Trade) and the unions were not doing their jobs well. In 1949 Rabotnitsa called for party and union leaders and managers to make health care less impersonal by visiting new mothers in maternity clinics to congratulate them. One of the women interviewed had a daughter in 1951 and said that conditions in the clinics were very bureaucratic. She added that everyone had to go to clinics on a regular basis to track the course of pregnancies.

As another aspect of the effort to improve health care, the Ministry of Health tried to institute a

42"Narod slavit sovetskikh materei," Trud 8 July 1945.
45Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
widespread educational system to teach women how to care for their own health and to protect their children from diseases. Women's clinics had primary responsibility for the education campaign. Rabotnitsa argued that this work was so important that each worker in a women's clinic office should devote at least twelve hours a month to it. The article went on to suggest that a travelling exhibition of women's clinics should be established to help women learn about hygiene and health.\footnote{iushkova, "Sanitarnoe prosveshchenie," p. 37.} \textit{Vecherniaia Moskva} reported in 1946 that consultation had become a very important part of women's health care in general and of cutting down on sickness during pregnancy in particular.\footnote{Grechichnikova, "Zabota sovetskogo gosudarstva."} Children's clinics disseminated information on nursing babies and taught mothers how to care for nursing children, and nurses went to homes to show mothers the best ways to care for their children.\footnote{Zborovskaia, "Okhrana materinstva," pp. 5-7.} Large enterprises were supposed to have special offices that would answer women's questions about their health, raising children, legal rights as workers and mothers, and conduct sanitary enlightenment work. Fel'dsher i akusherka instructed women's clinics to devote at least twelve hours a month to health education and suggested a travelling
exhibition of women's clinics to help more women learn about hygiene and health.49

The medical press also instructed medical workers on how to counsel women about caring for their children. Meditsinskaia sestra admonished nurses to teach women how to keep their children healthy—to boil children's milk and water; to wash their own hands and their children's hands often, especially before meals; to wash the dishes and glasses that the children used; to wash any toys that children put in their mouths with soap and water; and to kill flies. This article stressed that babies who were nursed got diarrhea less frequently than babies who were not and instructed nurses to advise women to nurse their babies, especially during the summer.50 Fel'dsher i akushherka ran an article on the hazards of the household fly and suggested methods of getting rid of them, instructing obstetricians and nurses to emphasize every mother's duty to kill flies.51 Finally, each clinic should have a bulletin that would include among other things the names of those women who had died from underground abortions and the names of the abortionists.52


Despite all the deficiencies in health care, the press emphasized that Soviet women received better medical care than women anywhere else in the world. Sovetskaia zhenshchina reported that Soviet doctors began using "laughing gas" in delivery rooms in 1935, while only the rich received this pain killer in Great Britain. This article admitted that the production of pain killers for birth had stopped during the war but had started again by the fall of 1945 and ended with the slogan, "Women have the right to a painless birth!"

The quest for a painless birth became an important part of gynecological discussion both in the popular press and in the medical journals. In a discussion in Sovetskaia zhenshchina in 1948 on the use of pain killers during birth, one gynecologist argued that the use of drugs during birth had not been proven to harm either the mother or the child, nor did he believe that the pain aided in contractions as some doctors had argued. He also claimed that even if the contractions were weakened by the drugs, other drugs could be used to stimulate stronger contractions. He recommended laughing gas as the best method for preventing pain with no harm to the mother or child. In 1950, Rabotnitsa reported on a new treatment developed in Kharkov based on the "Pavlovian system."

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53 A. Aleksandrov, "Neomrachennoe materinstvo," Sovetskaia zhenshchina, September-October 1948, 45.

54 "Kak By otnosites' k probleme obezbolevaniiia rodov?" Sovetskaia zhenshchina, September-October 1948, 45.
this method, the doctor simply had to teach women that there would be no pain and also train them to use their muscles correctly during labor. The article claimed that six or seven visits to a prenatal clinic were all that were needed for this method to work effectively and included testimonials from women who had benefited from it. The medical community quickly latched on to the idea that a painless birth could be achieved without drugs, and this theory provided a very convenient excuse for doctors to refuse to use anesthetic during labor, thereby saving this precious commodity for more important procedures.

Medical journals also discussed contraception, but only in the context of women who were medically unfit to give birth. One such article in Fel'dhser i akusherka began with the statement that the state was very concerned with protecting the happiness of motherhood and productive labor of women, but some women, either for a short time during an illness or forever because of medical problems, could not have children without the danger of deformity. These women could obtain legal abortions if they became pregnant, but for some of them it was necessary to prescribe contraceptives in order to protect their health. In September 1949 the Ministry of Health set down the following guidelines for determining who should receive

contraceptives: those with medical reasons to terminate pregnancy; those with a short term need to prevent pregnancy; those convalescing after an illness or operation; those with a physical insufficiency that prevented delivery of the child; and those for whom a pregnancy might endanger the health of an existing child (for example, a nursing baby). 56

The article stressed that the woman should consult with her husband to determine the best form of contraceptive to use and recommended condoms as one of the best and safest forms of contraception, stressing that they did not impair sexual feeling for the man. Couples who could not use condoms could use spermacides—either a commercial spermacide or a douche of a weak solution of vinegar or magnesium. This article also advocated the use of a diaphragm or cervical cap with spermacide, and women were to be instructed to wash their hands before and after inserting the device, to leave it in for eight to twelve hours after sex, to douche with a mild vinegar or magnesium solution before removing it, and to clean it and store it in a sanitary container. They recommended the aluminum cap as the most effective type, primarily because it had to be inserted by a doctor, although a woman could remove it herself. Rubber caps and diaphragms were not considered as effective because women inserted them

56 N. M. Polinovskii, "Prakticheskie sovety," Fel'dsher i akusherka 10 (1950): 43-47.
themselves and did not always do it properly. Although the article did not mention it, the fact that a doctor had to insert this cap also had the obvious advantage of preventing a woman from using this form of birth control after she was deemed medically fit to bear children.

The author also recommended household solutions to prevent pregnancy, such as a quilted tampon dampened with household vinegar, a 2% solution of sour milk or a 1% solution of hydrochloric quinine. He also advocated douching with two teaspoons of vinegar or boric acid in a cup of boiled water or a solution of alum immediately after sex. Another household contraceptive could be made from a paste of cocoa butter, gelatin and glycerin and inserted ten to fifteen minutes before sex. The article admonished that medical workers should warn their patients against withdrawal because it had a harmful effect on the health of both partners. It ended by pointing out that no perfect contraceptive existed and that not all methods were effective for everyone. It also warned that "longterm use of contraceptives is not indifferent for the health of a woman." 57

Clearly contraception presented a threat to the state's pro-natalist policy and was supposed to stay firmly in the control of doctors and nurses rather than women. The official ideology claimed that all women wanted to have children, but the fact that birth control

57Ibid., pp. 43-47.
was held tightly in the hands of the medical establishment indicates that the Ministry of Health suspected that this ideological position was false, and that many women, perhaps most women, would use contraception indiscriminently to prevent pregnancy if it were readily available. Most women did not have access to birth control, however, and even women who qualified for contraception usually could not obtain it.

A report on the Baumanskii district in 1950 cited lack of contraceptives in drug stores as one of the basic insufficiencies of the region. The obstetric/gynecology office in the factory Dorkhimzavod in the Kievskii district did not have contraceptives to give to women who should not get pregnant for medical reasons, and Maternity Clinic No. 3 also provided no contraceptives for these women. The report on the Frunzenskii district concluded that there was not enough education on birth control among women who should not get pregnant for medical reasons. Several of the districts, including the Molotov, Shcherbakovskii, Stalinskii, Proletarskii and Baumanskii reported that only diaphragms and/or condoms were available in extremely limited quantities. Finally, the women interviewed agreed that birth control was

58GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 198.
59Ibid., l. 174, 171.
60Ibid., l. 135.
61Ibid., l. 83, 108, 123, 143 ob, 190.
practically non-existent. Elena said that the only forms available to her were the rhythm method and homemade vinegar douches.62

Contraception clearly demonstrates the gap between the advanced scientific information available to medical personnel and the medical community's ability to provide these services. In this case, the state's pro-natal bias probably interfered with the production and dissemination of effective contraception, but in other areas that should have benefitted from this bias, such as prenatal care—as exemplified by Tania's experience with her "dead womb"—the doctors who actually saw patients were not always equipped with the technical expertise that the Soviet scientific community could have provided. Despite the fact that the state seriously intended to provide good quality health care, the system suffered from the same problems of incompetence and lack of equipment as other communal services. The state was not able to solve the problems with health care without more resources than it was willing to divert to this project, so policymakers also used coercion as a means to raise the birth rate.

Along with the health care campaign, both as a part of it and separately, the Ministry of Health continued the anti-abortion campaign. Abortion had been outlawed in 1936, ostensibly because advances in the standard of living had made it unnecessary—women could now

62Interview with author, 7 May 1993.
comfortably exercise their right to be mothers. Doctors who performed abortions could be sentenced to two years in prison and women who had abortions were subject to high fines after the first offense. The law provided for women to have abortions for certain medical reasons and this list was updated in the postwar period to include: endocrinitis, hypertension, circulatory problems, pulmonary illnesses, ulcers, liver trouble, gall stones, nefritis, single kidney, goiter, diabetes, tuberculosis, imbecility, deafness, psychosis, and thirty-four other conditions. If a woman suffered from one of these conditions, the doctor had to submit her case to a city or regional doctors' commission for review and obtain a permit from the commission before performing the abortion.

Doctors could also recommend that a woman be granted an abortion for other medical reasons if the condition seemed to warrant it. In these cases, the doctor had to submit the file to the republic's central doctor's commission for approval. These commissions were supposed to be formed in all regions of the country and the guidelines for their membership were laid down by the Ministry of Health. Doctor's commissions were ordered to answer every application for abortion within five days.


64GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 238, l. 30-33.
Finally, the doctor had to perform the abortion within forty-eight hours after the commission granted permission. Apparently, the commissions could not always follow the time limits, as a 1951 memorandum to the Presidium of the Soviet of Ministers pointed out that the central commissions took too much time and often granted permission too late to perform the abortion. It argued that the increase in medical personnel enabled the local commissions to handle this responsibility.

To launch the postwar anti-abortion campaign, Narkomzdrav held a meeting to discuss improving measures to combat abortion. The opening speaker observed that abortions decreased during the war but only because conceptions decreased as well. She stated that in Russian cities in 1944, 46.2 percent of all pregnancies had ended in abortion and that in Moscow, 73 percent of all pregnancies were aborted. She concluded that the measures against abortion were inadequate and asked for various agencies to submit ideas to improve them. Another speaker reported that in Moscow there had been 50,000 pregnancies and 16,000 abortions. Of these 5000 had been

65 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 238, l. 24-26.
66 Ibid., l. 43.
67 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 53, l. 1-2. It is not clear whether or not these statistics included legal abortions and miscarriages as well as underground abortions. In any case, these numbers are certainly inaccurate since the state had no way to calculate the number of underground abortions.
criminal abortions and only 2700 of these had been investigated by the authorities.68

Most of the doctors at the meeting cited lack of support from the justice organs as the primary reason for the failure of the anti-abortion campaign. One speaker claimed that the justice organs had no interest in prosecuting women who had criminal abortions. A doctor claimed that he had asked one woman if she had had an abortion and when she responded in the affirmative, he reported it. A month later the prosecutor's office informed him that the woman claimed that he had badgered her into admitting to an abortion that she had not had and that there was no evidence that she had had an abortion. The doctor concluded that the judicial organs did not take doctors' reports seriously and that women knew that they could get away with having underground abortions. Yet another speaker said that he had called an extraordinary commission to look into the abortion problem, but the prosecutor refused to attend. Only one speaker blamed not only the prosecutor but also the poor living conditions which often drove women to have illegal abortions. He believed that most women who turned to abortion did so reluctantly and that improving their material conditions would cut down on the number of abortions.69

68Ibid., l. 4.
69Ibid., l. 4-5.
A representative of the justice organs claimed that the increase in abortion was not only the fault of prosecutors and the abortion commissions—bodies established in each district to investigate cases of illegal abortion. He claimed that many successful underground abortions were never discovered and that it was difficult to prosecute abortions that were reported because of poor communication among medical personnel, the prosecutor and the justice organs. Finally, a representative of the prosecutors charged that the meeting had oversimplified the problem by blaming it all on the justice organs. He claimed that he had data to show that the number of prosecutions for abortion had risen each quarter. At this point, the meeting degenerated into a volley of accusations between the representatives of the justice organs and the doctors, each accusing the other of negligence in prosecuting and reporting illegal abortions.

Some time was spent at this meeting suggesting ways to improve measures against abortion. Speakers called for unions to become more involved in these efforts and demanded that more artists and writers use their talents in the campaign. They also planned to publish more anti-abortion propaganda in Rabotnitsa and Sovetskaia zhenshchina. Another report from the Ministry of Health suggested that the film industry should make movies about strengthening the family and motherhood and contrast good
mothers with women who destroyed their families through abortion.\footnote{GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 172, l. 5ob.-7.}

In fact, very little appeared in the popular press on abortion. Instead, articles concentrated on the other side of the coin, stressing that motherhood was woman's most sacred duty to the state and showcasing the support that mothers could expect from the state. The press may have been seen as a dangerous place to bring up the abortion issue since in 1936, after enacting the ban on abortion, it invited public comment on the issue and received many letters deploring the law.\footnote{Wendy Z. Goldman, Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936 (New York: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1993), 331-336.} After this brief period of discussion, the debate on abortion ended, and discourse on abortion was limited to medical journals.

Fel'dsher i akusherka explored the reasons that women turned to underground abortions. It cited fear of pain during birth, selfishness, false shame, and poor material conditions as the main reasons that "all intertwined in a worried, psychologically unstable woman and forced the decision to abort."\footnote{L. I. Bublichenko, "Ob aborte," Fel'dsher i akusherka 1-2 (1946): 19.} To prevent abortion, however, the journal recommended coercive measures rather than attacking any of the reasons cited. It suggested that medical personnel should carefully register pregnancies

\footnote{Fel'dsher i akusherka 1-2 (1946): 19.}
and watch over pregnant women to prevent them from secretly conceiving and aborting. By watching over pregnant women, the author argued, medical personnel would also be able to direct them to sources of material and legal aid and give them moral support. It also recommended exposure of criminal abortions and prosecution of abortionists—in fact, this author believed that exposure and prosecution of underground abortion were medical workers' highest duties.\(^73\) In a later article, this journal recommended that each women's clinic should post a bulletin that would include the names of women who had died from underground abortions and the names of the abortionists to frighten women away from such dangerous operations.\(^74\)

It is clear that the anti-abortion campaign was a failure. A Ministry of Health report on the entire Soviet Union revealed that in 1949, 93,597 women had been granted permission to have an abortion for medical reasons, and in 1950 109,459 women had been given permission, but this constituted only 10.4 and 9.6 percent of all abortions respectively.\(^75\) In order to discover why the anti-abortion campaign had not succeeded, the Ministry of Health launched investigations into various agencies,

\(^{73}\)Ibid., p. 19.


\(^{75}\)GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 238, l. 87.
including a 1949 investigation of the social law office of Women's Clinic No. 57 and the 1950 investigations into the activities of various districts of Moscow. The reports that the brigades submitted on the Moscow districts did not include the same information for each district so that only a limited amount of synthesis is possible. It is clear, however, that abortion continued to rise in these districts at least until 1950 (see tables 5 and 6).

Table 5
Rate of Abortions in the Baumanskii, Frunzenskii, Leningradskii and Kievskii districts of Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>births</th>
<th>abortions for medical reasons</th>
<th>underground abortions</th>
<th>total abortions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>17096</td>
<td>1492</td>
<td>4229</td>
<td>5721 (33.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>13126</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>4762</td>
<td>6581 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>9959</td>
<td>1411</td>
<td>4453</td>
<td>5864 (58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 185, 130, 163, 88. Statistics for 1949 for the Kievskii district are only for nine months.
Table 6
Abortions as a Percentage of Live Births

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frunzenskii</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proletarskii</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalinskii</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kievskii</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumanskii</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leningradskii</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 130, 108, 121, 163, 184, 88. Statistics for 1949 for the Kievskii district are only for nine months.

The main purpose of these reports was not to tabulate statistics on abortion in the districts, but rather to check on how well health care and justice organs followed the guidelines set down by the Ministry to combat abortion and to find out which strategies worked the best.

The reports indicated that the most effective weapon in the battle against abortion was to register pregnant women as early as possible; to keep a separate and detailed record of all women who had been denied a legal abortion, all women who seemed inclined to abort, and to visit them in their homes to keep an eye on them; and finally to hospitalize any women who were strongly suspected of considering underground abortion and all
women who were inclined to miscarry.\textsuperscript{76} Reports indicate that very few institutions adopted this coercive and intrusive strategy despite its obvious efficacy—-if a woman seemed likely to have an illegal abortion, the best recourse was to tacitly threaten her by visiting her in her home to check up on her. If the woman did not seemed sufficiently impressed by such blatant observation, then she should be placed in a hospital where it would be impossible for her to have an abortion without the knowledge of the medical personnel.

Most of the brigades that investigated the districts of Moscow discovered that medical institutions did not pursue this policy, which required those commodities that were scarcest in postwar Russia—qualified personnel, who could keep track of pregnant women and visit them, and hospital beds.\textsuperscript{77} Only a few institutions were able to implement this strategy. In the Molotov district, nurses visited women who were threatening to have an abortion at home and one maternity clinic reported that all women who manifested inclinations to having an abortion were hospitalized.\textsuperscript{78}

Women’s Clinic No. 60 in the Krasnopresnenskii district, reportedly kept an exact list of women who were pregnant, threatening to have an abortion, had been

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., l. 74–75.
\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., l. 198–199.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., l. 79–86.
refused an abortion, or had incomplete (illegal) abortions, but the brigade complained that the clinic did not follow up on the women who were refused abortions with in-home visits to them, with the result that women were not afraid to have abortions even if they knew that they were on the clinic’s lists.

Table 7
Women’s Clinic No. 60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underground Abortions</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of these, on list</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied Abortion</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of these, aborted</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 111.

The Scherbokovskii district as a whole had a better record with women who were denied an abortion with over seventy percent carrying the baby to term.
Table 8
Scherbokovskii district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant Women</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied Abortion</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of these, aborted</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 140ob.

Other reports gave less detailed information, but it is clear that very few clinics were able to keep track of all the women who might have an underground abortion. The brigade for the Kievskii district found that only one institution, Women's Clinic No. 57, adequately controlled women who threatened abortion.79 The brigade for the Leningradskii district discovered that there were 129 women in the district who were suspected of having abortions. Of these, 123 were hospitalized and they managed to save 102 of these pregnancies. The brigade also reported that in 1947 36.3 percent of the women who were denied an abortion "miscarried," in 1948, 24.5 percent and in 1949, 31.5 percent of women denied an abortion miscarried.80 Only the three social-law offices in the Stalinskii district reportedly kept lists and

79 Ibid., l. 169-170.
80 Ibid., l. 89ob.
conducted visitations of all women who were suspected of wanting an abortion.\textsuperscript{81}

Despite the fact that few medical institutions were able to monitor all such cases, women who were unsure about having children could only avoid detection by staying away from medical clinics, which could endanger their health. Medical personnel understood this problem, and a doctor at the 1945 \textit{Narkomzdrav} meeting argued women would not trust doctors if they knew that the doctors reported to the prosecutor.\textsuperscript{82} Several brigades reported that medical workers were reluctant to become involved in the investigation and prosecution of abortion because they did not want to frighten women away from the medical care that they needed.

The report from the investigation of the social law office of Women's Clinic No. 57 stated that many gynecological hospitals did not refer cases of criminal abortion to the prosecutor, nor did they conduct investigations of women who had obviously had an abortion, because they did not want to frighten women away. The report cited the example of a woman who confessed to giving herself an abortion with a syringe of soap and was sent to the hospital, where the doctors and nurses avoided asking her about the reason for her condition.\textsuperscript{83} The

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., l. 123.

\textsuperscript{82}GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 53, l. 6.

\textsuperscript{83}GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222 l. 76.
report the next year on the Kievskii district indicated the same problem, stating that no organization in the district was willing to take responsibility for abortion prevention, and that women's clinics were particularly reluctant to get involved in abortion issues, because of the justice organs' practice of prosecuting the women rather than the abortionists. As a result, women were frightened away from the clinics, and the brigade reported that 88-90 percent of all women who had underground abortions never appeared on the clinic lists. The clinics had reacted to this problem by no longer reporting cases of abortion to the prosecutor in hopes that women would go back to the clinic.

In 1948-1949 the social law office of Women's Clinic No. 57 investigated 1106 women who had been refused an abortion and they referred only three cases to the prosecutor. Two of these women were convicted of self-induced abortion. At the Sixth Gynecological Hospital in the Proletarskii district, the brigade discovered that out of 8968 "out of hospital" abortions reported in 1948, only 229 were sent to the prosecutor and in 1949 out

84Ibid., l. 77.
85Ibid., l. 74-75.
86In this instance, the term "out of hospital abortions" may include spontaneous miscarriages.
of 7049 reported cases of underground abortions only 336 were sent to the prosecutor. 87

Medical personnel clearly felt that the Ministry expected them to fulfill two contradictory roles in the postwar period. As doctors and nurses, they were expected to care for their patients’ health to the best of their ability. On the other hand, they also functioned as the front line of defense in the war against abortion, which often entailed violating a patient’s trust, thereby discouraging patients from consulting doctors, which placed the health of women of childbearing years at risk. Some medical workers tried to ignore state directives to police their patients, others divorced themselves from their patients’ concerns and interests, treating women who did not carry their babies to term like criminals. Tania described the terrible conditions that women who were undergoing an abortion in a hospital faced.

Women were...they stood before the operation, you know, I can’t tell you more. They were not women but some kind of spirits in awful gray gowns, shaking. We stood before the door and waited our turn, when they would call us. Before this they told us, ‘don’t eat, don’t drink,’ and other things, you know. And they treated women who had abortions so badly. They considered us a type of criminal even. And we [couldn’t] say one word, we couldn’t object, nothing, we were a silent essence, because they could do all sorts of bad things to us, anything they wanted and you couldn’t say anything because you were without rights at that time.

87 GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 99.
88 Interview with author, 16 March 1993.
Tania went to the hospital a few years later for pregnancy complications and saw the women waiting for an abortion. She described the process:

It was a type of mincing machine...you just sat in the hall until you went in the office where they cleaned you out. They didn't ask me if I was there for cleaning out [after a miscarriage or abortion] or for hospitalization. I went into the office. Two women stood there, doctors, ...in bloody, dirty aprons. They had rubber gloves and leggings on. Hastily without anesthetic, without anything, they cleaned [women] out. The woman laid there, contorted and they [the doctors] would talk amongst themselves of household matters.

On this occasion, she spent the night in the hospital, and was mistakenly placed in the ward for women who were waiting for an abortion or waiting to be "cleaned out" after a miscarriage. Since she wanted to keep her child, she was given a bed, those women who were there for abortions had to sleep on the floor. During the night a sixteen-year old girl went into labor:

She was screaming and throwing herself against the wall. I yelled for someone to help her and they looked at me with malice and said she was going into labor. They gave her a stimulant. She was four months pregnant. She had come for her "cleaning out" too late so they gave her something to induce labor. No doctor came to help her and she had to do it alone. She gave birth to a boy—it was dead, of course.

Another woman went into labor that night and no one helped her either. One can only speculate how these experiences affected the lives of these two women who were left in a crowded ward to give birth to their dead fetuses without any help from the staff. Certainly some women would be terrified of pregnancy after this kind of treatment.
Witnessing this experience affected the woman interviewed deeply, and she decided not to have any more children.

So that is what the relationship [of doctors] to women was like. Some people don’t care about sickness, some are like mechanics. But in general the relationship to women, it was terrible of course. The vision of women in heaps under bloody robes has stayed with me all my life and after that I was afraid of marriage and this kind of birth and abortion. I think it’s better not to have a husband, not to have anything ever, only not to undergo that.

The doctor’s commissions, which decided who was and was not eligible for an abortion, also came under fire in the Ministry of Health reports. The brigade reported that the doctor’s commission in the Baumanskii district gave 67 percent of the women who applied for legal abortions permission to have them, and discovered a few cases in which the commission granted permission when it should not have done so.89 The doctor’s commission in the Frunzenskii district in 1948 heard 1604 petitions for abortion of which they approved 911 (56.7 percent) and in 1949, it received 1462 petitions of which 899 (63.5%) were approved. The brigade expressed concern with the rise in abortions as a whole, but also with the increasing number of legal abortions. It suggested that the commission was not properly reviewing applications for abortion.90

Medical institutions were not the only organizations to blame for the failure of the war against abortion. Most of the investigations concluded that the abortion

89GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 222, l. 185-186.
90Ibid., l. 131.
commissions, the organizations that were supposed to investigate and help prosecute incidences of illegal abortion, were not adequate. The abortion commissions were able to investigate only a few cases and the district prosecutors dropped most of these. The Molotov district did not even have an abortion commission to investigate reports from doctors, and the prosecutor for the region took no part in anti-abortion campaign because of the absence of the commission. The medical organizations had referred thirty-four cases for criminal investigation, but the results of these investigations were not available. The brigade for the Proletarskii district found that the abortion commission was inactive and had only been in existence for a few months, and of the 229 cases sent to the prosecutor in 1948, six were dropped, six were prosecuted and the other 217 were labelled inconclusive, and in 1949, 336 cases were reported of which nine were dropped, twelve prosecuted and 315 considered inconclusive. In the Krasnopresnenskii district, the percentage of legal abortions rose 86 percent from 1947 to 1948. The brigade also found that there was no abortion commission in this district so the cases had to be sent to the Sovetskii district. Despite the high numbers of underground abortions, only five cases had been turned over to the prosecutor in 1948 and of these, one

91 Ibid., l. 79-86.
92 Ibid., l. 99.
abortionist was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison "to protect society." In 1949 only four cases were tried and another abortionist was sentenced to seven years prison. The women involved received a public reprimand. In 1948 only three cases of underground abortions were sent to the prosecutor and in 1949 five were referred to the justice organs in the Shcherbokovskii district.

Most of the brigades reported that there was not enough anti-abortion propaganda in the districts. On a more practical note, they also concluded that the absence of contraceptives added to the rise in the abortion rate. Readily available contraception, however would subvert the aims of the anti-abortion campaign, which were to increase the birth rate, but even women who were unable to have children for medical reasons could not obtain effective birth control. The Kievskii brigade noted that the almost complete absence of contraceptives except for condoms led to many unwanted pregnancies and forced women who were medically unfit to have children to turn to legal abortion at least once and sometimes twice a year. Finally, several brigades noted the lack of support facilities for women, particularly child care and housing,

93Ibid., l. 110, 112.
94Ibid., l. 140ob.
96Ibid., l. 198-199, 108, 119
97Ibid., l. 77ob.
and suggested that by better meeting the practical needs of mothers, each district would see a decline in the abortion rate. The report from the Frunzenskii district implied that rather than granting abortions for economic hardship, the district authorities should improve support facilities, especially for single mothers.

District officials and representatives of Ministry of Health were also reluctant to take on the abortion issue, and often tried to avoid it completely. The Baumanski brigade discovered that the raizdravotdel (district health department) did not deal with the abortion issue at all nor did the raiispolkom (district executive committee). In the Leningradskii district, the raiispolkom had refused to deal with the issue of abortion since 1948. The brigade for the Kievskii district reported that the raiispolkom neglected the abortion issue. The exception to this was in the Krasnopresnenskii district where the brigade noted that the anti-abortion campaign was conducted primarily by the raizdravotdel’s obstetrician.

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98 Ibid., l. 77ob, 198-199, 109, 128.
99 Ibid., l. 131.
100 Ibid., l. 186, 196.
101 Ibid., l. 90ob.
102 Ibid., l. 163-175.
103 Ibid., l. 111.
It is not surprising, then that the women interviewed believed that underground abortions happened frequently and several of them had had abortions or knew someone who had had one during this period.\textsuperscript{104} Tania reported that a nurse who had cared for her when she was ill performed "unofficial" abortions at home. One woman died after this nurse performed an abortion and the police searched the nurse’s house and found the rusty instruments she used.\textsuperscript{105} This same woman admitted that she had had a "premeditated miscarriage" the first time she was pregnant, because she had not yet finished her education. She accomplished this by moving a heavy wardrobe around her dorm room until she "spontaneously" aborted.\textsuperscript{106}

Olga, who had been a nurse at the front during the war, said that other nurses performed abortions on one another. She went on to say that women continued to help one another have abortions after the war. Although it was not difficult to get a legal abortion, she said, many women did it themselves, because women who had legal abortions were placed on the sick list at work and then everyone would know what she had done. For this reason,

\textsuperscript{104}Tania, interview with author, 16 March 1993; Sasha, interview with author, 4 April 1993; Mariia, interview with author, 13 April 1993; Sofiia, interview with author, 19 April 1993, Marta, interview with author, 24 April 1993, Elena, interview with author, 7 May 1993.

\textsuperscript{105}Interview with author, 16 March 1993.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.
many women found it better to go to a "black aunt" even though there was much greater risk involved.\footnote{Interview with author, 9 April 1993.}

Sofiia had an abortion in 1950. Her mother was able to find a doctor who performed the abortion for her unofficially. Although her abortion went well, she said that many women died from underground abortions.\footnote{Interview with author, 19 April 1993.} Elena agreed that many women died from illegal abortions—especially those they performed themselves. She described methods of self-induced abortion, including cramming various objects into the vagina to induce miscarriage and scraping out the uterus with a horseradish root. Elena obtained a legal abortion on the grounds that her nerves would not stand the strain of another child.\footnote{Interview with author, 7 May 1993.}

The fact that so many of these women had experiences with illegal abortions indicates that it was not an uncommon practice in Moscow during the postwar period. Most women who wanted to have an abortion either tried to induce miscarriage themselves or turned to other women, the "black aunts" for help. This is one instance where women seemed consciously to turn to one another for assistance. The absence of the male doctor performing a back-street abortion is striking, but not surprising since women comprised 84 percent of public health workers and 76
percent of all physicians by 1950. Despite their attempts to control reproduction, the state simply could not provide enough supplies and medical personnel to police all women all the time. In addition, some doctors apparently resented this aspect of their work and ignored it as much as possible.

The health care and the anti-abortion campaigns illustrate most vividly the state's attempt to control women and to force them to fall in with the state's objectives concerning population growth. The Ministry of Health designed its two-pronged campaign—provision of services combined with legal coercion—specifically to minimize women's reproductive choices. The two parts of this campaign worked simultaneously—a gigantic effort was made to increase and improve health facilities for women and children, and these same facilities were charged with the task of encouraging women to have children, making that possible through good health care and withholding the means of preventing birth, namely contraception and abortion. To top it off, these organizations were supposed to police their clientele for any signs of deviation from state objectives regarding reproduction. Women who showed signs of wanting to prevent or terminate pregnancy were to be watched and, if necessary, hospitalized to prevent them from taking any action that would prevent birth. Few institutions fully implemented

this policy, either because they were already overworked and lacked the resources for such widespread surveillance, or because the doctors found their watchdog function demeaning.

The descriptions of the incredibly callous treatment women received from doctors, supported by documents from the Ministry of Health and articles in the medical press on problems in health care, indicate that medical workers in obstetrics and gynecology were poorly trained, rushed, exhausted and simply uninterested in their work and in the women they treated—despite the fact that most of these workers were women themselves. Although the Ministry of Health did not hand down quotas for the number of babies each institution had to produce, the Ministry and many medical personnel viewed obstetrics and gynecology as part of the production process of reproduction—their job was to make sure that the women were in good working order to produce babies. Women who avoided doing their part were treated like recalcitrant workers and watched, threatened or imprisoned in hospitals until they capitulated by producing a healthy baby. In theory, medical workers were supposed to help women who were medically unfit to bear children by providing them with birth control, but contraceptive devices were very scarce and most of these women were forced to have abortions. Women, however, did not see their reproductive duties in the same light and in the harsh economic environment of the postwar years, they
used devious means to circumvent the Ministry's designs. They found doctors who would give them abortions, induced abortion themselves, used household products to make contraceptives, practiced the rhythm method, or simply abstained from sex. Despite the concerted effort of the Ministry of Health to force women to reproduce regardless of their economic or emotional needs, most women managed to maintain control over their bodies. Some women paid for this freedom with their lives when they turned to underground abortionists, others were publicly reprimanded for their actions. But most women found alternatives to child bearing within the medical community itself or in their own homes. The struggle for control over women's bodies continued throughout this period, demonstrating that it was impossible for the Soviet state completely to control the culture of reproduction.
CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

Despite the fact that state officials knew that the life pictured in propaganda and women's day to day lives were vastly different, they continued to pressure women, both through propaganda and legislation, to be dedicated workers and devoted mothers. The difficulties of postwar life complicated both roles, and these factors all interacted to shape women's relationships with men, mothers, children and neighbors. Women became the heads of families in many instances—certainly in those cases where they were single parents. Men played a small role at home while mothers and mothers-in-law were often valuable, although sometimes irritating, surrogate parents. Fathers were not expected even to take an active part in raising children beyond occasionally helping them with their homework or taking them to a museum.

Women's relationships with men were affected not only by the pressures of postwar life, but also by the fact that women outnumbered men—in 1946 there were 61 million women between sixteen and fifty-nine years of age in the Soviet Union but only 40.1 million men.¹ Katia remembered fierce competition between women for men and

¹Dodge, Women, p. 15.

255
said that even the "legless, armless, and blind men" from the war were "snapped up." Anna said that although three of her friends never married, she had no trouble finding a husband, but she knew that other women "chased" her husband because he was very handsome. She estimated that out of every one hundred men who went to the front out of her age group, only five or ten returned, many of them disabled. Alla argued that competition for men had always existed, but admitted that many women of her generation did not marry. Sofiia said that after the war, most women her age were single. Many of them had lost husbands at the front and did not remarry. Several of the women were young enough that their male cohort did not go to the front, but they were still affected by the "man shortage," because under normal circumstances, they would have married older men—the war meant that they had to look for husbands among their own age group. One of these younger women, Marta, did marry an older man and said that many women of his generation were angry with her for taking one of their scarce men.

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2Interview with author, 29 March 1993.
3Interview with author, 4 April 1993.
4Interview with author, 5 April 1993.
5Interview with author, 19 April 1993.
6Daria, interview with author, 8 April 1993; Lilia, interview with author, 16 April 1993.
7Interview with author, 24 April 1993.
Several women also reported that men had trouble staying in one relationship. Alla and Mariia attributed this phenomenon to men's vagaries, but several women believed that men had extra-marital relationships because women chased them, suggesting that women were responsible for men's infidelity.\(^8\) Katia said that women were searching for husbands, so of course men married more than once.\(^9\) Ira remembered couples who had married at the front. After the war, the man's first wife would show up, and the women would fight over him.\(^10\) Olga, who had been at the front, said that many of her friends married there, only to come home to find that their "husbands" were already married. She talked about one friend in this situation whose first wife refused to let the man go. Since Olga's friend had "married" at the front, she had no official claim on this man and was left to fend for herself and her son with no help from her "husband."\(^11\)

Olga estimated that only 2 percent of the men her age returned from the war, and argued that this changed relations between the sexes, saying that wives would do anything or put up with anything to hold on to their husbands. She claimed that if a woman reported

\(^8\)Interview with author, 5 April 1993; interview with author 13 April 1993.

\(^9\)Interview with author, 29 March 1993.

\(^10\)Interview with author, 9 May 1993.

\(^11\)Interview with author, 9 April 1993.
abandonment to the party, her husband could lose his membership. On the other hand, she also stressed that women "threw" themselves at men, suggesting that the men simply could not help themselves. She said that many women simply decided not to marry in order to avoid these situations—"they lived like nuns." Still, she felt that this decision came with a high price and believed that the more "moral" decision was for single women "to be aggressive" and have children for the future of the country.\textsuperscript{12}

The strained relationships between men and women appeared in the press as well. \textit{Sovetskaia zhenshchina} reported on a case in which the husband sought a divorce because he had met a younger woman. His wife opposed the divorce. In court, the husband offered to let the wife have all their money, their possessions, their apartment and an allowance. A woman on the jury asked the man if that was all his wife deserved after twenty-three years of marriage. The judge found in favor of the wife and forbade the divorce. The author agreed with the judge, arguing that divorce early in a marriage was understandable—people might discover that they just cannot live together—but after twenty-three years, she saw no reason to allow a divorce. The author went on to list a few acceptable reasons for divorce—drunken husband, egotistical wife, or a husband who would not

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}
allow his wife to work. The article ended by admonishing young people to think carefully before they married.13

The man shortage also made the pages of Krokodil. One tongue-in-cheek article purported to be a response to letters from "girls" asking how to succeed in society and "catch a man." It stressed that clothes were the most important consideration, advising women to wear short skirts and high heels. The article also suggested that women would have more time to spend on their appearance if they stopped engaging in useless activities, such as washing their feet—after all, no one would ever see their feet.14 The author apparently believed that women spent too much time worrying about finding a husband. A cartoon showed a secretary hoping to impress her new boss with her womanly wiles. Successive frames showed the secretary buying a new dress, getting a new hair style and buying flowers for the office. In the last frame the new director appeared and turned out to be a woman.15 Both of these pieces poked fun at women's attempts to ensnare men and hinted that these activities were a waste of time.

Other pieces in Krokodil lampooned unfaithful men. In one cartoon, the first frame showed a drunk man pestering

13Elena Kononenko "Otkrovennyi razgovor o bor'be za krepkiu sem'iu," Sovetskaia zhenschchina, July-August 1948, 26-27.

14V. Kataev, "Sovety molodoi krasavitse..." Krokodil, 30 January 1946, 9.

15"On prishel...," Krokodil 28 February 1946.
a young woman. The woman called for the police, and the officer turned out to be the man’s very angry wife. In another cartoon, a man and a woman were pictured standing outside a ZAGs and the man said, "It’s scandalous! I’ve registered [marriages] here seven times and each time they ask me the same thing—have you ever been married before?" Judging from articles and cartoons such as these, Soviet society appeared to be struggling between lascivious men and predatory women. While these images exaggerated the situation, it is clear that the tension between women’s desires to marry and men’s opportunities for multiple partnerships placed a great strain on sexual relationships in the postwar period.

The lack of men of marriageable age meant that many women had to choose between having no family or becoming a single mother—a difficult decision given the material deficiencies in postwar Russia. Even women who married could not be sure that their husbands would not abandon them and their children. The instability of sexual relationships encouraged women to rely increasingly on themselves and their female relatives for economic and emotional support, contributing to the growing female dominance of the family unit and the subsequent marginalization of men.

16"Prestuplenie i nakazanie," Krokodil 30 September 1945, 8.

17Krokodil 10 July 1945, 10.
Couples had other challenges to face in addition to the possibility of extra-marital relationships. Having lost even the role of primary breadwinner, men moved to the periphery of family life. Legislation and propaganda encouraging single women to have children further minimized the man's role in the family as did articles on parenting that clearly limited the father's role to that of mentor. When women discussed their families in interviews, they talked primarily about their children and sometimes their parents or siblings, but their husbands often emerged as shadowy figures who were only home to sleep, eat, and often, drink. To a certain extent, this narrowing of men's roles to the public sphere may have served the state's needs—men could direct all of their energy to work and party life, while women maintained homes and supervised children.

The housing shortage also contributed to tensions between couples and the marginalization of men. Crowded conditions limited a couple's privacy and infringed on their sex life. They also discouraged leisurely evenings with the entire family. Women spent their "free" time in an endless round of household tasks, while men stayed late at work or the library or tried to read or sleep at home. It is also clear that many men spent their free time drinking either at home or with friends. Although it is impossible to calculate to what extent this practice disrupted family life, its impact must have been
considerable as drinking husbands became more of a liability than an asset to the family. Finally many households were composed of two or even three generations, usually of women, living together. Two of the fifteen women, Elena and Olga said that they divorced because of tensions between their mothers and husbands. These women could not bring themselves to defy their mothers in favor of their husbands—possibly because their mothers seemed more reliable helpmates—so they had no choice but to divorce their husbands. It is also likely that the apartments belonged to the older women, and in that case, the husband would either have to learn to get along with his mother-in-law or leave. In either case, the women were responsible for the household and consequently, dominated home life, pushing men further from the position of authority that husbands and fathers had once held.

The loss of men during the war continues to affect Soviet society even today—the absence of older men is striking, while the number of babushkas (grandmothers or older women) seems endless. The multi-generational family structure has survived, and it is not uncommon for a family unit to be composed of a woman, her husband, their children and her mother, while households in which men outnumber women are rare. The highly feminized nature of

18Interview with author, 7 May 1993; interview with author, 9 April 1993.
postwar society has resulted in female dominance of the private sphere.

The overcrowded living conditions of the postwar period also led to tension among neighbors as they vied for use of the kitchen and lavatories. Most of these conflicts involved women as they tried to cook or wash the family’s clothes. The crowded living conditions and disputes over communal areas sometimes caused women to see their neighbors as obstacles to getting all their daily chores done. Although neighbors did occasionally help one another, women could not form close, supportive relationships with neighbors when their conflicting activities might at any moment lead to a fight. Truly communal apartments, in which all of the people in the house would take turns cooking and cleaning for everyone, never materialized. By the postwar period, this ideal had completely disappeared from public discourse, and it is difficult to imagine how it could be implemented given the increased numbers of people in each apartment with their various schedules and diverse tastes. So while women tended to be the dominant figures in each individual family, they did not unite either to ease their burdens by mutual support nor to broaden their influence into the public arena.

Although women gained power and status after the war, these advances were largely limited to the private sphere where they emerged as the de facto head of the family.
While women dominated the workforce and some certainly moved into powerful positions, by and large men maintained their grip on leadership both in the party/state apparatus and in the economy. The large proportion of women in the workforce, however, prompted the state to improve and to continue to improve and expand maternity benefits and labor laws, while the issues of childcare and other support facilities remained on the public agenda throughout the period. Starvation for resources and continued emphasis on the industrial sectors of the economy meant that support systems could not develop as quickly as propaganda insisted they would, and officials dodged the responsibility for providing these services by passing orders and directives around to various administrators, trying to lose them in the bureaucratic shuffle—a phenomenon that dominated postwar administration and continues even today.

The state's ideal of the perfect woman had a clear impact on women's lives—although not necessarily in the way that state officials had hoped it would. Women internalized certain aspects of the state model, but they did not buy into the entire package. Women did not, for the most part, see themselves as the builders of a glorious communist future. Work was essential for survival and was an important part of a person's identity, but was not necessarily viewed as an heroic effort—immediate economic problems were too pressing for most
women to look that far into the future. Women believed that raising a family was important, but most women did not believe that it was important enough to jeopardize their material or psychological well-being. Economic conditions prohibited large families and most women simply did not have the time to care for more than one or two children. In short, by placing so many burdens on women's shoulders without providing adequate support, the state effectively prevented most women from emulating its model.

The Soviet system was characterized by the leadership's belief that it could mandate any change that it desired, but the failure of the postwar campaign to produce the new "New Soviet Woman" clearly shows the limitations of state power. Policymakers could not simply create the perfect Soviet woman any more than they could magically generate funds for all the projects that they started. Women remained under the yoke of "domestic slavery" with little help from the state and no help from men. The state failed on all levels--economic, political and social--to take over men's responsibilities in the family. Women did not have adequate financial, moral or social support to function easily as both full-time mothers and workers, because the state's continued directives to increase support for women were systematically ignored by the bureaucrats who had to implement them. The bureaucratic shuffle was the inevitable result of the leadership's tendency to mandate
change without providing the means to implement it—both chronic problems for the Soviet leadership that are significant for understanding the eventual decline and collapse of the Soviet Union.

The contradictions inherent in postwar Soviet society not only affected women's roles, consciousness and relationships, they had long-lasting consequences for the Russian family and Russian society. Men's lives focused increasingly on the public sphere, while women divided their attention between work and family, believing their primary responsibilities to lie in these two areas rather than in party or political work. Soviet society continued to rely on women to maintain both the family and economic production, leaving more men free to move into party work and management positions. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the near collapse of the economy, the public sphere that men controlled has become much more volatile and unpredictable, leaving the family as one of the few stable institutions in Russia. The current economic difficulties have redefined priorities for both men and women, requiring both parents to struggle to support the family. The new social dynamic may force more male participation in the family as both partners strive for economic security, but the legacies of the postwar era linger still in a female dominated family structure and in the public arena, where men continue to control political and economic power.
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267
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