

A return to the “purely womanly mission” or a move towards an equal partnership?

Tackling the double burden on the pages of the Soviet women’s
magazine *Rabotnitsa* 1987–1991

Laura-Maria Heikkinen
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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract Pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee neuvostoliittolaisessa naistenlehti <i>Rabotnitsassa</i> käytyä keskustelua naisten rooleista vuosina 1987–1991. Siinä on keskitytty artikkeleihin, jotka kommentoivat naisten rooleja äiteinä, työläisinä ja vaimoina, sekä kaksoistaakan ongelmien ratkaisuihin, jotka nousivat artikkeleissa esille. Tutkielmassa pyritään selvittämään, miten kaksoistaakan ongelmaa käsiteltiin lehdessä, millaisia ratkaisuja sille esitettiin ja millaisia naisten rooleja artikkelit suosivat. Lisäksi tutkielma tarkastelee naistenlehti <i>Rabotnitsaa</i> tämän keskustelun keskusteluareenana ja selvittää, dominoivatko tietynlaiset näkemykset keskustelua sekä muuttuivatko lehdessä esitetyt näkemykset ajan myötä. <p><i>Rabotnitsa</i> oli kerran kuukaudessa ilmestynvä, Neuvostoliiton laajalevikkisin aikakauslehti ja sen kohdeyleisö oli kaupunkilaiset työläisnaiset. Lehteä alettiin julkaista jo vuonna 1914 ja sitä julkaistaan edelleen Venäjällä.</p> <p>Neuvostoliittolainen sukupuolijärjestelmä, jossa naiset huolehtivat kotitöistä sekä lastenhoidosta kokopäivätyön ohella, oli johtanut naisten kaksoistaakkaan. Kaksoistaakka sekä uuvutti naisia että haittasi heidän urakehitystään. Iso osa <i>Rabotnitsassa</i> käydystä keskustelusta käsittelee juuri näitä teemoja. <i>Rabotnitsan</i> artikkelit olivat osa laajempaa keskustelua, jota Neuvostoliitossa käytiin naisten ongelmista ja rooleista 1980-luvun lopussa ja 1990-luvun alussa. Glasnost ja sensuurin lakkauttaminen teki julkisesta keskustelusta vapaampaa sekä mahdollisti ongelmista puhumisen ja raportoimisen. Tämä tarkoitti myös naisten yhteiskunnalliseen asemaan liittyvien kysymysten kriittistä käsittelyä.</p> <p>Avainkäsitteitä tutkielmassa ovat sukupuolen (gender) ja sukupuolijärjestyksen (gender order) käsitteet, joita on käytetty apuna alkuperäislähteiden analysoinnissa. Neuvostoliittolainen sukupuolijärjestelmä, jossa naisten tehtäviin kuului sekä kotitöistä ja lapsista huolehtiminen että kokopäivätyö kodin ulkopuolella, kyseenalaistettiin ja sitä alettiin tarkastella yhä kriittisemmin 1980-luvun lopulla. Tutkielmassa sukupuolijärjestyksen käsitettä käytetään sekä kuvaillaessa neuvostoliittolaista sukupuolijärjestystä että artikkeleissa ehdotettuja vaihtoehtoisia tapoja määrittää ja järjestää naisten ja miesten tehtävät ja roolit yhteiskunnassa. Nämä vaihtoehtoiset tavat nähdään tutkielmassa myös ehdotuksina ratkaista kaksoistaakan ongelma.</p> <p>Tutkielmassa käy ilmi, että <i>Rabotnitsassa</i> julkaistiin erilaisia näkemyksiä naisten rooleista sekä ratkaisuja kaksoistaakan vähentämiseksi. Ensinnäkin jotkut keskustelun osanottajista kannattivat naisen perinteistä sukupuoliroolia, joka määrittää kodin ja siihen liittyvät toiminnot naisten tehtäviksi ja velvollisuuksiksi. Näissä näkemyksissä oli osin samanlaisia elementtejä kuin 1970-luvulta lähtien Neuvostoliitossa vallalla olleissa näkemyksissä, jotka korostivat naisellisuutta ja naisten roolia äiteinä. Nämä keskustelijat tarjosivat neuvostoliittolaisen sukupuolijärjestyksen vaihtoehdoksi sukupuolijärjestystä, jossa naisella olisi pääasiallinen vastuu kodista ja lapsista mutta he eivät välttämättä samassa määrin osallistuisi työelämään. Kaikki naisellisuutta ja äitiyttä korostaneet eivät kuitenkaan nähneet, että naisten sulkeminen työelämän ulkopuolelle olisi kannattavaa. Toiseksi <i>Rabotnitsassa</i> julkaistiin artikkeleita, joiden kirjoittajat ja haastateltavat haastoivat näkemyksen siitä, että naisten paikka olisi kotona. He vaativat, että naisten ongelmat otettaisiin paremmin huomioon yhteiskunnassa ja heidän asemaansa parannettaisiin esimerkiksi tarjoamalla parempia julkisia palveluita. Sekä konservatiiviset näkökannat että feminismiin kallellaan olevat artikkelit voimistuivat 1990-luvulla.</p> <p><i>Rabotnitsassa</i> käytiin myös keskustelua käytännön keinoista naisten kaksoistaakan selättämiseksi. Näitä olivat osa-aikatyö, valinta uran ja perheen perustamisen välillä, tasa-arvoisemmin jaettu vanhemmuus ja kotityöt, työolojen parantaminen sekä pidempi äitiysloma. Suurin osa keskusteluun osallistuneista kannattivat näitä keinoja. Jotkut keskustelijoista kuitenkin olivat sitä mieltä, että sukupuolirooleja tulisi tarkastella kriittisemmin. Useimmissa yllä mainituista keinoissa olettamuksena olikin, että yhteiskunta oli rakennettu miehelle normille ja naiset äiteinä olivat erityisryhmä työvoiman sisällä, jonka osallistuminen työelämään aiheutti tarvetta erityisjärjestelyille.</p> <p>Vaikka <i>Rabotnitsassa</i> käytiin kriittistäkin keskustelua naisten rooleista, lehdessä julkaistiin myös esimerkiksi reseptejä, vaatekaavoja, kodinsisustusohjeita ja lapsille tarkoitettua materiaalia. Tutkielmassa tämä nähdään esimerkkinä siitä, että <i>Rabotnitsan</i> sisältö samaan aikaan haastoi ja vahvisti naisen traditionaalista sukupuoliroolia, joka määrittä kodinhoidon ja lapset naisten velvollisuuksiksi.</p>		
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1. Introduction

1.1. Research questions and previous research

Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home – housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. [– –] That is why we are now holding heated debates in the press, in public organizations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission.¹

These words were written by the man behind the policies of perestroika and glasnost, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Mikhail Gorbachev, in the late 1980s, and yet they seem to be at odds with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. It seems that if the ideals embedded in Marxism-Leninism about women's emancipation through socialism, by liberating them from domestic labour and enabling their participation in economic production, had not vanished completely, they had certainly been watered down. However, even though the contrast between Gorbachev's views on women's roles in his 1987 book *Perestroika* and the old ideals of the October Revolution is striking, when examined in the historical context, this sentiment can be understood as merely a continuation of the development that had begun during the previous administrations. As early as the mid-1970 onwards, the pronatalist campaigns that were launched by the previous administrations had included promotion of more traditional gender roles and an emphasis on women's roles as mothers.²

Apart from sentiments similar to those of Gorbachev, also rather different views were expressed on women's roles when a wider discussion on the "woman question"³ was enabled by the policy of glasnost and the relaxation of censorship in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Even openly feminist perspectives emerged.⁴ One of the platforms for this debate was the magazine that had

¹ Gorbachev Mikhail 1987, 758–759. Translated from Russian, translator unknown.

² Attwood 1990, 165; Bridger 1996, 243.

³ The woman question (zhenskiy vopros) was an umbrella term for issues that concerned women's position in society.

⁴ Liljeström 1995, 372–373.

the highest circulation of any magazine in the country, the women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*.⁵ A large part of the discussion in *Rabotnitsa* revolved around women's roles as mothers, how women could better combine work with motherhood, and how Soviet women's "double burden" of work and domestic labour could be mitigated. As the years moved on, the disappearance of censorship, and presumably self-censorship, eventually led to a more polarised set of opinions as *Rabotnitsa* gave publicity to both feminist and very conservative views. Therefore, with this study, I aim to find out how the issues women faced while trying to combine motherhood with work were addressed in articles and interviews in *Rabotnitsa*, and what kinds of solutions they offered for women. Because the promotion of different roles women should or should not take in the society is closely related to the question of the double burden and its solutions, I also intend to concentrate on how these roles were promoted and what kinds of solutions they offered. I therefore understand the promotion of a gender order that was different from the Soviet gender order as a solution to the double burden. Thirdly, I aim to see what kind of platform *Rabotnitsa* offered for different views and discussion. Did the articles that promoted traditional gender roles dominate? Did *Rabotnitsa* also publish articles that opposed the resurrection of traditional gender roles? And was there a change over time in what kind of ideas and roles were promoted?

This study concerns itself with gender and gender roles as reflected in the Soviet women's magazine *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One of the areas where gender roles played a role was the home and tasks performed in the home. For example, responses given to a survey done by the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion, and published by *Rabotnitsa* in January 1991, reflected the sentiment that housework and child rearing were considered female functions. According to the survey, most men shared a traditional view of family roles. For example, 50% of male respondents said they did not do any housework, 61% of male respondents did not think women did enough housework, and 40% of male respondents thought a woman should devote her time to her family and only the husband should work. Female respondents were not as conservative as their male counterparts but their answers were not exactly radically feminist either, for example 31% of the female respondents shared the view that only the husband should work while the wife devoted herself to her family. However, almost half (47%) of the female respondents thought housework duties should be shared equally. 38% of male respondents shared this view.⁶ Therefore, I am interested to see how these views were reflected and how they possibly developed in *Rabotnitsa* by examining the research questions I

⁵ Sperling 1999, 107.

⁶ "Informrabotnitsa: Chto dumayut muzhchiny o sem'ye i zhenshchine?", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 4.

have given above. As gender and gender roles are interconnected to the notions of femininity and masculinity, femininity and how it was viewed in *Rabotnitsa* is also explored. Before analysing *Rabotnitsa* articles published in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I examine the history of Soviet women's double burden and how it was developed in chapter 2. In chapter 3, I concentrate on the promotion of traditional gender roles for women and the traditional notion of femininity. Through them I examine what kind of roles these type of articles offered for women. In chapter 4, I analyse views that were different to those examined in chapter 3, meaning they did not advocate sending women back to the home but proposed different kinds of roles and solutions for the double burden. In the last chapter, I look at the more practical side of the double burden and ways to reduce it. Therefore, in chapter 5, I examine how state protection and support for women and mothers as well as women's employment were discussed in *Rabotnitsa*.

In the scope of this study I concentrate on women's roles as mothers, wives and workers, as the elements of the double burden, because these were the topics that the discussion often revolved around. However, women's participation in politics was also a theme within the woman question, and women's roles in politics were explored by some of the contributors who discussed women's roles as mothers, wives and workers. It should therefore be noted that while female politicians and women's representation in politics were mentioned in *Rabotnitsa*, that theme was not as prevalent as women's roles as mothers, wives and workers. Therefore the focus of this study is on the latter roles, though women's role in politics is discussed in passing as well.

I have chosen to concentrate on articles that were published in *Rabotnitsa* between January 1987 and December 1991 for several reasons. Firstly, December 1991 saw the end of the Soviet Union when Gorbachev resigned, and the USSR officially ceased to exist on January 1st 1992. The December 1991 issue was therefore the last *Rabotnitsa* issue that was published in the USSR. Secondly, 1987 marked the year when the woman question became a topic of wider discussion. In January 1987 the policy of glasnost, an application of perestroika in the field of media, was strengthened when Gorbachev called for further reform at the Central Committee Plenum and criticised those who opposed the changes his policies were meant to bring. Glasnost (openness) itself was not a new concept in the USSR or the CPSU but in 1986 it had been broadened so that the media could also report on a wider range of topics, including social problems, that had previously been kept outside the public discussion. In addition to the Central Committee Plenum, the Soviet Women's Committee also held its All-Union Conference of Women in January 1987. The Conference opened a wider debate on the position of women in society as the Committee no

longer stayed silent on topics such as working conditions, domestic labour, healthcare, work promotion, and treatment of women in the media. Now they were critically examined in the speeches held by the participants. Moreover, as mentioned above, Gorbachev's book *Perestroika* further stimulated the discussion when it was published later in the year.⁷

As can be discerned from the publication year of many of the books and articles used as research literature for this thesis, the woman question of the Soviet Union, and later Russia, also stimulated scholars' interest from the late 1980s onwards. The opening of Soviet archives and discussion made it possible for both Western and Russian historians and social scientists, as well as Soviet and Russian feminists, to study and address topics and questions that had previously been out of their reach.⁸ The most relevant studies for this thesis are those done by Mary Buckley and Lynne Attwood. Buckley's *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (1989) and Attwood's *The New Soviet Man and Woman* (1990), a study on sex-role socialisation, were published before the fall of the Soviet Union, but they offer a thorough insight on ideology and the woman question, gender role stereotypes, and pronatalist views and policies of the last two decades of Soviet rule. They helped me to better navigate and understand my primary source *Rabotnitsa* but also motivated me to delimit my research question to cover the years 1987–1991 as I became interested in what happened in the discussion on women's roles in the very last years of Soviet rule, also after the publication of Buckley's and Attwood's research. Furthermore, Lynne Attwood has studied the women's magazines *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka* from the 1920s to the 1950s as well as during the Khrushchev administration.⁹ This, too, led me to concentrate on the period of perestroika and glasnost and study the late 1980s and early 1990s issues of *Rabotnitsa*, something that has not been previously studied thoroughly on the topic of the woman question, the double burden, and women's roles. However, *Rabotnitsa* and its sister magazine *Krest'yanka* are referred to in many studies and articles I have used as my secondary sources.¹⁰ In addition, there are several articles that focus on the magazines in various periods and look at different topics.¹¹

Whereas Mary Buckley's book *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* helped me to understand the background and historical context of the double burden and the use of ideology,

⁷ Noonan 1996, 110–116; Buckley 1992a, 203–204; Pietiläinen 2010, 78–80; 203–205; Buckley 1989, 200.

⁸ Edmondson 1992, 1–3; Marsh 1996a, 1–3; Engel 2004, 1.

⁹ Attwood 1999; Attwood 2002.

¹⁰ See, for example, Ilic 1996, Attwood 1996, and Buckley 1992b.

¹¹ See, for example, Davidenko 2018, Tolstikova 2004, and Ratilainen 2015.

later studies offered more understanding on the position of women in Soviet society just before the end of Soviet rule and helped me to analyse my primary sources in depth. One of these studies is *No More Heroines?* (1996) by Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay, and Kathryn Pinnick that focuses on women's position in the labour market in post-Soviet Russia but also extends back to the perestroika era. Another study, Barbara Alpern Engel's *Women in Russia, 1700–2000* (2004), offers a comprehensive and chronological history of Russian women. In addition, while it has not been used extensively in this thesis due to a slightly different focus when examining the late 1980s and early 1990s, it should be noted that Marianne Liljeström has done a comprehensive study on the Soviet gender system, *Emanciperade till underordning* (1995), that traces the origins of the gender order and extends its scope also to the 19th century.

Several edited books, too, have covered women's roles in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia and have been used as research literature for this study. As the double burden is a multifaceted topic, many of these edited books contain several articles on different themes that are related to the topic of this thesis. For instance, Donald Filtzer's and Melanie Ilic's articles on female workers in *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, edited by Rosalind Marsh (1996), Sergei Kukhterin's article on fathers and Marina Kiblitckaya's article on male breadwinners in *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, edited by Sarah Ashwin (2000), and Mary Buckley's article on women and the political reform of perestroika, Elizabeth Waters article on children's homes and Judith Shapiro's article on the industrial labour force in *Perestroika and Soviet Women*, edited by Mary Buckley (1992).

There are also a number of articles that concentrate on the combination of Soviet women's roles in the home and at work in the 1980s. *Superwomen and the Double Burden*, edited by Chris Corrin (1992), includes a case study on the double burden of women in Russia and former Soviet republics. Valentina Bodorova analyses the attitudes towards women, family and work during perestroika years in *Democratic Reform and the Position of Women in Transitional Economies*, edited by Valentine M. Moghadam (1993) using the responses given by Soviet citizens in nationwide polls conducted in 1989 and 1990. Another article by political scientist Gail Warshofsky Lapidus in *Women and Work: An Annual Review. Vol. 3*, edited by Barbara A. Gutek, Ann H. Stromberg, and Laurie Larwood (1988), which was published during the perestroika years, examines the interaction of women's dual roles and the Soviet policies related to them.

With the help of these studies I aim to examine the discussion on the double burden and women's roles in *Rabotnitsa* during the last few years of the Soviet rule. For example, Lynne Attwood's study on sex-role socialisation¹² offers an insight on the construction and promotion of certain gender roles and gender order. Attwood's study is therefore particularly relevant for chapter 3, which examines the promotion of traditional gender roles and traditional notions of masculinity and femininity as a solution to the double burden. Similarly, articles on male roles within the family by Sergei Kukhterin and Marina Kiblitckaya¹³ are relevant when examining equal parenting in chapter 4, and Donald Filtzer's and Melanie Ilic's articles¹⁴ on female workers support the analysis on female employment in chapter 5. Thus, all the above-mentioned research illuminates the reality of both readers and writers of *Rabotnitsa* and helps to understand the historical context and culture in which the *Rabotnitsa* articles were written.

1.2. Methods and theoretical background

The analysis of primary sources is of a qualitative nature. Firstly, I skimmed through the magazines to see what kind of articles and themes they contain and what kinds of research questions this type of material might have answers to. I noticed several common themes and topics, such as family, work and politics, in the majority of articles throughout the years. When reading and rereading the magazines in more detail, I marked down the articles in a spreadsheet, with volume and issue numbers, arranged them in different categories and wrote short descriptions for them. This was a useful way to see if there were enough articles that fell into the same categories in order to combine enough data for a thesis. As each monthly issue of *Rabotnitsa* has approximately 48 pages and five years worth of magazines make up over 2800 pages of material, using a spreadsheet to organise them thematically was necessary. While there were also articles that commented on women's political roles and women's absence from leadership positions, which is another theme within the Soviet woman question, I noticed that the combination of women's home and work roles was a more common theme in the articles that commented on women's roles in society. Therefore I decided to concentrate on women's home and work roles and the double burden women bore because of the difficulties in combining these roles.

¹² Attwood 1990.

¹³ Kukhterin 2000; Kiblitckaya 2000.

¹⁴ Filtzer 1996; Ilic 1996.

After familiarising myself with the research literature, I understood that the discussion on women's roles and especially the promotion of more traditional gender roles and notions of femininity and masculinity was a continuation of the development that had begun during the previous administrations. In addition, there were articles that were opposed to this sentiment of resurrecting traditional gender roles and pushing women back to the home. Therefore I further arranged the chosen articles, or excerpts taken from them, into two groups depending on their stance towards women withdrawing partly or completely from the labour force. However, I noticed that not all articles could be labelled using only these two categories. Some articles commented more on the practicalities of how to ease the double burden, some were contradictory in nature and included elements of both stances. That is why I also organized the excerpts taken from the articles into sub-categories, such as maternity leave, employment, femininity, motherhood and so on. Thus, many of the articles are mentioned in more than one chapter of this thesis.

Though the above described method of categorising material also resembles content or thematic analysis which is often used in qualitative research,¹⁵ the historical method of source criticism was used throughout this thesis when analysing the chosen articles that commented on women's home and work roles and the double burden. Therefore, with the help of secondary sources, through a type of "hermeneutic circle" of text and context, I aim to explain and analyse the proposed solutions to the double burden.¹⁶ Important aspects in this analysis are how the historical context and the context of the magazine explain the viewpoints of the contributors and the interviewees, how the discussion unfolded, and how the cultural and historical context is reflected in the primary sources. As part of source criticism, it is also important to take into account what kind of magazine *Rabotnitsa* was and who the intended audience of these articles was. I therefore discuss *Rabotnitsa*, the contributors and *Rabotnitsa*'s audience further and more in depth in the next subchapter (1.3.).

This thesis falls into the category of gender history. It both deals with the position of women and the construction of gender and gender roles. I aim to document the attitudes, thoughts and views on gender, gender roles, and gendered divisions of spheres and labour that were expressed by both men and women in the women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*. The everyday reality of Soviet

¹⁵ See, for example, Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, chap 4.3.

¹⁶ On source criticism, hermeneutic circle and historical research, see, for example, Meinander 1999, 14–17, and Kipping, Wadhvani, and Bucheli, 2013, 320–324.

women is also an important element in this study, so even though Soviet women's experiences are not documented in detail in *Rabotnitsa* articles, they are reflected in them, they are commented on, and they are therefore present. On the other hand, this study also looks into how gender was constructed by defining femininity, suitable female behaviour, occupations and roles for women. With the aim of both documenting the history of women and historicising gender, this thesis places itself somewhere in between these two perspectives described by Marianne Liljeström as the two premises for gender and women's history.¹⁷

Although my study is not theory-driven, there are concepts that are used in the analysis of the source material to help understand both the historical context and the nature of the society in which the primary sources were produced. As this thesis deals with the position of women and the promotion of certain types of roles, work, and femininity, the concepts such as gender, gender order and gender role are useful tools when analysing the discussion. These concepts are more important in some chapters than in others. For example, chapter 3 shows how gender is constructed by some *Rabotnitsa* authors in the way they define this femininity, whereas gender order or gender system are useful tools to examine the difference between men and women and their roles in the home and in the place of work.

Even though this thesis touches upon the biological, reproductive aspect of the female body, meaning pregnancy and child-birth, and therefore somewhat deals with biological sex, the main focus of this study lies elsewhere. That is why the concept of gender is relevant and should be defined. I do not intend to problematise the concepts of sex and gender but I seek to follow a broad and general understanding of these concepts. For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO) gives the following definition of gender on their website: "Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men. Gender interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex."¹⁸ Moreover, Swedish anthropologists defined gender as "cultural interpretation of biological sex differences" when they introduced the term "genus" in the 1980s to be used in Swedish for gender to differentiate it from "kön" that refers to the biological sex.¹⁹ R. W. Connell understands gender as something that is shaped by historical process and social

¹⁷ Liljeström 2004, 147. On gender history and gender studies, see also Aalto, Kaartinen, Konola, Lahtinen, Leskelä-Kärki, and Tuohela 2011, 46. According to them, many gender historians place themselves between these two perspectives.

¹⁸ WHO 2020.

¹⁹ Liljeström 1996, 116.

practices. These practises are not an expression of natural patterns but they do not ignore them either.²⁰ Thus, gender is connected to the biological sex and sex difference but it is defined by culture and historical context, meaning it is not fixed or immovable. For this study in particular, the promotion and definitions of gender roles, positions and gender characteristics are important. Even though I often refer to women without the sex/gender distinction in this study, in some parts of the thesis it is important to distinguish between sex (biological male/female) and gender (e.g. social, behavioural, psychological traits, social role, position, or identity).

Another relevant concept in my thesis is the gender system or gender order. Again, it is not my aim not to give a comprehensive picture of the Soviet gender order with my study, just as it is not the main focus of this thesis to give an exhaustive description of how gender was constructed in the USSR. However, this concept is another useful tool to help navigate some of the primary source material. With the term “gender order” (or “gender system”) I refer to a pattern of practices and power relations between women and men and definitions of masculinity and femininity that have been constructed socially and historically.²¹ Gender order is therefore closely related to gender but it concerns itself with wider structures of society, for example labour. My understanding of gender order has been influenced by the Swedish historian, Yvonne Hirdman, who is known for her analysis on the Swedish welfare state and its different gender contracts.²² According to Hirdman, gender contracts operate on three different levels: the abstract level deals with the cultural and idealistic representations of “man” and “woman”, the second level contracts are related to social interaction, institutions and the division of labor, and the third level consist of contracts between individual (heterosexual) spouses. Together these contracts form a social model called the gender system and they act as the "operationalization" of the system. The gender system, and the gender contracts within the system, follow two logics: the separation between sexes and the logic of the male norm in society.²³ In this thesis the former is relevant to the way labour was, or should be, segregated or divided, and the latter to how women were labelled as a problem that needed to be solved (the woman question), meaning society was built in such a way (on the male norm) that made the combination of motherhood and work problematic.

²⁰ R. W. Connell 1987, 79.

²¹ Ibid., 98–99.

²² See, for example, Hirdman 1990 and Hirdman 1991.

²³ Hirdman 1988, 51–52, 54–55.

Even though Hirdman's concept of gender system and gender contract has been criticised for being too deterministic and fixed as it does not give enough room for change and lumps both "women" and "men" into homogeneous groups,²⁴ I find Hirdman's concepts useful for this study. This is because the aim of the thesis is to see what kinds of roles were given to women and what kinds of gender orders were promoted. These ideas about certain roles and orders between men and women also created generalised assumptions about these groups. However, as these were ideas and views, they did not represent "what is" but showed the reader "what could be" or "what should be". The use of Hirdman's concepts with these promoted ideas therefore avoids the problem of making the gender relations of a certain period of time look immovable. Also, according to Marianne Liljeström, in the concepts of gender system and gender contract is included the notion that these concepts vary over time and across societies, and that women are given some amount of power and influence, for example in certain spheres of society, which would explain why women consent to them.²⁵ Moreover, Hirdman, too, argues that even though there is continuity within these concepts, the gender contracts also contain "seeds of conflict" as the parties can test their limits and contracts can be renegotiated.²⁶ I argue that this type of renegotiation took place when the Soviet gender order was challenged in the late 1980s and the wider debate on women's roles began.

It should be noted that in this study I follow the definitions of traditional gender role for women and traditional notions of femininity as described in research literature. Therefore, my understanding of these is formed on the basis of previous research on Soviet and Russian women. The notion of a traditional gender role for women emphasises women's roles as mothers and wives and sees them as more home-oriented. Through the traditional notion of femininity women are seen, for example, as more emotional, kind, nurturing and sensitive than men. Often because of these characteristics, women are seen as more suited to child rearing and domestic roles. This means men's and women's tasks in society are understood to be different.²⁷

Also, I use the word "communist" only when I refer to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, communist symbols, or in some cases members of the Communist Party in the early days of the Soviet regime (in chapter 2). Still, when referring to the Soviet state, it should be acknowledged

²⁴ Liljeström 1996, 124–130.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁶ Hirdman 1988, 54–55.

²⁷ Buckley 1989, 174–175; Attwood 1990, 184–189.

that its official ideology was Marxism-Leninism, a type of communist ideology. Because “communism” or “communist” can be understood in so many different ways, I have chosen not to use it repeatedly. In many cases it is more appropriate to use “Soviet” instead of “communist” as the former better describes the historical context, which is to do with a predominantly Russian state that had adopted Marxism-Leninism as their official ideology. In addition, although the communist ideology set certain limits to policies, different elements were emphasised at any given time, as is shown in chapter 2.²⁸ Therefore describing something as communist would not necessarily describe it accurately. Besides using “Soviet” to describe the state, its policies and ideology, in many cases I use the word when I refer to either citizens of the Soviet Union, institutions of the Soviet Union, or the time during which the Soviet Union existed.

²⁸ Buckley 1989, 230–231.

1.3. Women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*

The main primary source of this thesis is the Soviet monthly, state-run women's magazine *Rabotnitsa* (The Woman Worker). Two other primary sources, excerpts from Vladimir Lenin's speech from 1919 and Mikhail Gorbachev's book *Perestroika* from 1987, are used as examples of views on women's roles, and former is also referred to in a *Rabotnitsa* article and therefore commented on and used. As such, the analysis of primary sources in chapters 3, 4 and 5 rests heavily on *Rabotnitsa* and comments by Lenin and Gorbachev are added for support.

The publication of *Rabotnitsa* was established in 1914 by Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, along with other Bolshevik women, and was intended as a women's supplement to *Pravda*. Its first seven issues were published before the October Revolution, though two of them were confiscated in full by the authorities. After the Civil War *Rabotnitsa*, together with *Krest'yanka* (The Peasant Woman), started to be published regularly. The target audience of *Rabotnitsa* were proletarian women, the female urban factory workers, whereas *Krest'yanka*'s audience were women in the countryside. These two magazines were the only nation-wide women's magazines that were aimed at the female "masses" who might have found other publications and newspapers too difficult to read. In the 1920s, magazines were meant to communicate party policies of the CPSU to the female audience and educate them on the matters of the new society, but later on they were mostly used to legitimise the regime. Apart from ideology, another function of these magazines was to promote Soviet consumer culture. For example, they ran articles on home decoration and style. They also promoted the ideal of the worker woman, appropriate social norms, and femininity.²⁹ Out of these two, *Rabotnitsa* became the most popular women's magazine in the country, with a circulation of more than 18 million in 1981 and more than 23 million in 1990, which was higher than any other magazine in the Soviet Union.³⁰

Already in the late 1970s, as the administration had recognised that the woman question was not "solved" after all, some *Rabotnitsa* articles mentioned the difficulties women faced when trying to combine the roles of worker, wife and mother. However, it was only after the launch of perestroika and glasnost when the image of an emancipated Soviet woman was allowed to be

²⁹ Attwood 1999, 25–27, 170; Tolstikova 2004, 131, 133, 138; Ratilainen 2015, 95–96. On femininity and Soviet women's magazines, see, for example Gradskova 2007 and Davidenko 2018.

³⁰ Smeyukha 2012, 57; Sperling 1999, 107.

shattered by articles that depicted the grim reality of many female citizens of the country. Propaganda of the ideal Soviet women was replaced by different kinds of ideas and ideals put forward by different contributors.³¹ This variety of contributors can be seen in the articles analysed in this thesis. They include, for example, writers, sociologists, journalists, politicians, and artists, both men and women. On some of them I was able to find more background information than on others, as some of the contributors are and were more well known than others. This information, if available, is given in the analysis chapters 3, 4 and 5 when introducing the contributor and the article or the interview.

39 different articles from 1987–1991 are used as examples in this thesis but *Rabotnitsa* is also examined as a whole. Some articles are analysed in greater depth, from others a few comments are examined, and some are used as examples of the different types of articles published in *Rabotnitsa*. For example, in chapter 5 a few articles are given as examples of how women's work and working conditions were present in *Rabotnitsa*, and in chapter 3 *Rabotnitsa*'s supplement *Domashniy kaleydoskop* is used as an example. The reason why other articles are analysed in greater length and depth is because of the topics and focuses of the articles. Some of the articles and interviews focused on women's roles directly, such as the articles published as part of the series *Otkrytaya tribuna* (Open podium) that was dedicated to the discussion on women's roles and published between March 1988 and August 1990. Others commented on women's roles in passing but they are nonetheless relevant to this study as they offer an insight on the attitudes, sentiments and assumptions relating to women and women's roles in society. In addition to articles debating the woman question or women's roles in general, *Rabotnitsa* also published, for example, interviews, articles on current affairs, politics and history, short stories, articles on relationships and children, articles on art, poems, and letters sent by its readers.

According to Maija Töyry, women's magazines can reflect, challenge and reinforce gender contracts and they offer a view on gender contract negotiations. Articles published in the same magazine can therefore offer very different views on women's roles and femininity, some challenging the current gender order and others supporting it. The viewpoint may also depend on the type of text in question.³² In the scope of this study I mainly focus on those articles that directly commented on women's roles and the double burden and were part of a wider debate on the woman question. The relaxation of censorship made it possible for articles with different

³¹ Smeyukha 2012, 62–63.

³² Töyry 2005, 51, 320–326.

points of view to be published and different ideals to be promoted as the media was no longer just a mouthpiece for the CPSU. This was something new in the context of *Rabotnitsa*.³³ Still, it should not be ignored that while there was an ongoing discussion on women's roles on the pages of *Rabotnitsa*, the magazine continued to publish, for example, clothes patterns and recipes that underlined the notion of housework as a female function. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that *Rabotnitsa* was a state-run magazine with strong ties to the CPSU, published by the publishing house Pravda, and the communist symbols of the hammer and sickle and the portrait of Lenin remained on the contents page, which was usually page 2 or 3.³⁴ It was not a dissident samizdat ("self-published") publication. Also, decades of censorship, and self-censorship, together with continuous pronatalist media campaigns of the previous administrations might have influenced what contributors dared to say and what the editorial staff of the magazine decided to publish even when censorship gradually disappeared.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any studies or detailed information on *Rabotnitsa*'s readership. An article by Natasha Tolstikova from 2004 mentions that no known audience studies of *Rabotnitsa* have been done so I assume this is still the case.³⁵ The magazine was nonetheless meant for a mass readership and female workers.³⁶ This was also reflected in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa*. For example, during the years 1987–1991 there were articles about working conditions, part-time work, and unemployment of factory or other manual workers.³⁷ Moreover, although one could come across non-Slavic women (and men) on the pages of *Rabotnitsa*, the contributors to the discussion on women's roles were predominantly Slavic, at least judging by their names. According to Maria Davidenko, Central Asian women were mainly presented as builders of socialism who had been liberated from patriarchy and religiosity by the socialist state and their images were used to show that the USSR was a multiethnic state.³⁸ After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the publication of *Rabotnitsa* continued, with Zoya Krylova as its editor until 2006, and it is still being published in Russia.³⁹ Due to these factors, and the fact that the magazine was published in the Russian language, I

³³ Smeyukha 2012, 62–63.

³⁴ See any content page of *Rabotnitsa* between 1987 and 1991. This page is usually the second or the third page of the issue. The content page also mentions the name of the publishing house.

³⁵ Tolstikova 2004, 137.

³⁶ Ratilainen 2015, 95–96.

³⁷ See, for example, Ol'ga Laputina, "Nepolnyy rabochiy den': blazh' ili neobkhodimost'?", *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1988 18-20; Valeriy Baryshev, "O chem signalyat oranzhevyye zhilye?", *Rabotnitsa*, 7/1988; Ol'ga Laputina, "Bezrabotnitsy", *Rabotnitsa*, 06/1991, 10-11.

³⁸ Davidenko 2018, 452–459.

³⁹ *Rabotnitsa* 2020, "O zhurnale."

assume the majority of the readers were Russian or Slavic and that many of them worked in manual occupations. Therefore I have chosen to concentrate on certain topics, such as working conditions of manual workers in chapter 5, that both emerged in the primary source articles and were relevant to this type of readership.

It should be noted that not all of the contributors had personally written their own articles; some were interviewed, but they nonetheless contributed to the discussion on women's roles. The author mentioned in the footnote is therefore not always the person whose thoughts and views are being analysed, as the footnote always includes the person who was marked as the author of the article in the magazine, for example the interviewer. All translations are done by me, except for Lenin's and Gorbachev's excerpts, for which I have used the English translations. For transliteration I have used the BGN/PCGN romanization systems. However, for Russian names that are mentioned only in secondary sources, I have kept the transliteration given in the text.

2. Soviet women and the double burden

2.1. The October Revolution 1917 and women's emancipation

*Our troubles are untranslatable. I was once again convinced of this when, in a Western country, I tried to explain to the women who had gathered why, while women all over the world are fighting [for their right] to work more, our dream is to work less.*⁴⁰

This observation made by *Rabotnitsa*'s editor-in-chief Zoya Krylova in 1989 shows why Western feminists found it difficult to understand why many Soviet women were attracted to the idea of withdrawing from the labour force and becoming full-time housewives.⁴¹ After all, Soviet women had access to childcare institutions, higher education and non-traditional work, and their participation in full-time work was not frowned on. Yet, these rights were not the whole story when it came to Soviet women and their lives. Even though women in the USSR had access to the services and spheres mentioned above, the reality did not coincide with the official narrative and propaganda of the emancipated “superwoman” who could happily and easily combine work with motherhood. It would be fair to say that women in the USSR had a difficult life, and one of the primary reasons for that was the double burden they bore.⁴² Therefore, with this chapter I examine the background and historical context of the double burden. This chapter is meant to shed light upon the reasons why the idea of returning women back to the home gained momentum during the perestroika era despite it being in stark contrast with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and why much of the discussion on women's roles in *Rabotnitsa* revolved around the combination of motherhood and work.

Throughout Soviet rule gender was a “key organising principle”, according to Sarah Ashwin. The regime used gender to strengthen its rule by attempting to establish certain kinds of gender relations and gender order, but the ideals and emphasis varied over the years. After the October Revolution, the Communist Party used women as “levers” in an attempt to undermine the old order and gain control over society. By bringing women and their domestic role under the

⁴⁰ Z. Krylova, “Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5. Наши беды непереводамы. В этой истине я в очередной раз убедилась, когда в одной западной стране пыталась объяснить собравшимся женщинам, почему, когда во всем мире женщины бьются за то, чтобы больше работать, наши мечтают работать поменьше.

⁴¹ This misconception is mentioned in several studies. See, for example, Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 26–27; Lissyutkina 1993, 274–286; Marsh 1996a, 5–6; Edmondson 1992, 1–2.

⁴² Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 26–27; Noonan 1996, 110–111.

influence of the Party, they could disrupt the patriarchal family and gain access to the private sphere. However, as Ashwin points out, there is no consensus among researchers on whether the new regime was genuinely committed to women's liberation or whether they were merely interested in establishing control over society through new laws that ended male privilege and gave women equal rights.⁴³

Still, the 1918 family code and 1920 abortion law constituted a significant change in how men, women and marriages between them were understood and treated in the eyes of the law. The new legislation abolished women's inferior position to men, illegitimate children were given the same rights as legitimate ones, couples could choose to take the wife's surname instead of the husband's, divorce could be obtained at the request of either spouse, only civil marriages were allowed, women were given eight weeks' leave before and after childbirth and full control over their property and earnings in case of divorce.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the 1920 Decree on the Legalisation of Abortions permitted abortions if the operation was performed by a doctor. However, the law was meant to end backstreet abortions, so the main motive behind it was not to guarantee women's right to their own bodies and the law was not supported by everyone either, both inside and outside the Party. There were also problems in the implementation of the other new laws as women were not aware of their new rights and using them remained challenging in a conservative society. In addition, many women fretted over their own security during uncertain times in post-revolutionary Russia if the family unit was destroyed.⁴⁵

Old gender roles were deep-rooted among communists, too, but those Bolsheviks who wished to see women's liberation happen in the spirit of the law and also in society at large understood that legislation was only one step in a much longer process to make the society more equal. For instance, Bolsheviks such as Alexandra Kollontai, Inessa Armand, Vladimir Lenin and Lev Trotsky regarded the reorganisation of domestic labour as crucial to women's liberation. Kollontai argued that the family as it had been understood previously would cease to exist when women were no longer dependent on men and childcare was organised collectively. Changes in the wider economic structure of the society, with the dictatorship of the proletariat, would lead to changes in the smaller structures, such as the family unit. Without the provision of communal childcare working women would not be liberated. Still, gender roles were not critically

⁴³ Ashwin 2000, 1–9.

⁴⁴ Ashwin 2000, 7; Engel 2004, 142.

⁴⁵ Buckley 1989, 37–38.

examined. The focus of the analysis was class and how social solutions were to free women from their domestic duties, not gender. Domestic services the state set up were run by women so childrearing, cooking and cleaning remained women's responsibilities also when performed outside the home. Men, on the other hand, were not expected to take on any new domestic responsibilities or roles.⁴⁶

In the years following the October Revolution, there were efforts made within and by the Communist Party to mobilise women and create communal childcare. The first All-Russian Conference of Working Women took place in November 1918 and in August 1919 Zhenotdel (Women's Bureau) was formed to coordinate the work the Party did among women. The Zhenotdel encouraged women to take part in public life through their local soviets, party organisations and trade unions but it also worked towards setting up services such as dining halls and childcare centres. However, the material conditions of those years were poor and so were the socialised services the new regime managed to create. The civil war further strengthened traditional gender stereotypes when obligatory military service was only extended to men and women were encouraged to support and care for the soldiers.⁴⁷

After the civil war, the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1921, did not bring about a positive change in establishing a basis for communal childcare institutions. Instead their funding was cut and many working women with children ended up unemployed as they did not have a place to leave their children during working hours. The Zhenotdel continued its work throughout the 1920s, and one of the means of spreading their message was the revived women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*. The Zhenotdel did not, however, enjoy wide support within the Party. It saw its funding decreased and the need to have a separate organisation for women was questioned. Domestic labour and gender relations were considered nowhere near as important as women's participation in the labour force. Thus, certain aspects of the ideology were regarded as more essential than others. Even though the Zhenotdel and its work towards women's emancipation was not overly popular among communists, the Party nevertheless needed women's participation in reproduction. Pronatalist views were therefore also among the many conflicting messages the Party passed on to women during the 1920s. Still, as the state could not provide comprehensive and decent childcare services, many urban women turned to abortion during a time of economic

⁴⁶ Buckley 1989, 39, 45–49; Attwood 1999, 34.

⁴⁷ Engel 2004, 143–145.

hardship and the birthrate fell. Peasant women were more reluctant to get abortions as they often considered them to be a sin but they also more often lost their babies during infancy.⁴⁸

2.2. The Stalin era 1928–1953

Moving on to the 1930s, the Zhenotdel was abolished and the woman question declared officially “solved”. The official stance of the Stalin years was that women’s liberation was achieved as the class struggle had been resolved with the October revolution, new legislation, and the victory of socialism.⁴⁹ However, the reality did not reflect the propaganda. Soviet women continued to be forced to cope with everyday hardships. The First and Second Five Year Plans (1928–1932 and 1933–1937) included goals for socialising domestic labour but did not bring about significant progress as the emphasis was put on heavy industry. The lack of a comprehensive network of creches and kindergartens meant long waiting lists, and many women struggled to meet the demands of work, motherhood and domestic duties. Grandmothers and domestic workers who moved from the countryside to the cities offered some relief to the situation but most women had to carry the double burden themselves as only elite families could afford servants. In 1936 women spent almost five times the amount of time doing house chores as their husbands, meaning that they spent nearly the same number of hours doing housework as they spent working outside the home. The disruption of food production due to the collectivisation of agriculture added to the already difficult everyday life as maintaining a household also meant standing in queues for bread, butter, meat, milk, and vegetables during food shortages. There was scarcity of other consumer goods, too.⁵⁰

The industrialisation of the 1930s did not create equal opportunities for women even though many of them joined the labour force during that decade. Firstly, the main reason why women took up jobs was that their families could not survive on men’s salaries alone. Women entered branches of industry that had previously been male-dominated but new lines of gender segregation were drawn from above. Sectors such as cotton and sewing as well as lower and middle level white collar and service sector jobs were defined as “female”. Still, the 1930s also meant new opportunities for some women, especially those with working-class backgrounds.

⁴⁸ Engel 2004, 149–152, 157, 161–162; Buckley 1989, 61.

⁴⁹ Buckley 1989, 105, 112.

⁵⁰ Engel 2004, 175–177; Pushkareva 1997, 260.

The proportion of women in higher education institutions grew and they entered fields such as law and economics in higher numbers than before.⁵¹

In the mid-30s, Soviet officials began to underline Soviet women's duty to society as mothers. Soviet officials became alarmed because the birthrate was declining and families were getting smaller. Women were not eager to have more children as they were burdened by the demands of everyday life as described above. Abortion was made illegal in 1936 and divorces became harder to obtain. The "new Soviet woman" was not only a worker but also a nurturing mother and a good wife, and the nuclear family was now considered an integral part of a socialist society.⁵² The combination of women's different roles was present in *Rabotnitsa*, too, as the magazine promoted the image of a woman who possessed both "masculine" traits, such as being a strong worker and "feminine" traits, such as being a nurturing mother and a wife.⁵³ Women were responsible for the private sphere but men were also pressured to assume their duties as fathers. This sentiment was clear in the new legislation of 1936 that included bonuses for mothers of large families, raised the level of child support, and introduced tougher penalties for men who neglected them.⁵⁴ This new legislation was supported by many Soviet citizens as it brought security, and some favoured it because of its traditional values. Family also offered refuge in a society troubled with mass arrests and purges.⁵⁵

During World War II, most Soviet women participated in the war efforts. In industry and agriculture they replaced male workers who were sent to the front and women's labour participation, measured as a percentage of the workforce, increased during the war, reaching 56 percent by the end of it. Hundreds of thousands also served in the armed forces with women fighting on every front and in every branch of the army.⁵⁶ The pre-war gender segregational lines of work disappeared during the war but in propaganda gendered imagery continued and even intensified. Women were depicted as mothers and through their relationship to men, for example when they had taken the job of a man who had been sent to the front. Moreover, femininity was underlined and women represented home and family.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Engel 2004, 174–175.

⁵² Engel 2004, 177–178; Clements 1991, 268.

⁵³ Attwood 1999, 170–171.

⁵⁴ Engel 2004, 178–179.

⁵⁵ Buckley 1989, 128–129.

⁵⁶ Clements 1991, 271; Engel 2004, 213–215.

⁵⁷ Engel 2004, 218–220.

Even though the lines of gender segregation had vanished during the war, they returned in the postwar era and were even reinforced. The process had already begun in 1944, before the end of the war, when a new family code was issued. It was meant to further strengthen the family and included openly pronatalist changes, such as the introduction of a tax for single people and married couples who had fewer than three children.⁵⁸ Motherhood was glorified in the official propaganda and readers of women's magazines *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka* learned that being a mother was the most important duty of every woman.⁵⁹ Women's participation in military action during the war was not celebrated or valued in the same way as men's. In the communities these women were accused of being "camp followers", meaning they had served as prostitutes at the front. Another common belief was that they had tarnished their femininity by joining the military. Either way, they had stepped out of the sphere and gender role that was considered acceptable for women and as a result many of these women now feared they would no longer be "marriageable".⁶⁰

After the war women were expected to return their war-time positions back to male workers returning from the front but female labour was nevertheless still needed by the economy as so many men had lost their lives.⁶¹ Women continued to be burdened by the combination of household duties and full-time work. There were not enough public services that would help women manage their everyday lives and consumer goods were scarce.⁶² In addition, women were expected to care for the men, many of whom had come back from the war wounded, mutilated or psychologically traumatised. Home was therefore also a place of reconstruction and it was the responsibility of women to maintain it. This, however, did not mean that women were considered the heads of the family. On the contrary, men were in charge. Women's role was to serve and comfort men who had been ravaged by the war as well as to bear and rear children, work, and be feminine. According to previous studies, apart from having the desired number of children, women also accepted this role and celebrated their femininity.⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid., 223.

⁵⁹ Attwood 1999, 158.

⁶⁰ Clements 1991, 273; Engel 2004, 223–224.

⁶¹ Attwood 1999, 150.

⁶² Engel 2004, 227–228.

⁶³ Engel 2004, 224–225, 229; Bucher 2000, 151.

2.3. From Khrushchev to the mid-1980s

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and with the arrival of the Nikita Khrushchev's "thaw" in 1956⁶⁴, the woman question, or at least some aspects of it, returned to the list of topics that could be discussed a bit more openly in public as censorship was eased. The equality between men and women was still celebrated as an achievement of the Soviet society and officially the woman question remained solved, but attention was drawn to the absence of women from political and professional leadership posts, and women's double burden. Yet, the policies were contradictory as were the expectations on women's roles. Also, the Stalinist legacy did not die with Stalin and change in gender relations was not easy to achieve.⁶⁵

The double burden continued to be the reality of Soviet women's lives. However, the Khrushchev administration delivered on some of the promises it had made in 1959 to improve the situation of the female half of the population. This was done by shifting the priorities of the economy from heavy industry to branches that would facilitate the everyday lives of its citizens, such as consumer goods, housing, and communal services. The state launched extensive housing projects and through them many Soviet families received homes with running water and heating. The production of consumer goods increased as well. Moreover, what was also important in terms of women being able to join the workforce was the increased number of preschool institutions. By 1965 half of eligible children had received a place in urban areas but only less than 12 percent in rural areas.⁶⁶

With the improved standard of living, the double burden lessened but it did not vanish. Women's career advancement continued to suffer due to the amount of housework they performed as they did not have enough time and energy to upgrade their skills or take more demanding jobs.⁶⁷ The same applied to women and their low profile in the field of politics.⁶⁸ This reinforced the prejudice that women were not able to do more skilled work or have further responsibilities. In the industrial sector, many women, almost a quarter of all female workers, worked in low-paid trades such as textiles and garment, where working conditions were poor. These trades were profitable as the labour was cheap. Therefore they were used to subsidize the heavy industry. This also prevented investment in costly machinery that would have made work less intensive.

⁶⁴ "Khrushchev's thaw" refers to a period under Khrushchev when censorship was comparatively relaxed.

⁶⁵ Engel 2004, 231–233; Attwood 2002, 159–160.

⁶⁶ Engel 2004, 237–238.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁸ Buckley 1989, 145.

On the other hand, mechanisation of work usually meant that female workers were replaced with male ones and women continued working in low and unskilled manual labour jobs. Even though the leadership acknowledged these problems, and for example banned the use of female workers in some other branches of the economy such as mines, the status of women workers did not improve during the Khrushchev administration.⁶⁹

During the Khrushchev administration, housework remained a woman's domain and motherhood was considered women's duty and pleasure. However, abortion was once again legalised in 1955 and the leadership announced that it was now every woman's right to choose whether they wanted to be mothers or not. At the same time the government encouraged women to become mothers, warned about the dangers of abortions, and did not increase the production or availability of contraceptives. Moreover, educational scientists and psychologists began to stress motherhood and homemaking as a woman's natural calling. "Feminine" personality traits were explained by biology and theorists even suggested that women should work in professions that were similar to their roles as nurturers also outside the home.⁷⁰

Contradictions were also present in the women's magazines of *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka*. In articles emphasis was put on the importance of women's participation in the workforce and production as work gave women a sense of pride and financial independence. Still, unlike for men, participation in reproduction was no less of a duty for women. Whereas the magazines encouraged women to work in male-dominated occupations, at the same time women's feminine qualities were stressed as if there was a risk of female workers losing these qualities while working in unconventional jobs. Furthermore, there was some promotion of men participating in housework but only with some more "masculine" tasks. Yet, the majority of illustrations these magazines published depicted women performing housework with pleasure, and articles that did not deal with husbands and sons helping wives and mothers at home reinforced gender stereotypes instead.⁷¹

The change of leadership in 1964 did not bring about any great changes to the position of women in the Soviet society as the developments that had started during the previous administration continued. The provision of services and consumer goods continued to grow, though modestly as

⁶⁹ Engel 2004, 236, 239; Pushkareva 1997, 262–263.

⁷⁰ Engel 2004, 233, 240–241.

⁷¹ Attwood 2002, 161–162, 168–169, 172.

heavy industry and defence were still a priority for the Soviet leadership under Brezhnev. For instance, by the mid-1970s 45 percent of children had received a place in a preschool institution, about half Soviet households had a refrigerator and about 60% of households owned a washing machine. However, shortages still occasionally occurred even in big cities and there were economic disparities between urban and rural areas.⁷²

In the Brezhnev era, women still bore the double burden and the dissatisfaction among women was growing. This did not go without consequences. Women in the European areas of the Soviet Union were having fewer children, though abortions had outnumbered births already in 1960 during the previous administration, and the divorce rate was increasing with women initiating most of the cases.⁷³ However, the difference with the new administration was that it recognised that the woman question was not solved but instead that there were still problems that needed to be worked on. In the 1960s and 1970s social scientists debated both on how to lessen women's workload and how to combat the falling birthrate. Even though it was acknowledged by researchers that women did more housework than men, the recognition of this issue did not include examining gender relations or gender roles; instead, emphasis was put on how the state could help ease women's burden, by for example providing better state services.⁷⁴

In the 1970s, the "demographic crisis" due to the falling birthrate in the European republics prompted a discussion on women's roles in the press. Therefore something that had already begun in the academic circles in the 1960s was now also introduced to the wider public. This discussion revolved around the concerns over the "masculinisation" of the female personality and the "feminisation" of males.⁷⁵ Women's femininity had been damaged by new qualities they had acquired as workers. Having fewer children had also played a role.⁷⁶ Women and their allegedly lost femininity were even blamed for social ills such as alcoholism as men were no longer the breadwinners of the family and had therefore lost their purpose and resorted to alcohol.⁷⁷ The solution was the restoration of traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. It was argued that the "psychophysiological" traits of women, meaning they were based on biology and psychology, made women better suited for childrearing as they were more nurturing by

⁷² Engel 2004, 242–234.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 243–244.

⁷⁴ Buckley 1989, 161–163, 168–169

⁷⁵ Ashwin 2000, 16;

⁷⁶ Attwood 1990, 166–167.

⁷⁷ Engel 2004, 246–247.

nature. This meant that there was no need for critical examination of gendered division of labour or the distribution of labour in the home. Suggestions that differences in personality traits might result from nurture rather than nature were labelled as bourgeois feminism and condemned.⁷⁸

In the 1970s and early 1980s the state introduced several legislative changes to strengthen the family and emphasise women's roles as mothers. For instance, in 1973 all women became eligible for full maternity benefits, and paid leave in order to take care of a sick child was extended from three to seven days. In 1978 more jobs were added to the list of occupations that were considered harmful for women. Pregnant women and women with small children were not allowed to perform physically demanding tasks, and mothers were allowed to request flexible working hours.⁷⁹ In 1981 the government extended maternity leave so that mothers could take partially paid leave until the child reached the age of one and afterwards another six months of unpaid leave without losing their position at work. Before this, women had had the option of taking only one year of unpaid leave after the fully paid maternity leave of 56 days after giving birth.⁸⁰

In the last years of Brezhnev's leadership and during the short terms of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, the woman question was more closely linked to the demographic situation and the falling birthrate. The 26th Party Congress in 1981 declared that the way to solve the "population problem" was "through greater concern for the family, newlyweds and above all women".⁸¹ More emphasis was put on finding ways to ease women's double burden by providing childcare facilities, part-time work and extended maternity leave. The pronatalist stance of the government was intensified by the increased volume of books and articles on demography and a continuous media campaign to promote motherhood as women's primary vocation. Femininity was underlined. Instead of critically examining the double burden, women's self-sacrifice was perceived as a feminine characteristic and the existing gender order was further reinforced.⁸² Moreover, in 1983 a course called "The Ethics and Psychology of Family Life" for ninth and tenth grade students was introduced to all schools to socialise students into the appropriate gender roles. The course aimed to teach that men were expected to help around the house but women were expected to combine their roles as mother and worker.

⁷⁸ Buckley 1989, 175.

⁷⁹ Selezneva 2016, 12–14.

⁸⁰ Engel 2004, 245.

⁸¹ Materialy XXVI s'ezda KPSS 1981, 54, cited in Buckley 1989, 180.

⁸² Buckley 1989, 179–181; Engel 2004, 248; Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 22–23.

Motherhood was portrayed as “the woman’s great mission” and women should treat their families as a priority as their innate nature was to nurture. Students were encouraged to have children through the teaching of how the state offered help in the form of different measures, such as benefits to make it easier for women to combine their two roles; it was also emphasised that people with families lived longer and healthier lives.⁸³

Despite the state propaganda and pronatalist campaign, the early 1980s also saw a few female sociologists coming out with views that men, and children, should participate in housework. Still no critical examination of traditional gender roles took place, but the discussion of male domestic roles was nevertheless a subtle shift towards a more nuanced discussion on the domestic labour that was resting almost entirely on women’s shoulders. Moreover, already in the 1970s there had been disagreements on the desirability of part-time work, as among scientific circles some researchers argued that part-time work might be having a negative impact on women’s career advancement.⁸⁴ This therefore shows that even before perestroika and glasnost, different arguments on how to lighten women’s double burden existed even though the wider debate did not take place in the media and dissenting arguments did not include questioning gender roles as such.

In this chapter I have examined the research literature on the historical background of the double burden, how the double burden came to be, how it developed, and how women’s roles as mothers and workers were understood during several different administrations after the October Revolution. As shown in previous studies, domestic and childrearing tasks continued to be female activities, even though after the revolution some Bolsheviks regarded the reorganisation of domestic labour as crucial to women’s liberation. Marxism-Leninism remained the official ideology of the Soviet Union throughout these years but some aspects of the ideology, such as women’s participation in the workforce, were emphasised more than others. There were no radical changes in the Soviet gender order after the Second World War and before the late 1980s, when it was finally challenged and debated. According to the authorities and the official propaganda, Soviet citizens enjoyed equality regardless of their sex. Yet, in addition to working outside the home, Soviet women took responsibility for the home and housework. This resulted in the double burden, a task that was made even more difficult by the poor service sector and the lack of consumer goods. Women’s career advancement, too, was often hindered by the double

⁸³ Pilkington 1992, 208; Attwood 1990, 186–189.

⁸⁴ Buckley 1989, 168–171, 182–184.

task of a working mother. Moreover, old gender roles were deep-rooted but gender was not systematically analysed, and the glorification of motherhood and strengthening of traditional gender stereotypes and notions of femininity and masculinity further reinforced the sentiment that housework and childrearing were female functions.⁸⁵

It should also be noted that in the Soviet Union the woman question was an issue that needed to be somehow solved. The fact that a woman question existed at all suggests that the society was built on the male norm, and therefore women who did not fit this norm as both workers and mothers, were labelled as a problem that needed to be solved. Men and women also had different roles and duties in society even though they both participated in the labour force, as women's reproductive role in society was considered different than that of men. As will be shown in the next three chapters, women's productive and reproductive roles, the combination of these roles, and the conflict between these roles, something that had resulted in the double burden, continued to be present in the discussion on women's roles in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, the Soviet gender order was challenged, and the relaxation of censorship allowed arguments that had previously been condemned or silenced to emerge. On the other hand, the promotion of traditional gender roles gained momentum as the constraints of the ideology were gradually removed.

⁸⁵ Liljeström 1995, 347–348, 353; Temkina and Rotkirch 1997, 6–7; Salmenniemi 2008, 56; Buckley 1989, 225–228.

3. Resurrecting traditional gender roles

3.1. Emphasising femininity

Even though there were no fundamental changes in the Soviet gender order between the 1940s and the 1980s, there was a shift towards a more traditional notion of gender and gender roles from the 1970s onwards, as discussed in the previous chapter. Emphasis on women's "natural" feminine features and personality traits became more pronounced and biological determinism, to an even greater extent, explained differences between men and women and their tasks in both public and private spheres. Women's roles as mothers were underlined and motherhood perceived as an essential part of womanhood.⁸⁶ As examined in this chapter, these elements were still present in the discussion on women's roles in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Soviet gender order was challenged.

In this chapter, I firstly analyse how femininity was emphasised and how it was linked to women's roles. Then, in the second subchapter, I focus on women, the home and their roles as mothers and how they were stressed in *Rabotnitsa*. In the last subchapter, I examine the increasingly prevalent desire to return women to the home that was present especially in the articles published in the early 1990s. This sentiment I understand as a solution to the double burden, which was offered to the reader as an alternative to the Soviet ideal of combining motherhood with work. Most of the comments, articles or interviews examined in this chapter are in line with the mainstream approach to the woman question and gender roles of the articles published in the late 1970s and early 1980s and represent biological determinism and the promotion of women's "natural" feminine features and roles.⁸⁷ Still, I argue that the views of some of the contributors of the early 1990s *Rabotnitsa* articles are in such stark contradiction with the very idea of Marxism-Leninism, and the Soviet ideal of equal opportunities regardless of sex, that they probably would not have been published before glasnost. These articles and comments that represent a much more conservative stance on gender and women's roles are analysed in the last subchapter (3.3.). Before that, in the first two subchapters, I examine

⁸⁶ Liljeström 1995, 347–348, 353; Temkina and Rotkirch 1997, 6–7; Engel 2004, 246.

⁸⁷ Attwood 1990, 165–182. See also Liljeström 1995, 347–367. Attwood examines articles published in popular press, including *Rabotnitsa*, in one chapter of her book *The New Soviet Man and Woman* (1990). Also Marianne Liljeström uses some *Rabotnitsa* articles from the 1970s in *Emanciperade till underordning* (1995). My understanding of the mainstream approach to gender roles in the popular press of the late 1970s and early 1980s is based on these studies.

comments resemble those that can be found in press articles of pre-perestroika times. Their view on male and female personality traits and characteristics was traditional and they understood them as something that was either male or female. Moreover, motherhood was often emphasised.⁸⁸ In these first two subchapters I partly use the same interviews, as femininity and motherhood were often very much interconnected. These interviews are good examples of that link. They also directly commented on the woman question and women's roles and therefore they offer a lot of instructive material on this topic.

As discussed in chapter 2, there had been a continuous pronatalist media campaign launched by the previous administrations that began in the mid-1970s and was aimed at non-Asian areas due to their falling birthrate. Motherhood was promoted and glorified, femininity was underlined, and women's self-sacrifice was valued.⁸⁹ This was also evident in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa* during that period. This campaign was a continuation of the work of pedagogical literature published by educational scientists as early as the 1960s that called for more traditional views on femininity, masculinity, and the upbringing of boys and girls, as well as a re-examination of women's emancipation and equality between the sexes.⁹⁰ In addition to the press campaign, a course called "The Ethics and Psychology of Family Life", which was meant to socialise ninth and tenth grade students into the appropriate gender roles by teaching them traditional feminine and masculine personality characteristics, was introduced into school curriculums in the early 1980s.⁹¹ Thus, the pronatalist campaign did not only include propaganda in the newspapers and other media to encourage people to have more children, but was also extended to schools in order to mould teenagers into appropriate and more traditional gender roles that would serve the purpose of preventing divorces and increasing the birthrate.

Even though the ideal of the Soviet superwoman was shattered in the media when censorship was relaxed, emphasis on women's "natural" femininity and fundamental differences between men and women remained. These were sentiments that had been present already in the 1970s and early 1980s. Another aspect of this was the concern over the "masculinisation" of the female personality and the "feminisation" of the male personality, an element that had been present in both educational and social scientists' writings as well as in the contents of the school course.⁹²

⁸⁸ Attwood 1990, 165–182.

⁸⁹ Buckley 1989, 179–181; Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 22–23.

⁹⁰ Attwood 1990, 165.

⁹¹ Pilkington 1992, 208.

⁹² Attwood 1990, 166–167.

One illustrative example of how this theme was present in the late 1980s *Rabotnitsa* is the interview of Zoya Boguslavskaya, a well-known Soviet writer, playwright and critic, who also addressed the woman question on other platforms during the perestroika era.⁹³ This article was part of the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna* (Open podium) that was dedicated to the discussion on the woman question and was published between March 1988 and August 1990. For this reason Boguslavskaya's interview addressed women's roles directly and is therefore an important primary source for this study.⁹⁴

In Boguslavskaya's interview the concern over the "masculinisation" of women is very present. When answering the interviewer's question about what losses have occurred in society and how they have affected women, Boguslavskaya argued the following:

*We all the time pretended that there were no fundamental differences between a man and the fair sex. And thought it was almost a blessing. The image of a persistent woman, who is able to bear and give anything and who is in no way inferior to her partner, has been formed. The Amazon who works the night shifts, drives a tractor and a plane. [—] Little by little the natural kindness, pliability and grace lose their value, as do the smooth lines of dresses, the swan's gait, and the long curls. Together with the trousers, the wide strides, the haircut and the cigarette increases the sharpness of tone, the ferocity of quarrels, the desire to always be one with the male society.*⁹⁵

Boguslavskaya was therefore worried that women had lost their femininity by working in masculine occupations and in order to become equal with men. She implied that women had been pushed to this position by the state and official propaganda that had made everyone believe that there were no differences between sexes, where in fact, according to her, men and women were different by nature. Boguslavskaya seems to understand certain characteristics are inherently either female or male.

⁹³ L. Shevtsova, "Vozvrashcheniye k sebe", *Rabotnitsa*, 10/1988, 18–20. Boguslavskaya also addressed the woman question in her article published in *Literaturnaya gazeta* in August 1987. In 1989 her article was published in English in the academic journal *Canadian Woman Studies*. See Boguslavskaya 1989.

⁹⁴ L. Shevtsova, "Vozvrashcheniye k sebe", *Rabotnitsa*, 10/1988, 18–20.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* "Мы же все время делали вид, что принципиальных различий между мужчиной и прекрасным полом нет. И считали это чуть ли не благом. Сформировался образ нести-баемой, способной все вынести и дать отпор женщины, ни в чем не уступающей своему партнеру. Эдакой «амазонки», которая работает в ночную смену, водит трактор и самолет. [—] Мало-помалу природная доброта, уступчивость, изящество теряют цену, как и плавные линии платьев, лебединая походка, длинные локоны. Вместе с брюками, широким шагом, стрижкой и сигаретой возрастают резкость тона, ожесточенность споров, желание всегда быть «своей» в мужском обществе."

Interestingly enough, it was the interviewer who implied that women had lost “features inherent only to them” by asking Boguslavskaya what had led to this situation. Of course Boguslavskaya had implied this earlier in the interview as is shown above. Also, later in the interview she was led to discuss emancipation by arguing that many of *Rabotnitsa*’s readers who had sent letters to the magazine seemed to think that women had more rights than they actually needed, and through the struggle for securing these rights there had been losses for women. According to the interviewer, women had a “passionate desire to find themselves, to return to themselves” and be women again. Boguslavskaya agreed and added that “a woman needs to be feminine, womanly” because she was already “fed up” with being masculine.⁹⁶ She therefore implied that women had been forced to deny their natural feminine qualities.

According to Lynne Attwood, the “masculinisation” of women (and the “feminisation” of men) was a topic that had been especially taken up by the Soviet journalists in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and therefore Boguslovskaya’s and the interviewer’s comments were not at all unusual. Particularly from the late 1970s onwards, pedagogical theorists had concentrated on sex upbringing and started emphasising the “biological basis” of male and female personality differences and therefore portrayed them as somewhat inherent and essential instead of moulded by environmental factors. According to Attwood, these writings were mostly based on assumptions and descriptions of sex differences, were without scientific theories and in contrast with earlier scientific studies done in the field of psychology. Attwood argues that this contrast with earlier scientific studies could be explained by the social and political climate in which the pedagogical writings found their popularity in the 1970s. The “masculinisation” of women and the “feminisation” of men were linked to the increasing level of divorces and decreasing birthrate and this made the phenomenon relevant to the demographic concerns that became more pronounced in the late 1970s.⁹⁷ Mary Buckley also addresses this theme and argues that towards the end of the 1970s many social scientists started to pay more attention to demographics. Articles in the newspapers urged women to marry at an earlier age and the promotion of “natural” gender differences increased. Women’s femininity and men’s masculinity were to be pursued.⁹⁸ Marianne Liljeström claims that gender-specific social conditions were also behind the concerns over the “masculinisation” of women and the “feminisation” of men. Women were

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Attwood 1990, 2–4, 166–169.

⁹⁸ Buckley 1989, 174–175.

exhausted by their double burden and divorces were primarily initiated by women. Men had lost their role as the breadwinner of the family whereas women had joined the labour force. Alcoholism was increasing among men. These circumstances then created concerns over the weakening of the patriarchal gender order and “natural” gendered tasks and places.⁹⁹

Although Boguslavskaya claimed that the successful combination of a career and motherhood was almost impossible, she also argued that women’s inherent qualities were also undervalued outside the home and should be put to good use in working life. She supported “raising the prestige of women”. Boguslavskaya gave the example of the Soviet ambassador to Switzerland, Zoya Novozhilova, whose interview is examined in the next subchapter. Boguslovskaya regretted that it took nearly a half a century for the Soviet Union to have a female ambassador again. She argued that the younger generation of women wanted to be more equal both at home and in the public sphere. She thought it should be noticed how in other countries women “successfully use the unique ability of a woman to establish contact with a business partner, reach an agreement in the most hopeless situation, [and] persuade [people] to go forward”. According to Boguslavskaya, in the West many major businesses had female secretaries and women’s good organisational skills were useful when implementing the ideas given by the head of the company. Boguslavskaya concludes that in that line of work “[n]ot only creativity, diligence, but also the realization of ideas is one of the very fruitful areas of women's activity”. On the other hand, it seems that not every type of work was suitable for women. When answering another question and comparing the position of women in American and Soviet societies, Boguslavskaya stated she was grateful to the Soviet state “for protecting women from many unsustainable male affairs that disfigure their essence”.¹⁰⁰ Therefore it seems that she supported some sort of occupational segregation of professions based on sex as she did not consider certain professions or work-shifts good for women and welcomed protective legislation that restricted women from performing hazardous work. She also implies that women’s characteristics made them more suitable for secretarial work whereas men would still occupy the managerial position.

Similarly, in August 1990, a Candidate of Philosophical Sciences¹⁰¹, Galina Yakusheva, brought up using feminine qualities in work in the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna*. First she brought up a

⁹⁹ Liljeström 1995, 347–348.

¹⁰⁰ L. Shevtsova, “Vozvrashcheniye k sebe”, *Rabotnitsa*, 10/1988, 18–20.

¹⁰¹ A Candidate of Sciences degree (*kandidat nauk*) is the lower level of a doctoral degree.

couple of rather conservative statements that had been made on the topic. According to Yakusheva, Karim Rash had written in *Pravda* newspaper of how a low birthrate and the breakdown of families were caused by women being part of the workforce and therefore women should be returned to the home to her children in order to remedy this situation, and that the husband should get his wife's salary. Another statement raised by Yakusheva was made by an unnamed female People's Deputy candidate who had noted that women spending three years at home with their children was a positive thing because they would become dependent on their husbands. According to this unnamed candidate, this would then force the husband to take more responsibility and make it more difficult for the wife to file for a divorce. Yakusheva saw these views as outdated and not in line with perestroika, as women should not be treated like "passportless peasants" who were not allowed to leave their village. She claimed that it was an advantage to keep women in working life, as well as in politics, because of the feminine qualities that they brought with them. Furthermore, the "feelings of motherhood, tenderness, heightened ability to compassion" could actually work to a woman's advantage at work.¹⁰² She therefore did not endorse returning women to the home as women's feminine traits were a valuable asset in the public sphere. Yakusheva's views are very similar to those of Boguslovskaya. Both saw women's feminine traits as important and useful features in working life but they both imply that these traits were different than those possessed by men. Similarly in the pedagogical writings that were meant for mass consumption in the late 1970s and 1980s, analysed by Marianne Liljeström, women's "natural" qualities were useful at work but they also defined what tasks and professions were better suited for women.¹⁰³ Therefore views expressed by both Boguslavskaya and Yakusheva were a continuation of the sentiment that had been prevalent in writings on women's feminine qualities and tasks already in the 1970s.

Like Boguslavskaya, Yakusheva, too, was worried about the "masculinisation" of women. She supported the idea that every woman and man had a choice over their careers and whether they wanted to stay at home with their children or not, a theme further examined in subchapter 4.3. Yakusheva noted that some men "fully realise themselves only in their home life - soldering, repairing, planning, digging a vegetable garden, even cooking" whereas for some women it would be a tragedy not to be able to realise oneself in professional or social activities. Therefore not every woman needed to be a cook and not every man needed to be a "hunter and earner". Yakusheva argued that women would not turn into angels and lose the "unfeminine"

¹⁰² Galina Yakusheva, "Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

¹⁰³ Liljeström 1993, 166–167.

characteristics some were worried about, such as the rudeness and irritability, if they were prohibited from working and their books taken away. Yet, later in the article Yakusheva complained about the “unnatural distribution of roles” when it came to dating and romantic relationships between a man and a woman. In this field, women should not be “hunters”, remarked Yakusheva, and explained how this switching of roles has led to a situation where both men and women were unhappy and women were accused of “adultery and divorce, feeling of loneliness in the family, [and a] dissatisfaction with marriage”. According to Yakusheva, “the happiness of a man is to love, and the happiness of a woman is to be loved”. She was also happy that there had been a development of a new type of man who was energetic and active as “next to such a man rises a woman with decent and free personality” who does “not want to get rid of her beautiful dependence on male strength, reliability, support and love”.¹⁰⁴ Yakusheva implied that even though men and women possessed different characteristics, they could still both participate in the labour force and they could both enjoy doing things at home. However, it seems that cooking was something that was considered a bit more feminine out of those tasks Yakusheva gave as examples some men enjoy, as the word “even” was placed in front of it. She therefore understood men and women as possibly having complimentary characteristics, especially in personal relationships.

What is interesting is that even though Yakusheva emphasised how men and women as groups were very heterogeneous when it came to professional aspirations and interests, in their personal lives the setting was very different. In romantic life, women should not be the “hunter” but someone who was dependent on her male spouse. This, again, is a sentiment that had been present in the writings of the previous decade. According to Marianne Liljeström, there had been three types of behaviour that had been emphasised and defined as feminine in gender relations: coquetry, shyness and modesty. Women were not supposed to court men as that behaviour was reserved for men and considered unnatural for women. Shyness was, on the other hand, a sign of a woman's receptiveness to men.¹⁰⁵ I would therefore argue that at least two of these behaviour patterns, coquetry and shyness, are emphasised by Yakusheva, especially if shyness is understood as being receptive, as Liljeström argues. This is because Yakusheva thought women should not be “hunters” on the romantic front and that, with the right kind of man, women would happily be less independent and accept her role by her man. Yakusheva also implied that something is expected from men too as she refers to this ideal partner as “a new type of man who

¹⁰⁴ Galina Yakusheva, “Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

¹⁰⁵ Liljeström 1993, 169–170.

was energetic and active” next to whom a woman and her personality could flourish, something that was needed because of the “unnatural distribution of roles”.¹⁰⁶ This could mean that she was concerned about the “feminisation of men”, which was coined with the “masculinisation of women”, because she implied that this unnatural distribution of roles needed to be reversed so women and men could both thrive in personal relationships. However, just before introducing “a new type of man who was energetic and active” she had argued that turning back “the historical clock” was impractical.¹⁰⁷ I understand these archetypes as a product of the wish to remain “feminine” women and “masculine” men in personal, romantic relationships but not to send women back to the home where their place had been in the earlier periods of history. This new type of man would let women have a career but he would also be the active party in forming romantic relationships so women did not need to be “hunters”.

Interviewed for the same *Otkrytaya tribuna* article series as Boguslavskaya and Yakusheva, the sociologist Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, too, thought women’s feminine qualities could be useful at work. Bestuzhev-Lada was featured in *Rabotnitsa* several times, both before and after his interview of 1988. According to Lynne Attwood, Bestuzhev-Lada was a proponent of returning women to the home but he also slightly changed his reasoning depending on the current economic situation. In the 1990s, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, his statements became more supportive of the view that a women’s place was in the home with her children.¹⁰⁸

In the interview given to *Rabotnitsa* in 1988 Bestuzhev-Lada’s views were not as explicit when it came to returning women to the home, but on using feminine qualities at work they were rather different to those of Boguslavskaya or Yakusheva. He proposed a system in which women on maternity leave would also work as kindergarten teachers. Mothers and teachers are “allies and like-minded people”, he noted. Mothers would be on teacher duty a couple of hours a day and teach a group of children, including her own child. When they were not teaching, and their child was being taught by another mother, they could go and run their errands and have “a rather intense social and everyday life”. There would no longer be a need for nannies and they would disappear as a profession. This was not, however, a negative result as “having entrusted the matter of raising our children to professionals only, we ourselves have programmed the now-broken gap between the generations”. Thus, it was better if mothers did the educating rather than

¹⁰⁶ Galina Yakusheva, “Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Attwood 1996, 257–258; Attwood 1990, 171.

professionals as it was better for the families. Bestuzhev-Lada even proposed creating a network of women's pedagogical institutions "that would give the whole complex of knowledge and skills, the totality of a special culture necessary to become a true keeper of the home".¹⁰⁹ He therefore implied that women shared certain characteristics and qualities that made them more suitable for work such as teaching. These qualities could then be further cultivated by training women to be better at childrearing and running the home. The educational function of women and mothers was also emphasised by Gorbachev in *Perestroika* when he referred to women's "specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home-maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children".¹¹⁰ Thus, Bestuzhev-Lada was not alone in his view of also seeing mothers as educators as this view was shared by the General Secretary himself. As Gorbachev's book was published before the interview, it is also possible that Gorbachev's statement influenced or reinforced Bestuzhev-Lada's views on women.

In his interview, Bestuzhev-Lada linked women to the home and raising children quite unmistakably, even though he mentioned that fathers could also take paternity leave as it should be up to the family to decide who stays at home with the child or children. He thought more and more women were interested in staying home with their children and argued that there were three types of women. Some were more career-oriented, some thrived as mothers, and still others were somewhere in between. In this sense, Yakusheva's view that neither men or women were homogeneous groups with identical interests and aspirations was similar to Bestuzhev-Lada's argument. However, proposing that women could go and study in women-only institutions to become better homemakers reveals that Bestuzhev-Lada considered childrearing and domestic duties as categorically women's responsibilities. He also extended women's duty of motherhood to tasks that could be performed outside the home, such as kindergarten teaching. There are therefore similarities between his and Boguslovskaya's views in the sense that they both express views of a gender segregated labour market due to innate characteristics that are based on one's biological sex. Yet, Boguslovskaya saw women as working side by side with men in certain working environments where women could put their innate qualities, such as good organisational and people skills, to good use. Bestuzhev-Lada linked work suitable for women more directly to motherhood and childrearing, at least the type of women of whom he spoke about the most. Nevertheless it should be noted that Bestuzhev-Lada also agreed that there were women who

¹⁰⁹ I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

¹¹⁰ Gorbachev 1987, 757-759.

were more career-orientated. However he did suggest that more and more women were now oriented towards the home.

Mary Buckley assesses similar views to those of Bestuzhev-Lada that were shared by other social scientists in the 1970s in *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*. Women were characterised as “emotional, gentle, delicate, thoughtful, kind, sensitive and understanding”, and seen as a “special category” of labour due to their dual roles as both workers and mothers. Due to their “psychophysiological characteristics” that made them both physiologically and psychologically different from men, women were more suitable for nurturing roles than men. For social scientists these differences meant that there was no need for critical examination of gendered division of labour inside or outside the home as communism would not eradicate them.¹¹¹ In a similar manner, Bestuzhev-Lada implied that due to their nurturing qualities women were better suited to teaching and looking after children. Boguslavskaya, again, saw women as being better at organising, interpersonal communication and offering emotional support, and Yakusheva’s point of view was very similar to that of Boguslavskaya.

As examined in this subchapter, several writings that were especially dedicated to the discussion on women’s roles as part of the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna*, emphasised femininity and the difference between men and women. However, there were also differences in the articles as Boguslavskaya and Yakusheva stressed the positive addition they could bring to work outside the home and Bestuzhev-Lada concentrated on describing how women were more suited to the roles of childrearer and educator, the same element Gorbachev had emphasised in *Perestroika* a year earlier. Therefore, emphasising femininity and sharing a traditional notion of it did not always mean the contributor was advocating sending women back to the home. Still, what seems to be similar, at least in the case of Boguslavskaya and Bestuzhev-Lada, is that tasks women and men performed were to be divided according to what was best suited to their gender characteristics. Both, then, seemed to have promoted a gender order where tasks were, at least to some extent, divided between men and women. With Yakusheva this sentiment is less clear though she also argued that feminine qualities were useful in the public sphere as well. The articles examined above are given here as examples but these were not the only ones that shared the view that men and women had different characters and that this might result in different tasks

¹¹¹ Buckley 1989, 174–175.

and responsibilities. This can also be seen in the articles and comments analysed in the next two subchapters.

3.2. Strengthening the family, focusing on motherhood

As discussed in chapter 2 and the beginning of this chapter, women's roles as mothers became emphasised from the 1970s onwards, both in academic circles as in the press and writings meant for a wider audience. Due to their "natural" feminine traits, women were seen as better suited to the role of a childrearer. Because of their roles as mothers, among the workforce they belonged to a different category than men. The emphasis on women's domestic orientation and their roles as mothers and wives continued in the late 1980s and early 1990s and, as discussed in the beginning of this thesis and in chapter 2, this was even voiced by the General Secretary of the CPSU Gorbachev in his book *Perestroika*, which was published in 1987.¹¹² Therefore, in this subchapter I examine how motherhood and the home were emphasised in relation to women's roles in *Rabotnitsa* articles of that time.

In many *Rabotnitsa* articles, women were linked to motherhood and the home very closely. Many of them imply that a woman cannot be happy without children and without being a mother, while some say it very directly, such as Mikhail Gorbachev's wife Raisa Gorbacheva in a short interview done at the All-Union Conference of Women in January 1987 and published in *Rabotnitsa*'s March issue the same year: "A woman cannot be truly happy without children, a husband, home. When she says she finds it easier and freer to be alone, do not believe her."¹¹³ Mrs. Gorbacheva's comments were not unprecedented. Statements such as the one Mrs. Gorbacheva made in 1987 were very much in line with the official sentiment and understanding of women's roles in society that had been promoted since the 1970s, and motherhood was at the centre of them. The sentiment of resurrecting traditional roles for men and women had become prevalent during the Brezhnev administration and this had continued during the short terms of Andropov and Chernenko.¹¹⁴ While many other policies were changed or new policies were introduced by the Gorbachev administration, this sentiment seems to have lived on. The excerpt from Gorbachev's book, *Perestroika*, which was introduced at the very beginning of this thesis, supports this conclusion. Gorbachev regretted that women no longer had enough time for

¹¹² Buckley 1989, 174–175.

¹¹³ "Khozyayki zemli rodnoy", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1987, 2–6.

¹¹⁴ Buckley 1989, 179–181.

“housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere” and wished for a way women could “return to their purely womanly mission”¹¹⁵ Therefore, even though perestroika and glasnost had surely made some impact on views and discussions on a variety of topics by the time his wife Raisa Gorbacheva made her comments in January 1987, gender relations and women’s roles were not yet among them. That is why it is also important to note that the debate on women’s roles only really began in January 1987, when the Soviet Women’s Committee took up the issue of women’s current problems (it was during this conference that Gorbacheva participated, and this was also when Gorbachev demanded further reforms at the Central Committee Plenum).¹¹⁶

The debate and discussion on women’s roles fuelled by glasnost was not clearly evident in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa* before 1988. For example, the editorial of the December 1987 issue, written by a *Rabotnitsa* journalist Irina Sklyar, was merely a commendation of all the decisions and discussions the state had undertaken. Its style was still quite propagandist even though it mentioned that the silence on women’s problems had finally been broken during the year that was now coming to an end. The framework of the official Soviet gender order that included both wage work and motherhood as women’s dual duties was also still very present in the beginning of the years this thesis examines, and, as in the case of Irina Sklyar’s editorial, they were celebrated.¹¹⁷

Similarly, a month later, the Soviet gender order was not challenged in an interview of a Soviet diplomat, the Soviet ambassador to Switzerland Zoya Novozhilova, as both the combination of roles and emphasis on women’s responsibilities as a mother were explored. Novozhilova was the first female ambassador since Alexandra Kollontai (who had been the first woman to occupy such a post and had served as a Soviet diplomat in the 1920s until the 1940s).¹¹⁸ Novozhilova confessed that her own priority had always been work, and interestingly enough added that she was not embarrassed to tell this to the readers. However, even though the article was called “Women can do anything!” she stated that “first of all, a woman is a mother” and then talked about “female destiny” in relation to her family and children.¹¹⁹ This conflict evident in Novozhilova’s comments concerning women and their double role within society reflects

¹¹⁵ Gorbachev Mikhail 1987, 758–759.

¹¹⁶ Noonan 1996, 110; Buckley 1992a, 203.

¹¹⁷ Irina Sklyar, “God nashey zhizni”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1987, 2.

¹¹⁸ Rotkirch 2014, 204–206.

¹¹⁹ V. Mekhontsev, “Zhenshchiny mogut vsë!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1988, 12–13.

something that Sarah Ashwin calls “the combination of traditionalism and radicalism”. These elements lived side by side in Soviet propaganda and in this context it is therefore understandable why one might stress both aspects of the ideal Soviet woman, motherhood and work, even in a slightly contradictory manner like in the case of Novozhilova’s interview.¹²⁰ These somewhat conflicting comments are an example of the old ideal of a Soviet woman who in a self-sacrificing manner combines her two duties, or even destinies, of motherhood and work. Also, Novozhilova was a Soviet diplomat, an ambassador, so comments made by her surely followed the line of the Party, especially when the debate on women’s roles had not yet reached its full force.

As I examined the primary sources, I noticed that these types of views and comments that somewhat praised, or at least uncritically reflected, the combination of roles of an ideal Soviet woman were still present in 1988 but they became rarer in the pages of *Rabotnitsa* as the years passed. I would argue that admiring women’s ability to combine both roles became increasingly unpopular, especially when the Party no longer controlled the discussion through censorship. However, it should be noted that the pronatalist campaign and sentiments stressing women’s roles first and foremost as mothers had swept through the media years before Gorbachev came into power. Also, as examined in chapter 2, addressing the problematic nature of this combination of roles that resulted in the double burden had partly begun even before the Gorbachev administration. This was because the Brezhnev administration had recognised that the woman question was not solved after all and widened the range of topics that could be discussed.¹²¹ Therefore the problematic nature of combining the roles of mother and worker had already been acknowledged at least in some *Rabotnitsa* articles in the late 1970s.¹²² Still, glasnost must have had its impact on what was published in *Rabotnitsa* because the censorship was relaxed and a wider discussion on women’s roles and the problems women faced was introduced in 1987. I would argue that this could particularly be seen in the later years when points of views in *Rabotnitsa* articles became more divided and they drifted away from the old ideal. These views are further examined in the next subchapter 3.3. and in chapter 4.

However, all the elements of the ideal Soviet woman were not suddenly replaced by a new ideal or ideals either. This could be seen in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s in

¹²⁰ Ashwin 2000, 17–18.

¹²¹ Buckley 1989, 162–163, 187–188.

¹²² Smeyukha 2012, 62–63.

which some contributors still stressed certain elements of the old Soviet ideal in their writings, while at the same time other contributors criticised the ideal. For example, in the March 1988 issue, a well-known Soviet actor, Yuriy Nikulin, wrote that women are self-sacrificing by nature and that men should acknowledge and appreciate this more often.¹²³ Women's self-sacrifice had also been understood as part of femininity in the earlier decades.¹²⁴ Then again, only five pages later, *Rabotnitsa*'s editor of the magazine's social problems department, I. Zhuravskaya, asked what men were combining their work with if women were supposed to combine it with motherhood.¹²⁵ Therefore, the views present in *Rabotnitsa* did not follow a certain ideal or model. In general, they became more critical towards the old ideal of a Soviet superwoman who combines motherhood with work but their point of views varied as some contributors still stressed certain elements of the Soviet gender order or ideals, just as Nikulin stressed women's self-sacrificing nature. Then again, probably not all elements of the Soviet ideal were dictated from above, and the cultural and historical context of the Soviet Union should also be taken into account, meaning the understanding of appropriate gender roles and perception of gender characteristics may also have been influenced by local culture and customs that the Soviet regime could not, or decided not to, eradicate. What supports this view is that gender and gender relations were never critically examined after the October Revolution, as shown in chapter 2 and argued by Mary Buckley.¹²⁶

Zoya Boguslavskaya, whose interview is introduced and partly examined in the previous subchapter, also stressed motherhood and family, in addition to being concerned about the masculinisation of women. She described a mother and a child as inseparable, like "the Madonna and child" of the painting. She referred to times of war and how mothers would save the lives of their child at the cost of their own, and how the same maternal instinct woke the mother at night even if the child was crying quietly. However, Boguslavskaya was appalled that this bond of a mother and a child seemed to have been broken as the media had reported that some women, "cuckoo mothers"¹²⁷, prostitutes, and drug addicts, had abandoned their children.¹²⁸ In the interview she also argued that women's independence had led to a dangerous situation that had put families at risk. She stated that she understood women who wanted to be independent but

¹²³ Yuriy Nikulin, "O zhenshchine", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1988, 2.

¹²⁴ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 23.

¹²⁵ I. Zhuravskaya, "Razgovor 9 marta", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1988, 7.

¹²⁶ Buckley 1989, 39, 45–49

¹²⁷ Women who had abandoned their child were referred to as "cuckoo-mothers". Waters 1992, 128–129

¹²⁸ L. Shevtsova, "Vozvrashcheniye k sebe", *Rabotnitsa*, 10/1988, 18–20.

added that no one should be completely independent as they would then be left without friends, children and families, and this independence would break "indissoluble human ties." Boguslavskaya regretted that her country had focused so much on the "labour collective". She argued that society as a whole would be a better one if there was more focus on the family as "[o]ur future is tied to the moral climate and the health of every home". Therefore family and home should be valued more than they currently were, and she implies that focusing on the family could offer a solution for social ills.

Though Boguslavskaya did not directly say that women were custodians of morality, she made implications towards that sentiment and making this link would be consistent with other articles and literature. For example, Galina Yakusheva, whose article was introduced in the previous subchapter, also argued that women's roles as keepers of the "hearth" were important in order to "protect enduring moral values", and this role can be lost in the process of "a too sharp 'male' leap into the unknown".¹²⁹ Thus, Yakusheva implied that women should not abandon this role and become "men-like", as this would presumably damage these moral values. The Soviet Women's Committee, too, continued this position during the election of the newly formed Congress of People's Deputies in 1989. This was apparent when *Rabotnitsa* in May 1989 published the names of those elected to the Congress as well as the main objectives the Committee had set for its deputies who were to represent the organisation. The list of objectives mentioned the welfare of mothers and children several times but the Committee also expected its deputies "to increase the role of women in improving the moral atmosphere of society, in improving inter-ethnic relations; to ensure that mercy and humanity, high morality and ethics, respect for women's dignity and honor become the norms of our lives", as well as to "create in society intolerant attitudes towards alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution".¹³⁰ As argued by Sergei Kukhterin, in the Soviet state women were expected to take more responsibility over childrearing as well as work as moral guardians in the private sphere.¹³¹ This sentiment is clearly reflected in the comments by Boguslavskaya and Yakusheva and in the list of objectives of the Soviet Women's Committee.

¹²⁹ Galina Yakusheva, "Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

¹³⁰ "Spisok narodnykh deputatov SSSR ot Komiteta sovetskikh zhenshchin", 5/1989, 9–10; "Nakaz: narodnym deputatam, izbrannym ot sovetov zhenshchin, ob'yedinyayemykh Komitetom sovetskikh zhenshchin", *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1989, 11.

¹³¹ Kukhterin 2000, 82–85.

Boguslavskaya's comments about the "moral climate and the health of every home" encouraging women, and the whole of society, to concentrate more on the home and private sphere were therefore very similar to the focuses of the tasks of the Soviet Women's Committee deputies. This applies to Yakusheva's sentiments as well. Gorbachev, too, saw strengthening the family and women's domestic duties as a way to fight against social problems that were now exposed in the media due to glasnost.¹³² Gorbachev acknowledged this in his book *Perestroika* in 1987 when voicing his concerns over the limited time women could "perform their everyday duties at home – housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere". He argued that many problems "in children's and young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production – are partially caused by the weakening of the family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities", and that is why there were now "heated debates in the press, in public organizations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission".¹³³ He therefore implied that the absence of women as mothers, not men as fathers, were linked to social problems. Also, Elizabeth Waters argues that this sentiment of strengthening of the family was widely supported in the 1980s, and therefore comments by Boguslavskaya and Gorbachev are good examples of this.¹³⁴ Moreover, as Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick point out, this concern over family and the need to strengthen it were connected to the moral panic over social problems that were reported in the media.¹³⁵

The sociologist Bestuzhev-Lada, whose interview was also introduced in the previous subchapter, promoted stay-at-home motherhood more directly than Boguslavskaya, who had merely stressed the importance of home and motherhood but, as shown earlier, emphasised women's qualities in working life as well. Even though Bestuzhev-Lada added in one of his answers that it was up to the family to decide which one of the parents stays home with the child, he clearly stressed women's maternal care of children and talked about those who were potential stay-at-home mothers very favourably throughout the interview. According to him there were three types of Soviet women: those who dedicate their life to work, those who find both work and home important, and those who, if given the opportunity, would like to stay at home with their children instead of working outside the home. Women who fell into the first category were

¹³² On reporting of social problems in the media during perestroika and glasnost see, for example, Pietiläinen 2010.

¹³³ Gorbachev 1987, 758.

¹³⁴ Waters 1992, 127–128.

¹³⁵ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 23–24.

very rare, and they needed help from husbands, grandmothers and mother-in-laws because without them they “cannot cope with the house”. Most of Soviet women belonged to the second category. However, he argued that it seemed to him that now even more women wanted to stay at home, so the third category, which consisted of 20 to 30 percent of women, had possibly grown even larger.¹³⁶

Unlike Boguslovskaya, who actually suggested the complete opposite as she argued that the younger generation of women wanted to be more equal both at home and in the public sphere, Bestuzhev-Lada believed that for younger women work was not as important as it had been for older generations.¹³⁷ Bestuzhev-Lada was “absolutely convinced that the time has come to give the right to the third category of women to realise themselves in the sphere that fully corresponds to her mental attitude, her system of values”. He suggested accordingly that the time a woman spends at home taking care of her child or children could also be calculated towards her pension.¹³⁸ Therefore, in order to make it possible for women, especially those who belonged to the third category, to stay at home instead of working full-time, he proposed that this should be comparable to work performed outside the home and paid pension. He also implied that a successful combination of work and motherhood could only be favourable for some women, and that the number of those women was shrinking. It is interesting that he did not critically examine the reasons some women would opt to stay at home, such as the double burden, but suggested that this was down to the type of women they were. As implied by Bestuzhev-Lada, only the career oriented women, a minority, were worthy of substantial help from their husbands (or female relatives) as without their help these women would not be able to both run the house and have successful careers. This suggests, as Lynne Attwood argues when examining Bestuzhev-Lada’s earlier interview to *Rabotnitsa* of 1985, that domestic responsibilities were not to be shared equally unless you had a very successful career.¹³⁹

The editor-in-chief Zoya Krylova, too, stressed the importance of mothers spending as much time together with their children as possible in an editorial in January 1990 in which she praised the extension of maternity leave. She argued that longer maternity leave meant that women could now devote “an unbroken day and an unbroken soul to a child” and “feel more deeply what great

¹³⁶ I. Zhuravskaya, “Variant na zavtra?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

¹³⁷ L. Shevtsova, “Vozvrashcheniye k sebe”, *Rabotnitsa*, 10/1988, 18–20.

¹³⁸ I. Zhuravskaya, “Variant na zavtra?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

¹³⁹ Attwood 1990, 130.

happiness and responsibility Motherhood [her emphasis] is”, while at the same time children would not have to cry every morning and hurry to their kindergartens.¹⁴⁰ However, even though Krylova, and Bestuzhev-Lada before her, emphasised mothers taking care of their own children during the day instead of taking them to daycare, one should note that the state provision of childcare in the Soviet Union was often not of as high a quality as one would have wished. There were concerns over poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding and children getting sick. Working conditions and work satisfaction at these facilities were poor as well, and not everyone even received a place for their child in daycare or preschool.¹⁴¹ It is therefore understandable why the attitude towards kindergartens might have been rather negative.

The assumption and general acceptance that the home and children were women’s responsibilities was very obvious in the *Rabotnitsa* supplement, *Domashniy kaleydoskop* (Home kaleidoscope), published in the middle of each issue. It contained recipes, patterns for clothes, home decorating and gardening ideas, physical exercise instructions, health and beautifying tips. In other words, it offered help and guidance for women on how to successfully perform women’s duties at home and how to care for their femininity.¹⁴² Even though there was an ongoing discussion on women’s roles on the pages of *Rabotnitsa*, and some of the arguments also called for more equal partnership between spouses, *Domashniy kaleydoskop* continued to give a very traditional kind of image of what was expected from women. In addition, in 1991, when *Rabotnitsa* renewed its appearance and style, these types of articles were also spread throughout the magazine and not published only as part of the *Domashniy kaleydoskop* supplement. The editor-in-chief, Zoya Krylova, wrote about this decision in the first issue of the magazine in January 1991, stating the following:

*“From love and happiness to irons and pots. Who would have thought that our Home Kaleidoscope with its useful tips would occupy such an important place in the magazine? Given the severity of the topic, this year we will not limit ourselves to the supplement “Kaleidoscope” integrated into the magazine, but will scatter useful tips outside its borders - throughout the issue.”*¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Zoya Krylova, “God ispytaniy, god nadezhd”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 2.

¹⁴¹ Pilkington 1992, 211.

¹⁴² See any *Rabotnitsa* between 1987 and 1991. *Domashniy kaleydoskop* usually begins after page 19 or 20.

¹⁴³ Zoya Krylova, “Slovo - uchreditelyam: I zhit’, i verit’”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 3. “От любви и счастья - к утюгам и кастрюлям. Кто бы мог подумать, что наш “Домашний калейдоскоп” с его полезными советами займет

In the same editorial piece, Krylova stressed the importance of family to society and asked the readers if they had noticed that next to the magazine's name it said "For women and family". She compared the family to a temple at the top of society as "family is a holy place where a person is fully realised: one works, loves and strengthens spiritually". However, Krylova reminded her readers that everyone needs to build their own kind of temple and that *Rabotnitsa* could help them build a better one. So the caption next to the name, according to her, tells about a tradition *Rabotnitsa* had.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, in the last year of Soviet *Rabotnitsa* the magazine also made an editorial decision to link the magazine even closer to the theme of family and home, and this way communicate to its readers that these were the most essential themes for women. However, I also see this as an example of how women's magazines can challenge, reflect and reinforce gender contracts or gender order, and how the viewpoint depends on the type of the article, as argued by Maija Töyry.¹⁴⁵

As pointed out in this chapter, views of motherhood as a woman's most important function became more pronounced in many *Rabotnitsa* articles as they years passed. Even though these were not the only views that were expressed in *Rabotnitsa*, as the later chapters show, the articles stressing motherhood and home, and how women were different from men, did so quite emphatically and in a way that was no longer in line with the ideal of the worker-mother who successfully combines her two roles. In addition, *Rabotnitsa*'s supplement gives a very clear implication that home and domestic roles were female functions. The worker part of the Soviet ideal of a woman who combined motherhood with work most definitely lost its value and prestige over the years. Motherhood remained glorified and was strengthened by essentialist arguments of sex-specific personality traits. The next subchapter discusses a theme already mentioned when examining the interview of Bestuzhev-Lada, women's withdrawal from the labour force.

3.3. Back to the home?

Gorbachev's new and radical reform policy that was adopted in 1987 obliged state enterprises to adopt cost-accounting and self-financing and show profit. This meant that the enterprises would

такое важное место в журнале? Учитывая жгучесть темы, в этом году мы не ограничимся встроенной в журнал книжечкой "Калейдоскопа", а рассыпем полезные советы за его пределами - по всему номеру."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Töyry 2005, 51, 320–326.

soon need fewer industrial workers who would work more productively. The expectation was that women would be the first ones to be let go when enterprises started working on their productivity. This assumption was welcomed by some as it would relieve women from their double burden and they could return to the home. The “back to the home” movement, which had already started gathering pace in the 1970s and whose proponents promoted the idea that women should not be participating in the labour force in such high numbers, gained more ground and wider popularity. Arguments about how female employment resulted in the double burden and low birthrate and had negative effects on children were also heard during the election campaigns for the Congress of People's Deputies in spring 1989.¹⁴⁶

These sentiments found their way onto the pages of *Rabotnitsa*, too. In addition to emphasising the importance of motherhood and a traditional understanding of femininity, such as those articles examined in the previous subchapter, many articles addressed the topic of women spending more time at home in the future. Some supported the idea that a woman's place was in the home. Others expressed a sentiment that the daily chores and domestic tasks women perform at home as mothers and wives should be valued more and considered it comparable to work performed outside the home. A common theme in the articles analysed next is that they portrayed the private sphere as something that was “natural” for women and therefore it is linked to the idea of innate male and female characteristics examined in the previous subchapter.

To some extent the figure of Lenin was harnessed to serve the arguments that women should concentrate on their duties as mothers instead of workers. In the May issue of 1989 Lenin was mentioned by Valentina Ushakova, a chairperson of the woman's council (*zhensovet*) of Pushkinsky District of Leningrad, who was concerned about the growth of orphanhood and so called “cuckoo mothers”. Mothers who had abandoned their children were referred to as “cuckoo mothers” and they were widely condemned in the media.¹⁴⁷ She believed this phenomenon had roots in women's alienation from the family and this should raise alarm. Ushakova then noted that “V. I. Lenin warned that in no case should we equate women and men in terms of types of work, its duration and productivity”.¹⁴⁸ Although it is true that Lenin had addressed the mentioned matter in a speech he delivered at The Fourth Moscow City Conference Of Non-Party

¹⁴⁶ Noonan 1996, 110; Shapiro 1992, 20; Engel 2004, 253.

¹⁴⁷ Waters 1992, 128–130.

¹⁴⁸ Valentina Ushakova, “Malen'kiy opyt, bol'shiye problemy”, *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1989, 14–15.

Working Women in 1919, Lenin's conclusions on this topic do not fit well with the sentiment Ushakova was proposing. In Lenin's words:

*Here we are not, of course, speaking of making women the equal of men as far as productivity of labour, the quantity of labour, the length of the working day, labour conditions, etc., are concerned; we mean that the woman should not, unlike the man, be oppressed because of her position in the family. You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain factually downtrodden because all housework is left to them.*¹⁴⁹

Lenin continued his speech by praising how new institutions such as dining-rooms and nurseries that had been set up would free women from "housework slavery" and they could participate in the productive labour on equal footing with men.¹⁵⁰

Of course, we do not know if Lenin would have made the same proposals in 1989 as he did in 1919. Also, by 1989 many women were probably so exhausted by the double burden, they would have been happy to see any kind of relief to their situation, no matter what Lenin had said 70 years earlier. Still, Marxism-Leninism was the official ideology of the Soviet Union so answers to questions, such as how to make women's lives easier, were to be found in the texts of Lenin and Marx. It is therefore understandable why references to Lenin were made in *Rabotnitsa* too, and why there were attempts to bend his texts and thoughts to support the current views on gender. The flexibility of the CPSU and its propagandists on the issue of women's roles nevertheless varied over time. For example, during the Brezhnev administration, when the ideal of the Soviet superwoman still prevailed, ideologists tried to fit pronatalism into this equation by even referring to rather odd texts by Karl Marx.¹⁵¹ The Gorbachev administration was more flexible by allowing freer discussion to take place. Then again, in my estimation, Gorbachev's statement on women and their return to a "purely womanly mission" in his book *Perestroika*, which is also discussed in chapters 1 and 3, were at odds with Lenin's speech above and therefore in conflict with the ideology.¹⁵² However, according to Mary Buckley, throughout the Soviet times economic, political, cultural and doctrinal demands affected which elements of the

¹⁴⁹ Lenin [1919] 1965, 67–68. Translated from Russian, translator unknown.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Attwood 1990, 8.

¹⁵² Gorbachev Mikhail 1987, 758–759.

ideology were emphasised. The Brezhnev administration made a discussion possible by declaring the woman question unsolved and glasnost broadened the boundaries of the debate. Still, the ideology set its limits too as it would have been unacceptable, for example, to introduce unequal pay based on sex for the same work, to argue that women were inferior to men, or to allow women fewer opportunities.¹⁵³ I would also argue that the combination of emphasis on certain elements of the ideology and the limits set by the ideology then explain why choice between children and career, which is discussed in chapter 4.3., was promoted as an option for women during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Similarly to views presented by Gorbachev, a member of the Congress of People's Deputies, Valentina Kiseleva, stated in *Rabotnitsa*'s interview in November 1989 that women "should be less busy in order to pay more attention to children", and added that the work women do at home should be appreciated more, and it should not be frowned upon if a woman does not work outside the home.¹⁵⁴ This comment is very similar to that of Mikhail Gorbachev in *Perestroika*, which was published two years earlier. As discussed in the previous subchapter, according to Gorbachev, "women no longer have time to perform their everyday duties at home — housework, upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere" because they are "[e]ngaged in scientific research, working in construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities". Gorbachev argued that women had "specific rights and needs" due to their role as mothers and home-makers and these rights and needs had long been neglected. This has led to an undesirable situation and many problems in society, from morals to production.¹⁵⁵ Both Gorbachev and Kiseleva emphasised women's role as mothers more than as workers, and thought they should spend more time at home. Therefore their role in society was different from that of men. Similarly, social scientists had argued in the 1970s that women were a specific category of the labour force because of their reproductive role, and that not only did they differ from men because of physiology but also in characteristics and psychological traits.¹⁵⁶

Even though Gorbachev emphasised women's role as mothers and homemakers, he also supported wider representation of women in politics, believed that women should take an active

¹⁵³ Buckley 1989, 230–232.

¹⁵⁴ I. Sklyar, "Ya iz sredey rabochikh lyudey, oni mne blizki..." *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1989, 14-15.

¹⁵⁵ Gorbachev 1987, 757-759.

¹⁵⁶ Buckley 1989, 175.

role in the democratisation process, and opened the door to the highest echelons of power to a first female member after almost 30 years by appointing Aleksandra Biryukova to the Politburo in 1988.¹⁵⁷ Still, women's return to their "purely womanly mission" might still be the most memorable part of Gorbachev's writings on women's roles, at least if judged by how many times I came across this quotation in my secondary sources.¹⁵⁸ It also shows that the "back to the home" movement had support even in the highest echelons of power. It could be argued that Gorbachev only tried to show support to Soviet women who felt drained by the double burden, and that this was only a part of how Gorbachev tried to ease the hardships of women. Still, as Kiseleva's interview and other articles analysed in this chapter show, his statement did not fall on deaf ears, or at least there were others who supported the idea of women prioritising home over work. Moreover, as Norma C. Noonan points out, it would be difficult to see how such statements made by the General Secretary of the CPSU would go unnoticed. The significance of these words lies in who said them.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, Barbara Alpern Engel argues that the absence of a strong leadership was reflected in the indecisiveness and his contradictory statements on the woman question, which sometimes echoed earlier pronatalist views and other times followed his "Leninist" vision, made it possible for the conservative views to flourish.¹⁶⁰ Lynne Attwood in turn argues that the old patriarchal ideas on gender never disappeared but survived all through the Soviet times though they were not allowed to surface until the pronatalist campaigns.¹⁶¹ These arguments would then explain why conservative ideas on women's roles and the promotion of traditional gender roles gained so much ground in the late 1980s and early 1990s and why they were strongly represented in *Rabotnitsa* of the time.

These arguments and observations above also explain why, when moving into the 1990s, *Rabotnitsa* published articles that more directly supported the idea that women should devote more time to their families and homes, or in some cases even become stay-at-home mothers. Even before this, as we have established, many articles had already played with the idea that some women could possibly stay at home, but now some writers and interviewees almost insisted that the home was the place women "naturally" belonged to. Even the editor-in-chief Zoya Krylova, in her editorial in January 1991, criticised how women who stay at home with

¹⁵⁷ Engel 2004, 252–253; Buckley 1989, 199.

¹⁵⁸ Gorbachev 1987, 757–759. Norma C. Noonan also refers to this statement as Gorbachev's "best-remembered passage" in her article published in 1996. Noonan 1996, 111.

¹⁵⁹ Noonan 1996, 111.

¹⁶⁰ Engel 2004, 252–53.

¹⁶¹ Attwood 1990, 207.

their children and keep the family hearth warm for their husbands are frowned upon and considered as dependents. She therefore called for a redefinition of the word “work” and pointed out that people who do what they love are happy.¹⁶² However, it should be noted that the country was living through a turbulent time in the early 1990s. For example, during the winter of 1990–1991, many Soviet republics were moving towards independence, the economic situation was deteriorating, and inside Russia there was a power struggle between Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, who at that time was the head of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR.¹⁶³ Krylova referred to these uncertain times in the beginning of her editorial. She started her rather home-centered editorial: “I am not an astrologer and cannot give a forecast of our future life. One thing is clear: of course, it will be stormy and dangerous.”¹⁶⁴ Here, the historical context, and the meaning of one’s home for people of the time, should be also understood. As Larissa Lissyutkina points out, during Soviet times, home, and especially the kitchen, was “the only free space” and even a place of resistance. Lissyutkina argues that for women who wished to return to the home to get rid of their double burden, the kitchen did not represent oppression or a place of isolation. It was a place for discussion, intimacy and heated arguments, a place where people gathered. For many it therefore represented a private place one could escape to.¹⁶⁵ It could then be argued that also during the turbulent and uncertain times of the early 1990s, it was understandable to focus on the home and seek refuge in it.

Probably the most conservative views on women were given in an interview published in June 1991. They were made by Andrei Golitsyn, an artist and the first elected chairman of the Union of the Russian Nobility which was an organisation formed by descendants of the former Russian nobility.¹⁶⁶ His views were remarkably conservative even by the standards of the time. The interviewer, Irina Sklyar, clearly questioned them as well as we see in this excerpt:

[Irina Sklyar:] *Are you really convinced that the purpose of a woman is home, family ?!*

[Andrei Golitsyn:] *I guess so, yes. I do not insist that every woman is obliged to deal only with the home, there are different needs and aspirations, this is all very individual. But no one can replace her place in the home.*

¹⁶² Zoya Krylova, “Slovo - uchreditelyam: I zhit’, i verit’”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 3.

¹⁶³ Service 2009, 489–496. SFSR is the abbreviation for Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

¹⁶⁴ Zoya Krylova, “Slovo - uchreditelyam: I zhit’, i verit’”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Lissyutkina 1993, 276.

¹⁶⁶ Irina Sklyar, “Slavnyy rod prodolzhayetsya...”, *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1991, 22–23.

[Irina Sklyar:] *But what about our national history? It includes a lot of women - outstanding women leaders, scholars, educators, rebels, and not all of them were lonely...*
[Andrei Golitsyn:] *That's right. Outstanding personalities appear on both sides, as before, and now. I speak from a general point of view and insist that there are some areas of activity, of more natural feminine essence, and it is impossible to divert a woman from these areas without harming her.*¹⁶⁷

Moreover, what made this interview different from other articles that promoted women's place in the home was that Golitsyn emphasised women's modesty and promoted separate education for boys and girls. Girls would study subjects that were related to good housekeeping because "a woman needs to be able to host guests, set the table beautifully, cook well (even with a poor set of products)". In turn, important skills that boys would learn at school included "possession of rhetoric, oratory, negotiation skills".¹⁶⁸ Therefore he promoted a society where the roles and tasks of men and women would be completely separated, women belonged to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. What is interesting though is that the interviewer, *Rabotnitsa's* journalist Irina Sklyar clearly questions Golitsyn's view that women belong to the home whereas the editor-in-chief of *Rabotnitsa*, Zoya Krylova, had expressed similar views in the magazine as shown earlier in this subchapter. Krylova was not as categorical as Golitsyn and one could say that she merely defended women's right to choose, but Golitsyn also acknowledged that there were women who might actually excel in the public sphere instead. Still, it seems that there was a diversity of opinions among *Rabotnitsa's* staff. On the other hand, Golitsyn represented those who had been overthrown by the October Revolution so his views could have also been questioned because they were made by a man who represented Tsarist Russia.

Even though Golitsyn's views were certainly very conservative, consisted of a fair amount of nostalgic sentimentality for pre-revolutionary times in Russia, and were questioned by the interviewer, his interview was not the only article that directly supported the idea that women's "natural" place was in the home. For the March 1991 issue, Vladimir Zubkov, a chief physician

¹⁶⁷ [И. С.:] Вы действительно убеждены, что предназначение женщины - дом, семья?! [А. Г.:] В принципе да. Я не настаиваю на том, что каждая женщина обязана заниматься только домом, есть разные потребности и устремления, это все очень индивидуально. Но ее место в доме никто не может заменить. [И. С.:] А как же наша отечественная история? Она знает немало женщин - выдающихся правительниц, ученых, просветительниц, бунтарок, и далеко не все они были одиночками... [А. Г.:] Это верно. Выдающиеся личности проявляются с обеих сторон - как прежде, так и теперь. Я же говорю с общим плане и настаиваю на том, что есть какие-то сферы деятельности, более естественные женской сущности, и невозможно уводить женщину из этих сфер без ущерба для нее.

¹⁶⁸ Irina Sklyar, "Slavnyy rod prodolzhayetsya..." , *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1991, 22-23.

of a maternity hospital and a member of the Committee on women, family protection, motherhood and childhood of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, had written a women's day piece. He firstly discussed pregnancies and stated that "a woman is a jewel, which must be treated very carefully and seriously". Later on he revealed that he had found a partner that made him happy. According to him, she was his "complete assistant in life". Zubkov was pleased that she shared his views about men's and women's place in society: "[L]et men remain in charge of the society, and women in the family. An intelligent woman understands that in the house she is the head of the family, and in public – always the man." In the end of his text Zubkov added his wishes for women: "[T]ake care of yourself, love your family and give birth, despite any difficulties." Thus, Zubkov's views were fairly similar to those of Golitsyn, though we do not know if Zubkov also supported separate education for boys and girls. However, Zubkov proposed that in case they were made redundant women could be retrained for new professions, become entrepreneurs, and develop new forms of work that could be performed from home.¹⁶⁹ Thus, he implied that instead of those occupations women currently worked in, there could be new ones and those that could be performed at home. Arguably, these would be different from those occupied by men, suggesting he proposed some sort of a gender segregation of professions.

Another example of how conservative views on women's roles became more pronounced in the early 1990s can be found on the first page of the last *Rabotnitsa* issue published during Soviet times, in December 1991. This New Year greeting-themed editorial was written by G. Orlovskiy, the executive secretary of *Rabotnitsa*. Instead of listing the things he wished for *Rabotnitsa*'s readers during the upcoming year, he listed the things he did *not* wish for them. Orlovskiy argued that destiny should determine one's calling, be it working in a leadership position or devoting yourself to your family. It seems that by this he meant that the former is for men and the latter is for women, as he also stated that women should not enter politics, and that equality means equal opportunities, not similar tasks. According to him, men and women could not have equal or identical duties. According to Orlovskiy, "[t]here has to be a man behind the plow, as it has always been". He would not advise his granddaughter to join politics either, instead he would "[l]et her listen to birds, read poetry, learn to stitch a shirt and cook soup", and in line with that, he was also worried about how little time women devoted to their children every day.¹⁷⁰ These skills and activities were again very similar to those skills Golitsyn considered important for girls to learn, cooking and good housekeeping skills. Also, the insistence of having a man

¹⁶⁹ Vladimir Zubkov, "Lyubite zhenshchin!", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1991, 7.

¹⁷⁰ G. Orlovskiy, "I vam togo ne pozhelayu", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1991, 2.

“behind the plow, as it has always been” seemed to suggest that he thought men should remain in charge because it was the natural order of things.

Orlovskiy admitted that he was aware that not everyone agreed with him and that some articles that were published in the very same issue would dismiss his wishes by asserting very different points of views. However, he stated that he would still stubbornly defend his views that women should not be burdened with the responsibilities that belong to men. The overall message of his writing was thus to encourage women to do “naturally” womanly and feminine tasks, such as the upbringing and nurturing of children. Orlovskiy also wished that women would remind men to perform their own “natural” responsibilities properly, such as politics, so women would not have to get involved in them.¹⁷¹ Orlovskiy seemed to have believed that women would be happier if they were given the chance and freedom to perform their “natural” work, that is maternal and domestic tasks, to the full. For example, he implied that women were involved in politics only out of necessity, because men were not carrying out their own responsibilities properly. Again, in an ideal situation the public sphere was reserved for men, just as Zubkov had wished as well.

Orlovskiy and Zubkov were not alone with their views either. According to a sociological survey conducted after the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, mentioned in an article about a local female political candidate in May 1990, voters did not want to see female deputies. In the same article the journalist mentioned comments made by fellow passengers on a train who thought women did not belong in politics and that men would never vote for a woman. They had also asked her: “And what can your Gul’fiya [the female candidate] do? Knit stockings in parliament?” She wrote that those comments reminded her of some of the letters they had received in the magazine stating, for example, that “[a] female politician is no longer a woman” and “[l]et her raise children, not engage in [politics]”.¹⁷² Therefore, despite Gorbachev’s support for a wider representation of women in politics, there were people who were openly against this idea. Again, it seems that politics was not a suitable profession for women, or perhaps a female politician was seen as someone who had unfairly taken a seat from a male candidate. Either way, only 15.7 percent of the deputies elected for the new Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 were female. In the Supreme Soviet, a smaller body that was formed from the deputies of the Congress, 18.5 percent of members were female. In the Supreme Soviet formed in 1984 the percentage had been 32.8. There was also a drop in the number of women who were elected in

¹⁷¹ G. Orlovskiy, “I vam togo ne pozhelayu”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1991, 2.

¹⁷² Nadezhda Menitskaya, “Zachem ey vlast’?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1990, 10–11.

the local elections in 1990. Therefore, when citizens had a freer choice, compared to earlier elections when seats and women's representation were both decided and set by the party, many voters and organisations that put forward their candidates decided against a wider representation of women. Women themselves were also unenthusiastic about becoming candidates.¹⁷³ Therefore, based on these observations of both primary and secondary sources, I would argue that when censorship was eventually lifted and the political system became more democratic, the widespread attitude towards women's active role in the public sphere was revealed or it became more negative. Before this presumably the state, or the Soviet gender order that was enforced by the state, had kept some women in the field of politics by conscious decisions made by the CPSU.

Moreover, Mary Buckley argues that because of the double burden, women did not have time for politics either, which as well explains why women were reluctant about becoming political candidates.¹⁷⁴ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, women also formed their own organisations, something which was reported in *Rabotnitsa*.¹⁷⁵ However, according to Buckley, the organisations remained distant for many women. Buckley refers to an article published in *Rabotnitsa* in September 1990, which dealt with readers' letters about women's organisations. In these letters women stated that they did not know how to become involved in such organisations or how they simply did not have enough time or energy for them.¹⁷⁶ However, some of these organisations had at least some influence in society, for example the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers.¹⁷⁷ In other words, not only was there a negative attitude towards women in politics that was shared by at least some share of the population, the double burden itself pushed women further away from this field. However, some women organisations that were active outside the formal political arenas managed to draw attention to at least some issues with their activism.

As examined in this subchapter, *Rabotnitsa* published articles and interviews, especially in the last few years of the 1980s and in the first years of 1990s, that very directly supported reinstating traditional gender roles and tasks in the household. These contributors seemed to have promoted a gender order in which women's primary function was to be a mother and a wife, while men worked outside the home. Some would have liked to see women removed from politics, too, as

¹⁷³ Buckley 1992b, 55–58.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 65–66.

¹⁷⁵ Buckley 1992b, 65–66; See, for example, Tat'yana Ivanova, "Kto spaset tsivilizatsiyu", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1991, 21.

¹⁷⁶ Buckley 1992b, 65–66; Irina Sklyar, "Nash deviz: Nichego ne vyprashivat'!", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1990, 14–16.

¹⁷⁷ In 1990, Gorbachev issued a decree that was based on the demands of this organisation. Marsh 1996a, 18.

pieces written by Vladimir Zubkov and G. Orlovskiy show, because they saw it as men's territory and responsibility. Interestingly, in some articles journalists of *Rabotnitsa* supported women taking more responsibility over household chores, especially childrearing, like in Krylova's editorial in January 1991, but in other ones they challenged at least parts of the view that women should be sent back to the home, like Irina Sklyar did in the interview of Andrei Golitsyn. This is an example of the magazine's journalists' different views and seems to prove that the staff of *Rabotnitsa* was not a homogeneous group of people. It is also an example of how glasnost made it possible for different points of views to surface, and this is something that is clear throughout this thesis. Then again, articles promoting returning women to the home became more common in the last year of Soviet rule.

However, *Rabotnitsa* did not only publish articles and interviews produced by their own staff but a voice was also given to people who did not work for the magazine, including contributors who had a very conservative and traditional stance on gender roles as seen in the case of Zubkov. They might not have been in line with the views of *Rabotnitsa*'s journalists but they were published nonetheless. Still, it could be argued that *Rabotnitsa* only aimed to operate as a platform for different views in the time of glasnost, and as a women's magazine the editorial board wanted to publish stories that commented on women's roles in society, including pronatalist and pro-family arguments that supported removing women from public life. It should be noted that even though *Rabotnitsa* was a magazine that was affiliated with the CPSU, in the late 1980s and early 1990s it was able to, and chose to, publish articles that might contradict each other as well the official stance of the Party. Besides, as will be shown in the next chapter, *Rabotnitsa* also opened its pages to views that criticised and challenged the restoration of traditional gender roles.

4. Objections and alternatives to stay-at-home motherhood

4.1. More than just mothers and housewives

Even though there were many articles that, indirectly or directly, supported the idea of women returning to the home and working less outside the home, not all articles published in *Rabotnitsa* between 1987 and 1991 fully endorsed the traditional notion of gender roles and tasks that were assigned to men and women accordingly. These articles touched upon the same topics as their more traditional counterparts but had a different and more critical approach to them. In this chapter I examine views presented in *Rabotnitsa* that did not support sending women back to the home. However, some of these articles also included mixed views on men, women and gender roles, meaning they could be critical towards one aspect and at the same time support another. In the first subchapter I focus on articles with a more critical stance towards traditional gender roles. Then, in subchapter 4.2., I examine how more equal participation in parenting and housework were offered as a solution for the double burden and how this was addressed in *Rabotnitsa*. Lastly, I explore the argument of choice given to women to lessen their double burden in *Rabotnitsa*.

Even in the 1960s and 1970s, there had been social scientists who did not fully endorse the more pronatalist stance taken by their colleagues and adopted by the authorities. However, according to Mary Buckley, the debate died out at the beginning of the 1980s due to the demographic crisis of the falling birthrate. Still, the scientific community was more concerned over the economic aspect of women's roles and the double burden than they were of redefining gender roles or critically examining women's alleged emancipation through socialism. In the late 1980s, during glasnost and perestroika, the discussion on women's roles again widened and topics that had not previously been allowed in the media were now reported and discussed. Something that was new, too, were the feminist writings that began to emerge.¹⁷⁸ This was also evident on the pages of *Rabotnitsa*. Therefore, in this subchapter, I examine those articles, interviews and comments published in *Rabotnitsa* that did not support the idea that women should return to the home to fix the double burden but proposed something else, including a feminist critique of gender and gender roles.

¹⁷⁸ Buckley 1989, 187–188, 191–192; Buckley 1992b, 1–2.

One of the contributors who took a more critical stance on gender roles in *Rabotnitsa* was the journalist Larisa Kuznetsova. She wrote a few quite lengthy articles for *Rabotnitsa* during the perestroika years but she also took part in the discussion through articles published in other publications.¹⁷⁹ Her views differed from the Soviet all-combining superwoman ideal as well as from the views supporting the restoration of traditional gender roles. One of her articles, *Val i Valentina*, in September 1988, started the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna* (Open podium) that dealt with women's roles in society and included contributors already previously mentioned, such as Igor Bestuzhev-Lada and Zoya Boguslavskaya. However, none of them were as critical as Kuznetsova who also returned to the series in March 1990 with another article *Razgovor pered zerkalom?* (Conversation in front of the mirror?).¹⁸⁰

In her first article, in September 1988, Kuznetsova pointed out that according to sociologists, only 20 percent of women would stay at home if a full income was guaranteed to her family; 80 percent of women would choose to continue working. She added that in reality even for those 20 percent, it would not be possible because the livelihood of the whole family depended on the salary of the wife and mother as well, and on top of that, husbands often had a drinking problem. Kuznetsova argued that women were, however, pushed back to the home by arguments that claimed that women should be permitted to stay at home because they were not interested in careers, career advancement or participating in politics.¹⁸¹ This amount of 20 percent was similar to that given by Bestuzhev-Lada, as examined in chapter 3.2., though Bestuzhev-Lada gave an estimate between 20 and 30 percent and argued that it was probably even greater.¹⁸² In addition, the research literature used for this thesis gives different figures on how many women actually wanted to work in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For example, Elena Sargeant refers to a number given by Tat'iana Zaslavskaya, the former president of the Soviet Sociological Association in 1988 who at the time estimated that 40 percent of women would like to stop working if income and standard of living were secured.¹⁸³ On the other hand, Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick argue that according to several sociological surveys that had been conducted from the 1970s onwards, the answer to the question "Would you be prepared to give up work if your husband earned an adequate wage" had always been overwhelmingly

¹⁷⁹ Kuznetsova had participated in the discussion on the woman question already before glasnost. For instance, her book *Zhenshchina na rabote i doma* (Woman at work and at home) was published in 1980. Attwood 1990, 174.

¹⁸⁰ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23; Larisa Kuznetsova, "Razgovor pered zerkalom?", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1990, 11–14.

¹⁸¹ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

¹⁸² I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

¹⁸³ Sargeant 1996, 270.

negative, regardless of women's background.¹⁸⁴ Therefore we do not know for sure how many women actually wanted to work but these figures indicate that it was still the majority of them. It seems that Kuznetsova was then more or less correct with her claim that women were pushed back to the home by arguments that probably falsely portrayed them as not being interested in working or participating in politics. As was shown in subchapter 3.3., it seems that the attitude towards women's participation in politics was also negative, at least based on election results and comments published in *Rabotnitsa*.

As was examined in chapter 3.3., a member of the Congress of People's Deputies, Valentina Kiseleva, argued in *Rabotnitsa*'s interview in November 1989 that the work women do at home should be appreciated more.¹⁸⁵ Similarly Kuznetsova, too, was critical of the lack of recognition and appreciation for women's domestic and maternal labour. She found it problematic that it was not labelled as "socially useful", it was unpaid, and that it was not counted as work experience. But instead of promoting women's return to the home, she took a different stance. According to her, motherhood was the hardest of job, and to be able to combine it with work outside the home, there should be good public institutions, such as pre-schools, to support this combination. She claimed that there were not enough pre-schools and the prices of all services were on the rise. In her view, Soviet women were exhausted by the "'notorious combination' of everything that no one else in the world could ever combine".¹⁸⁶ She therefore turned to the state to help women to keep working and to be better able to combine work with motherhood. As was established earlier, in subchapter 3.2., the state provision of daycare and pre-school institutions were plagued by poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding, and bad working conditions, and not everyone was able to receive a place for their child in these institutions. Because of this, parents often chose to give their children to grandmothers or other relatives for the duration of the working day.¹⁸⁷ However, instead of arguing that mothers should stay home with their children, Kuznetsova called for better services for them.

It could be argued that Kuznetsova's call for a more comprehensive network of child-care institutions that would enable women to work without being subjected to exhaustion was a rather Leninist idea in nature as Kuznetsova demanded better public services to free women from

¹⁸⁴ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 49.

¹⁸⁵ I. Sklyar, "Ya iz sredey rabochikh lyudey, oni mne blizki..." *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1989, 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21-23.

¹⁸⁷ Pilkington 1992, 211.

domestic chores. The pronatalist campaigns and the “back to the home” movement, however, would have sent women back to the domestic chores socialism was supposed to have freed them from by providing public services. Also, Gorbachev, too, had touched upon this issue in the 27th Party Congress in February 1986 when he declared that there was a plan to introduce more child-care institutions.¹⁸⁸ However, as mentioned earlier, in subchapter 3.3., and argued by Barbara Alpern Engel, Gorbachev fell short of his own “Leninism” when it came to women as he gave contradictory statements on women’s roles and promoted women’s return to the “womanly mission”.¹⁸⁹ As was evident in the articles discussed in the previous chapter, promotion of increasing the provision of pre-school institutions was not on the agenda of those who advocated for sending women back to the home, either. Their views seemed to be more in line with Gorbachev’s statement about “womanly missions”.

Kuznetsova also took on the topic of gender roles and the need for further discussion on women’s roles. In her September 1988 article Kuznetsova maintained that the concept of perestroika had not reached the woman question and there had not been “stormy debates” on this matter. She warned that the whole perestroika process could come to a standstill if the “very complicated female aspect” of it was not considered and understood, and reminded that the direction should be forwards not backwards. She also noted that only the arrival of “a new type of man capable of seeing sexual equality not as something which prejudices a man’s rights but as the dialectical development of them” would make it possible for women to truly make a choice and to have the opportunity for career growth. Moreover, a man should be ready to stay at home with his children for a year or two so his wife could concentrate on her career.¹⁹⁰ Thus, she also called for men to help women to cope with the double burden so women could have at least a choice to have a career if they wished to. Interestingly this “new man” might be similar to that wished by Yakusheva, as analysed in subchapter 3.1., though it is unclear if Yakusheva’s version of this ideal male partner would also share housework and be ready to take paternity leave.¹⁹¹ Kuznetsova’s argument about there not yet being stormy debates coincides with my observation on *Rabotnitsa* articles and the discussion that took place in this particular magazine. As I examined in the earlier chapter, a wider discussion on women’s roles only began in 1988. This article of Kuznetsova’s in September 1988 started the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna*, which was

¹⁸⁸ Attwood 1990, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Engel 2004, 252–53.

¹⁹⁰ Larisa Kuznetsova, “Val i Valentina”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

¹⁹¹ Galina Yakusheva, “Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

a more in-depth examination of the woman question. Therefore, it could be argued that Kuznetsova's article was one of the earliest articles in *Rabotnitsa* that possibly made way for the "stormy debate" Kuznetsova had hoped for.

In her March 1990 article, Kuznetsova told the readers that she had received many letters from them after her previous article published in September 1988. In this latter article she reflected on her own thoughts and analysed the letters that were sent to her. The senders had complained about their daily lives and how they were exhausted from work around the house and trying to make ends meet. It seems that Kuznetsova had instead expected to receive more political letters and complaints about women's inability to participate in political and public life. For example, in her previous article she had asked why single mothers, those who were beaten by their husbands and those with alcoholic husbands did not unite. This lack of political aspirations made Kuznetsova argue that there was a "revival of traditional aspirations" among women. She presumed this was the outcome of women's inferior working conditions. Women would rather see themselves sent back to the home, to the family and kitchen, than be subjected to the harsh conditions of production work.¹⁹² Thus, in her latter article Kuznetsova implied that the most alarming issue was not necessarily the lack of respect and public recognition of domestic work but the grim reality of women's workplaces they had to face on a daily basis. This situation had therefore led to more traditional aspirations among women as well, as they would no longer have to be subjected to harsh working conditions if they stayed at home instead. At the same time they would have enough time and energy to do everything around the house.

This sentiment of exhaustion was also addressed by the editor Zoya Krylova when she in *Rabotnitsa*'s issue of August 1989 commented how difficult it was to try to explain to Western women why Soviet women would like to work less when women in other countries might be fighting for their right to work.¹⁹³ This again tells the story of how the ideal of a Soviet superwoman who self-sacrificingly performs her duties as a worker, a mother, and a wife was far from reality. This contrast between the propaganda and reality made words such as "emancipation" widely unpopular in the perestroika era, as the emancipation the Soviet authorities had promoted for decades was something else than actual women's liberation.¹⁹⁴ It would also explain why women in letters sent to Kuznetsova were not addressing political

¹⁹² Larisa Kuznetsova, "Razgovor pered zerkalom?", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1990, 11–14; Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

¹⁹³ Z. Krylova, "Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

¹⁹⁴ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 36.

aspirations as they were probably just trying to cope. Also, as Kuznetsova herself concluded, this probably explained their “revival of traditional aspirations” to be sent back to the home.

A very direct stance against returning women to the home was taken in one interview of a popular television commentator, Vladimir Pozner, in March 1989. He asserted that he did not agree with the view that home was a woman’s natural place where women should now be returned to in order to “restore their alleged lost femininity”. Pozner went as far as arguing that Russia was backward. According to him, this explained the attitude towards women and why women still remained on the sidelines of society. He argued that Russia’s backwardness was clearly expressed in an old proverb: “Chicken is not a bird, and *baba*¹⁹⁵ is not a human.” He thought this sentiment that a woman is not as worthy as a man was still shared by many. He regretted that women had much more difficult lives than men and they were much busier than their male counterparts. Even though women were praised in words, little had been done to make women’s lives easier.¹⁹⁶ Pozner was therefore quite direct in his criticism of the Russian culture and how women were treated. He argued directly against those who wanted to send women back to the home by referring to their feminine qualities which made them more suited to domestic roles. Interestingly, he also paid attention to the way women were praised but how this did not materialise in their lives. Similarly, a year earlier, *Rabotnitsa*’s editor of the magazine’s social problems department, I. Zhuravskaya, had written an article called “9th of March Conversation” referring to the day after the International Women’s Day (8th of March), a popular holiday in the Soviet Union. She complained about the difficulties women faced and, for example, asked what men were combining their work with if women were supposed to combine theirs with motherhood.¹⁹⁷ Pozner’s words about how women were praised but not much was done in order to help them cope better are similar to the contrast Zhuravskaya implied with the name of the article, meaning women were being celebrated and praised on the 8th of March but continued to live their difficult lives on the next day.

Rabotnitsa also reported on politics and different political events and meetings that had taken place, especially if they concerned women, families or children. One of these events was the November 1989 Plenum of the Soviet Women’s Committee of which *Rabotnitsa* published a report in January 1990. In this report a reader could see that the Soviet Women’s Committee had

¹⁹⁵ *Baba* is a derogatory term for a woman.

¹⁹⁶ Irina Sklyar, “Ne nado zhdat’ milostey ot... muzhchin!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 22–23.

¹⁹⁷ I. Zhuravskaya, “Razgovor 9 marta”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1988, 7.

been critical towards how women were treated in Soviet society and how the participants had addressed the double burden. For example, Zoya Pukhova, the chair of the Committee, had stated at the plenum that women's councils were "at a disadvantage with other public organisations", and she saw this as being "a reflection of society's attitude towards women's issues" in general.¹⁹⁸ She therefore openly criticised the state as well as society's values and attitudes. Pukhova had also commented on a matter that reached the pages of *Rabotnitsa* many times during the late 1980s and early 1990s: the unpaid domestic labour women performed in addition to their paid jobs. According to her, this situation had lasted for decades and the root of the problem was that women's work was considered and recognised socially useful only when it was performed outside the home. Moreover, O. A. Khazbulatova, a chairman of a woman's council and the secretary of Ivanovo Communist Party Regional Committee, had, too, made comments on the topic during the plenum. In her speech she had noted the lack of household appliances at shops and thought of it as a paradox because at the same time women had been ordered to go back to the kitchen. According to her, despite the poor working conditions many women faced, women did not see a future in staying at home before there was a public recognition that the work performed at home was as valuable as that performed at a workplace.¹⁹⁹

As can be seen from the report, the woman question and the double burden were addressed very directly by the Soviet Women's Committee in late 1989. Also, it seems that they did not share the sentiment that women should be sent back to the home. Moreover, O. A. Khazbulatova's views are similar to those of Larisa Kuznetsova and Valentina Kiseleva, meaning that all three thought that women's domestic work should be appreciated more. However, whereas Kiseleva had argued that women should be made less busy and women who did not work outside the home should not be frowned upon, Kuznetsova had called for better services so that women could both work and be mothers.²⁰⁰ In turn, O. A. Khazbulatova also asked help from the state in the form of better consumer goods. Still, it is unclear if O. A. Khazbulatova thought that with better household appliances and more appreciation, women should spend more time in the private sphere. Either way, she openly recognised the problem. She also made the observation that the idea of sending women back to the home when housework was still tiring and time consuming and women's unpaid labour in the home was not appreciated, was rather alienated from reality.

¹⁹⁸ "Vremya doveriya", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 18–20.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ I. Sklyar, "Ya iz sredy rabochikh lyudey, oni mne blizki..." *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1989, 14–15; Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

As the years moved on, more views that were in line with Western feminism were published in *Rabotnitsa*. For example the July issue of 1991 saw an article called “Second class citizen?” that was written by Ol’ga Lipovskaya. *Rabotnitsa* had asked her to write about a meeting of independent women’s organisations, groups and associations that had taken place in Dubna in March 1991 and called themselves the “First Independent Women’s Forum”. Lipovskaya was one of the participants of this meeting and also the editor of a journal called *Zhenskoe Chtenie* (Women’s Reading) which published Western feminist writings in addition to other commentary on women’s issues²⁰¹. The article she wrote for *Rabotnitsa* was very critical of how society treated and portrayed women, and covered many different issues from unemployment to beauty pageants.²⁰²

On the topic of the double burden and women’s domestic and public roles, Lipovskaya argued that even though women were able to work outside the home, at home they “remained as enslaved as before”. According to her, women had undivided responsibility over domestic chores and the upbringing of children. Lipovskaya linked the campaign to bring women back to the home to the increasing unemployment and called it a “conscious policy”. She thought it was ridiculous to demand that women should now become housewives and it was “useless to try to ‘drive the paste back into the tube’”. She accused men in power of not caring for women’s problems and difficulties and argued that the use of female labour in low-paid jobs and lack of modern household appliances were examples of this negligence.²⁰³ Lipovskaya therefore implied that these problems women were facing were all interconnected. It was a type of widespread oppression of women that could be seen in the way women’s problems were discussed, how they remained “enslaved” at home and even in the lack of household appliances the state did not provide.

The tone of Lipovskaya’s article is very different from most of the articles that dealt with double burden and women’s roles in *Rabotnitsa* during the perestroika years. Its arguments were in line with Western feminism, something that is not surprising given Lipovskaya’s background as a feminist and her position as the editor of *Zhenskoe Chtenie*. Lipovskaya argued against women and men possessing different “inherent” qualities and maintained that differences existed

²⁰¹ Buckley 1992b, 65.

²⁰² Ol’ga Lipovskaya, “Chelovek 'vtorogo sorta’?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 7/1991, 16–17.

²⁰³ Ibid.

between individuals rather than between sexes. “And although in life quite often there are both strong, sensible women, and cowardly, passive men, we stubbornly follow the myth crammed into our heads”, she argued. At the same time she also criticised how those qualities that were supposedly “inherent” to men were considered better and valued more than those that were considered feminine.²⁰⁴ Her views on “femininity” were therefore very different from those examined in subchapter 3.1, as she critically analysed the whole concept of gender being based on biological sex and called the gendered characteristics a myth. However, she touched upon the same topics as members of the Soviet Women’s Committee examined above and therefore her arguments in that sense are very similar to those of O. A. Khazbulatova and Zoya Pukhova. She, too, criticised how the state did not provide household appliances and how there was negligence towards women’s problems, the same issues that were raised at the November 1989 Plenum of the Soviet Women’s Committee.

Lipovskaya’s article is also an example on how *Rabotnitsa* worked as a platform for different views on women’s roles and how to solve the problem of the double burden. It did not limit itself to being only a mouthpiece for the Communist Party or the “back to the home” movement. Even though Western-type feminist views, such as Lipovskaya’s, were in the minority among the articles that were published, readers, most of whom must have been women, were now able to get to know such views even on the pages of *Rabotnitsa*, a women’s magazine aimed at the masses. This was something new. During the previous decades and previous administrations such views would not have been allowed to be published, let alone in a magazine such as *Rabotnitsa*. Before the introduction of glasnost, publishing openly feminist views and feminist critiques of the gender order in self-published (samizdat) journals could get you arrested. For instance, in the end of the 1970s, some of the feminists publishing the feminist samizdat journal *An Almanac: Women and Russia* lost their citizenships and were deported. This changed in the late 1980s when feminist writings started to appear in the press, feminist groups emerged in big cities, and some female academics and political actors adopted feminist concepts, such as *muzhekratiia* (male dominated bureaucracy).²⁰⁵ However, it should also be noted that views such as Lipovskaya’s were not yet published in the first few years of the period this thesis concerns itself with. As it had been with the most conservative of views, when the years moved on feminist-leaning sentiments became more pronounced. I would argue not only glasnost and the disappearance of censorship, but also the disappearance of self-censorship had led to this

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Engel 2004, 247; Buckley 1992a, 214–215; Marsh 1996b, 287–288.

situation. Mary Buckley points out that in the first few years of the Gorbachev administration, people, including journalists, were more careful with their views. Addressing problems too critically and expressing opinions that had previously been out of bounds might have also been unfavourable for the new leadership as this could have given Gorbachev's opponents a weapon against him and he might have been removed from power.²⁰⁶ This seems also to be true in the case of *Rabotnitsa* as more critical views only started to appear in 1988 but it was only in the early 1990s that the most feminist and most conservative sentiments could be found in *Rabotnitsa*. Of course this was something that was decided by the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa* and we unfortunately do not know if such opinions were offered to the magazine even before the 1990s, or if people who shared these views only dared to share them in a magazine such as *Rabotnitsa* in the early 1990s.

As examined in this subchapter, women's problems were prominently voiced in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These articles suggested other solutions to the double burden than sending women back to the home, such as better provision of child-care facilities, and an altogether better understanding and handling of women's problems in society. This suggests they supported a gender order where women would participate in the labour force and that society as a whole should not operate on a male norm. Arguments against women's willingness to return to the home were also voiced. Even though articles that promoted returning women to the home became more common in 1991, *Rabotnitsa* also published a feminist critique of the Soviet society, gender roles and gendered characteristics in the same year, suggesting the editorial board wanted to show a variety of views. Therefore, with time the debate was widened but also became more polarised. Then again, the greater number of conservative articles could also indicate that the "back to the home" movement became more influential in the society and this was reflected in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa*, too. Still, the articles examined in this subchapter seem to advocate a gender order in which men and women had more similar tasks, or at least women's tasks would not be limited to those in the domestic sphere. As already shown in the case of Larisa Kuznetsova's article, more equal distribution of domestic responsibilities was also offered as a solution for women. Therefore, in the next subchapter, this option is examined further.

²⁰⁶ Buckley 1989, 192.

4.2. Equal participation in parenting and housework

Even though the Soviet constitution stated that every citizen had an obligation to participate in the upbringing of children and everyone had equal rights regardless of their sex,²⁰⁷ home and parenting were considered women's duties, or at least the responsibility fell on women more often. It was one of the root causes of the double burden and why women found it so difficult to combine motherhood with working life. Women spent so many hours on childcare and housework tasks that it prevented them from achieving higher qualifications due to the lack of free time. This then resulted in many of them working in low or unskilled occupations. According to a survey done in 1988, women on average did three hours and 18 minutes of housework on top of their workday, and on their days off this amount was doubled. Men, on the other hand, performed only 58 minutes on an average working day and two hours 44 minutes on their days off. Also, the average amount of weekly housework increased from 28 hours to 36 hours when a woman gave birth to her first child.²⁰⁸

As covered in subchapters 3.2. and 3.3., many contributors were keen on keeping domestic responsibilities as they were or proposed measures that would further increase gender segregation in the domestic as well as in the public sphere. They saw this as a way in which women could be freed from their double burden by decreasing their working hours or removing them from working life completely. However, there were also other options that were discussed in *Rabotnitsa*, such as men taking on more housework and sharing the responsibilities for the home and children equally with their wives. Many articles published in *Rabotnitsa* called for more equal parental responsibilities and writers thought that fathers' roles had been diminished. They often suggested that fathers, too, could stay at home when their child was sick, and others even proposed that in some cases it would make sense for the father to stay at home with the newborn instead of the mother. In most of the cases these opinions were shared when discussing how women were overwhelmed by all their responsibilities and what could be done to make their lives easier.

For instance, in a report, published in August 1989, on the first meetings of the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, Zoya Krylova touched upon the subject in a rather critical piece of writing. Krylova, the editor-in-chief of *Rabotnitsa*, had also been elected to the

²⁰⁷ Konstitutsiya SSSR 1977 goda, stat'ya 66 [article 66].

²⁰⁸ Pilkington 1992, 202.

new political body, the Congress of People's Deputies, in the election held in the spring of 1989, so she reported how the woman question and women's issues were being taken into account during the meetings. She argued that women did not want to return to the past but simply asked for a "humanisation" of their lives. Women wanted to decide how much to work and whether to stay at home with their children, and possibly take turns with their husbands at staying at home. Therefore husbands and fathers should also bear some of the responsibility and stay at home with a sick child and possibly take part of the parental leave.²⁰⁹ In the article Krylova therefore advocated for both a more equal distribution of parental responsibilities and a choice for women to decide whether to stay at home or not, a topic further discussed in chapter 4.3. However, later on, in the 1990s, Krylova emphasised more heavily women's role as mothers and the importance of home instead of the responsibility of husbands and fathers, as is examined in chapter 3.2. Her views are an interesting example of how articles written by the same person stressed different points of views, and this is discussed further in chapter 5.1.

Similar approaches to the one expressed by Krylova in August 1989 were taken even earlier by at least one other journalist and two interviewees. In December 1988, the sociologist Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, whose views were examined in chapter 3 and who thought that more and more women wanted to stay at home, argued that families should be able to choose who stayed at home. However, just before this comment he had stated that every woman should receive up to three years of paid maternity leave after giving birth. Therefore it is unclear what type of paternity leave he meant.²¹⁰ Also, in March 1989, the television commentator Vladimir Pozner took a similar stance when he argued in an interview that it should be up to the family to decide who stays at home.²¹¹ A year before that, in March 1988, I. Zhuravskaya's critical women's day opinion piece was published. Zhuravskaya asked what men were combining their work with if women were combining theirs with motherhood. She wondered why women could stay home for up to one and a half years but fathers could not and why it was usually the mother who stayed at home when the child was sick. She also asked why it was always the wife who cooked during weekdays and weekends. Moreover, according to Zhuravskaya, in the Soviet Union people spent annually 275 billion man-hours on domestic work, compared to 240–250 to man-hours spent at

²⁰⁹ Z. Krylova, "Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

²¹⁰ I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17

²¹¹ Irina Sklyar, "Ne nado zhdat' milostey ot... muzhchin!", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 22–23.

work, and 200 billion of them were performed by women alone.²¹² Therefore she pointed out the very unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities between women and men.

Zhuravskaya's article is a good, and quite early, example of a similar stance that had been present in academic circles already in the late 1970s and early 1980s, called the "biarchy" theory. Even though the pronatalist attitudes might have gained a stronger footing in academic circles as well as in the media, calls for equal family relations and responsibilities were not unheard of among Soviet sociologists and demographers either. According to Lynne Attwood, this so called "biarchy" theory offered an alternative way to examine the family relations and housework, and it had its proponents, too. In their view the Soviet family was in transition and therefore there were both patriarchal elements and egalitarian elements present within the family. This sometimes caused problems and tensions. Once the transition was complete, tensions would disappear and this would lead to a "biarchal" family in which the household responsibilities were equally distributed.²¹³

The presence of the "biarchy" theory shows that there were other solutions than the pronatalist approach to the problem of the double burden, and even before the start of perestroika and glasnost. However, it is difficult to see how this theory would have gained wider popularity in the media during the pronatalist campaign launched by the previous administrations when the censorship was still in place. The introduction of glasnost changed this, and, as examined in this subchapter, calls for more equal distribution of housework and childrearing were common in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and they were also voiced by people who were not radical Western-style feminist activists but journalists and women who were active in party politics.

A few examples of how more equal parental responsibilities were also brought up by women who were active in politics or held a position in the CPSU, and were therefore somewhat known to the public locally or nationally, are the report on the Plenum of the Soviet Women's Committee, published in January 1990, and Zoya Pukhova's interview in September 1988. According to the report on the Plenum of the Soviet Women's Committee, a chair of a woman's council and the secretary of Ivanovo Communist Party Regional Committee, O. A. Khazbulatova, had called for laws that would guarantee equal participation and equal

²¹² I. Zhuravskaya, "Razgovor 9 marta", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1988, 7.

²¹³ Attwood 1990, 128-129.

responsibilities for both parents in her speech at the plenum.²¹⁴ Similarly, Zoya Pukhova, the chair of the Soviet Women's Committee, noted in her interview in September 1988 that "the role of fatherhood is diminished" and domestic chores as well as raising children seemed to be associated with women. She added that the Soviet Women's Committee had used its initiative to address the matter with the Goskomtrud (the State Committee for Labour and Social Issues) and proposed that benefits which were intended mainly for women should instead be addressed to the whole family so that the family could decide who would use them, and how.²¹⁵ This was before the Soviet state eventually amended its legislation in 1990 when it made it possible for fathers, grandparents or other close relatives of the child to take partially paid or unpaid leave to look after the child.²¹⁶ According to Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick, it was the pressure coming from, for example, Zoya Pukhova and the Soviet Women's Committee that finally resulted in the decision to extend the leave to cover fathers as well.²¹⁷ This is therefore a good example of *Rabotnitsa* reporting on matters that had been voiced by women then being brought to the attention of the government, and eventually even legislated for. This shows that *Rabotnitsa* followed the discussion on women's roles closely and reported it to the wider public. Also, this shows that the Soviet Women's Committee was not toothless and therefore worthy of reporting too.

An even more critical stance towards the unequal division of labour was taken by Larisa Kuznetsova, a critical commentator on the woman question during perestroika years whose two lengthy articles were examined in the previous subchapter. Unlike the contributors previously mentioned in this subchapter, she voiced the need for critical examination of gender in her September 1988 article. Kuznetsova argued that a more equal standing between men and women, and husbands and wives, required a new type of man altogether. This man could agree to stay at home with his children to give his wife an equal opportunity to build her career.²¹⁸ Kuznetsova therefore implied that gender roles and relations should be critically examined in order to bring about equalities between the spouses.

Kuznetsova's insightful observation was on point, especially if it is viewed in the light of later research on masculinity and male breadwinners. According to Marina Kiblitckaya, the male

²¹⁴ "Vremya doveriya", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 18–20.

²¹⁵ L. Gavryushenko, "Pust' budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12.

²¹⁶ Pilkington 1992, 204.

²¹⁷ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 32.

²¹⁸ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

breadwinner was also a norm during Soviet times even though women participated in the labour force. This thinking was preserved in the Russian culture and dates back to the pre-revolutionary times. However, the Soviet state also played a role in sustaining this attitude by putting certain industries and professions above others, meaning that men in general were paid more than women because the majority of workers in these industries were men.²¹⁹ Furthermore, Sergei Kukhterin argues that the patriarchal ideology survived with the older generations who participated in the upbringing of their grandchildren during Soviet times, and this way, Soviet children were also exposed to the older norms. In addition, the Soviet state prioritised work over everything else, fatherhood was marginalised, and women were granted a more substantial role as mothers who bore the responsibility of childcare.²²⁰

Just as Kukhterin and Kiblitckaya argue, it seemed that at least in the very beginning of the 1990s family and home were still very much considered as women's responsibilities if you look at a survey published in *Rabotnitsa* in January 1991. According to this All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion survey, most men shared a traditional view of family roles. 50% of male respondents said they did not do any housework, 61% of male respondents did not think women did enough housework, and 40% of male respondents thought a woman should devote their time to her family and only the husband should work. 31% of the female respondents shared the view that only the husband should work while the wife devotes herself to her family. However, almost half (47%) of the female respondents thought housework duties should be shared equally though only 38% of male respondents shared this view.²²¹ Also, even though *Rabotnitsa* was a women's magazine and therefore many of the contributors were female, it seems that male contributors were more keen on sending women back to the home. For example, as examined in subchapter 3.3., at least Vladimir Zubkov, Andrei Golitsyn, and G. Orlovskiy shared such sentiments.²²² Then again, the views expressed by another male contributor, Vladimir Pozner, were very different as he explicitly stated that he did not believe women should be sent back to the home and also argued that families should decide which parent took parental leave.²²³ Therefore, not all men shared the sentiment that women were more home-oriented and for that reason should mostly concentrate on family and home.

²¹⁹ Kiblitckaya 2000, 90–92.

²²⁰ Kukhterin 2000, 80–81.

²²¹ “Informrabotnitsa: Chto dumayut muzhchiny o sem'ye i zhenshchine?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 4.

²²² Irina Sklyar, “Slavnyy rod prodolzhayetsya...”, *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1991, 22–23; Vladimir Zubkov, “Lyubite zhenshchin!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1991, 7; G. Orlovskiy, “I vam togo ne pozhelayu”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1991, 2.

²²³ Irina Sklyar, “Ne nado zhdat' milostey ot... muzhchin!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 22–23.

Another interesting example of how caring for children was considered largely a woman's responsibility is the example of "cuckoo-mothers", an issue that was raised by the feminist Ol'ga Lipovskaya in her July 1991 article. In the media, women who had abandoned their children were referred to as cuckoo-mothers and were widely condemned. Lipovskaya pointed out that even though the responsibility for a child applied to both parents, fathers of these children were not denounced in the media in the same way as their mothers.²²⁴ Lipovskaya's observations therefore revealed that caring for children was considered to be the responsibility of the mother as blame fell on mothers alone. As Lipovskaya pointed out, the way these "cuckoo mothers" were treated in the press was quite harsh during the late 1980s. Many thought these women should be punished. Some suggested stamping their internal passports, others went as far as proposing forced sterilisation or sending them to camps.²²⁵ This reveals that parenting did not fall on the shoulders of parents equally.

As examined above, more equal housework and parenting were often discussed in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some argued for a critical examination of gender roles, others wished that parental leave could be taken by the father of the child too, something that was eventually enabled in 1990 when partially paid and unpaid leave were extended to fathers as well. However, giving families the right to choose would not automatically change people's attitude towards gender roles and gendered tasks or guarantee that families would begin to use them more equally. This was something that was implied by Kuznetsova and Lipovskaya who took a more critical stance towards gender roles, and saw the need for critically examining them. Because equal parenting and housework were mentioned quite often in *Rabotnitsa*, this type of feature within a gender order was a popular option among contributors in order to reduce the double burden, and as the survey of 1991 examined above suggested, it was also favoured by almost half of women.²²⁶ Apart from giving families the freedom to choose over parental leave, the element of individual choice was also present in articles and comments that stressed women's right to choose between a career and a family. In the next subchapter, this option is discussed.

²²⁴ Ol'ga Lipovskaya, "Chelovek 'vtorogo sorta'?", *Rabotnitsa*, 7/1991, 16–17.

²²⁵ Waters 1992, 129–130.

²²⁶ "Informrabotnitsa: Chto dumayut muzhchiny o sem'ye i zhenshchine?", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 4.

4.3. Choice between career and family

One recurring element that was present in several *Rabotnitsa* articles was the notion of individual choice, regardless of their view on women's roles. This is not surprising as the choice approach, meaning women could choose between a career and a family, also became more and more popular among Soviet sociologists during the perestroika years, and one of its first and most prominent supporters was Igor Bestuzhev-Lada²²⁷ whose interview with *Rabotnitsa* is examined in chapter 3. According to Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick, the element of choice offered Gorbachev and his administration a way out of the contradiction of “womanly missions” and “wide roads”, a measure he had proposed for a higher representation of women in politics. Instead of trying to combine motherhood and family with work, women only had to choose between those two options. Choice for women was increasingly being discussed in the press and on TV as the years moved on. However, as both Lynne Attwood and Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick argue, the concept of choice was rather deceptive. The assumption behind it was that most women would choose to have a family over a career. As examined in chapter 5, at the same time when the concept of choice was promoted, the government decided to extend maternity leave in 1989 and from 1987 part-time work had been made available for women with small children at their request.²²⁸ In addition, as discussed in the previous subchapter, family and home were mostly considered a women's territory. Therefore there was also a factor of social pressure and “appropriate” gender roles that pushed women towards the option of giving up a career for the sake of the family.²²⁹ As is examined in this chapter, it is also quite evident that the same dilemma did not apply to men.

In *Rabotnitsa*, the element of choice was present in many articles that discussed women's roles and how they might best cope with the pressures of home and work. For example, the editor Zoya Krylova argued in her article in March 1989 that a woman should be given a choice to decide what was best for her and her decision should be respected. If she decided to work, she should be helped so she did not have to spend hours waiting in queues, washing and cooking. If a woman wanted to stay at home with her children, she should be given a “living wage” as educating a child was useful work too.²³⁰ She therefore suggested that men should help their

²²⁷ Attwood 1990, 129.

²²⁸ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 25–26; Attwood 1990, 131–132.

²²⁹ Attwood 1990, 131–132.

²³⁰ Z. Krylova, “Nel'z'ya ostanavlivat'sya!..”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 5.

wives at home if a woman chose to have a career, and that mothers staying at home should be paid some sort of a salary for their work as a childrearer.

The concept of choice is also present in articles that argued that women were a heterogeneous group that included those who were more suited to or interested in domestic roles and those whose main ambition was work. For instance, the report on the Plenum of the Soviet Women's Committee published in December 1988 mentioned that Zoya Pukhova, the chair of the Soviet Women's Committee, had argued that a woman has the right to focus on her career and not have children. She believed that the combination of roles of a working mother was destroying women. Similarly with Igor Bestuzhev-Lada and Galina Yakusheva, whose views are examined in chapter 3 and who both suggested that some women were more career-oriented while others found their satisfaction in the home, Pukhova also argued that some women were oriented towards the home and some women might not find happiness in marriage.²³¹ It is therefore interesting that as early as 1988, voiced by a female member representing a party-affiliated organisation, the two duties which Soviet women had to the state, of production and reproduction, were separated from each other. Also, Pukhova seems to imply that a successful career was not compatible with the role of a mother. Thus, all three contributors argued that depending on the type of woman you were, you could now choose between a family and a career. However, Yakusheva also argued that feminine qualities were useful at work, and the "feelings of motherhood, tenderness, [and a] heightened ability to feel compassion" could actually work to a woman's advantage. Therefore, instead of arguing that all women had to make the choice, she implied there were those who could combine the roles of a working mother as motherhood could "stimulate" a woman and "fill her mind, soul with life-giving juices, [and] inspire her with self-confidence, desire for daring".²³² In other words, in her article the concept of choice is present but it is not the only option that is given.

Even though the concept choice was often mentioned, it did not mean the contributor was without an opinion as to what kind of roles they thought women were better suited to, so sometimes this combination led to contradictory messages. One of such articles was published in September 1989 as part of the article series *Otkrytaya tribuna* that was dedicated to the woman question and the discussion on women's roles in society. This article was written by economist

²³¹ Z. P. Pukhova, "Nastupilo vremya energichnykh prakticheskikh deystviy", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 10–12; I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17; Galina Yakusheva, "Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

²³² Galina Yakusheva, "Zhenshchina v epokhu zastoya i posle", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 16–17.

Yelena Tolokina. She discussed women's work at home from an economic perspective and mainly concentrated on the amount of money women who stayed at home with small children could and should receive from the state and where this money would come from. In addition, the article contained interesting and relevant comments on women's roles within the domestic sphere and as part of the labour force.²³³ As it is a good example of how the concept of choice also included elements of a gender order in which parenting was a woman's duty, and because it was published in *Rabotnitsa* as part of an article series that was dedicated to the woman question, it is examined in length.

Interestingly, the lead paragraph of this article, which was written by a member of the editorial staff of *Rabotnitsa*, first introduced the topic of the article to the readers but then also made comments relating to how the editorial board felt about the ideas in Tolokina's article. According to the lead paragraph, the editorial board did not all agree with what was stated in the article as some of them considered this approach as humane towards working mothers but others thought it was unrealistic due to the economic situation and lack of state money. There had also been those who found this approach "patriarchal" towards women's problems. However, they decided to publish it as part of a "collective search for opportunities to facilitate women's work, motherhood, and life in general".²³⁴ Therefore the voice of the editorial board was made heard. This suggests that there were various different views among the staff which itself would also explain why so many different opinions and arguments were published in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The article was placed on the third page of the issue, next to the list of contents where *Rabotnitsa*'s editorial was sometimes located²³⁵. Possibly because this was a very visible place in the magazine and because there was no consensus among the editorial board about Tolokina's views, they decided to publicly announce their opinions.

Tolokina admitted that she would have defended every woman's obligation and right to have a job when she was younger, but now she no longer thought that all women should work eight hours a day outside the home. She acknowledged that according to the constitution the responsibility of raising children lay with both of the parents but added that in reality only women took up that task. She stressed the importance of the work women performed at home, also noting how physical it was, and demanded that women should be financially compensated

²³³ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Not all issues had an editorial written by a member of the editorial staff. Instead of an editorial, different articles on various topics were located on this page.

for this socially beneficial and significant work if they chose to stay home with their small children.²³⁶ Therefore her views were similar to those of Valentina Kiseleva, O. A. Khazbulatova, and Larisa Kuznetsova, who also argued that women's work in the home should be appreciated more and recognised as socially useful.²³⁷

Tolokina did not call for all women to, for example, take years-long maternity leaves, but, like many others during the late 1980s and early 1990s, underlined that it was every woman's choice whether she would like to stay at home or not, and that no one should force her to take time off work while her children were young. She also stated that according to sociologists it was only a minority of women that would like to devote themselves to raising children at home if this was possible financially, about 20-30%, a figure that was brought up by sociologist Igor Bestuzhev-Lada in his article in the same article series in December 1988.²³⁸ Women who, instead of staying at home, chose to combine motherhood with work outside the home could receive more free time with fewer working hours. Moreover, Tolokina stressed that women who were returning to working life ought to receive retraining in order to make up the time they had spent at home with their children.²³⁹ Here, Tolokina's views therefore seem to be consistent with the views of the government too, as in 1987 an obligation for workplaces to give women with small children part-time work if they so wished was introduced.²⁴⁰ She also recognised that motherhood and maternity leave could slow down women's careers and opined that that was why training was necessary.

Even though Tolokina defended every woman's right to choose whether to stay at home or return to work after giving birth, some parts of the article revealed a rather different view on this matter. For example, in the beginning of the article she pointed out that women did most of the work at home despite the USSR constitution stating that parents had a shared responsibility over their children, and admitted that she no longer thought that every woman should work outside the home and be freed from their household chores. However, she then argued that these domestic duties, such as raising a child, had a creative aspect to them and they could also help maintain and further develop the love between the spouses, and therefore "after a decade" she was "no

²³⁶ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5.

²³⁷ I. Sklyar, "Ya iz sredey rabochikh lyudey, oni mne blizki..." *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1989, 14-15; "Vremya doveriya", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 18–20; Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

²³⁸ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5; I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

²³⁹ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5.

²⁴⁰ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 25.

longer in a hurry to proclaim the obligation for every mother to leave for an eight-hour task in the public sector".²⁴¹ Therefore it seems that she supported the view that childrearing and other domestic chores were first and foremost women's responsibilities.

It is of course possible that by pointing out the positive aspects of doing household chores she did not want to comment on how these tasks should be distributed, but was simply referring to the reality the majority of Soviet families lived in. However, Tolokina also asked in her article how much a woman could work without it damaging her role as a carer and homemaker.²⁴² This suggests that she saw the role of a worker and work outside the home as something that could harm her role as a mother and a wife. Moreover, Tolokina thought it was important that people, including women themselves, were convinced of the importance and value of giving birth and raising a child at home. According to her, this was a slow process, and it could take a generation to change people's views on women staying at home to raise their children as being without a job was still frowned upon. She based this idea on the notion that domestic work was socially important and therefore should be considered as work like any other. Tolokina wrote that a Soviet woman worked 35 hours a week doing domestic chores and spent "the same amount of calories that a metallurgist spends in the same time". Apart from demanding recognition for this type of work, Tolokina also thought domestic work should be paid too, just as the editor of *Rabotnitsa*, Zoya Kyrlova, had argued six months earlier, as examined above. However, as stated above, not all members of the editorial board thought this was realistic due to the economic situation.²⁴³ Tolokina therefore implied that in the future people should view stay-at-home motherhood more positively as it was hard work, and the state should recognise this by giving women a salary for their domestic work. Thus, at the same time Tolokina supported the idea that every woman would have the right to choose whether to stay at home or return to work after giving birth, and noting it was only a minority of women who would like to withdraw from working life, she thought it was important to change people's views on this matter and make them view work at home more positively. This suggests that Tolokina thought that more women would choose to stay at home in the future if this occupation became more respectable and valued. There was a choice but the option of staying at home should be made more attractive for women.

²⁴¹ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5; Z. Krylova, "Nel'zya ostanavlivat'sya!..", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 5.

Another contradiction can be seen even within a couple of consecutive sentences in her article:

*It may seem that we urge women who were previously lured into social production to return to their families and forget about the development of their professional abilities. (As a matter of fact, sometimes women of other countries who are fighting for their own equal participation in social production accuse us of doing this.) But this is not the case. Our conversation is only about women who temporarily leave their jobs and raise children up to 10-11 years of age – the age when the absence of the mother during her working day is no longer painful for the child.*²⁴⁴

Here Tolokina seems to argue that her intention is not to encourage all women to stay at home, only those who would want to, but at the same time children of mothers who do not stay home with them until they are 10-11 years of age would suffer. She therefore implied that children of mothers who worked would somehow suffer from the absence of their mothers during her working day. Also, a career break of 10 years would surely be exactly what “women of other countries” were accusing them of, as mothers would abandon their professional life for a decade. Tolokina did suggest women could get training after they returned to work but 10 years spent at home seems like a long time. Moreover, this only applied if a woman had one child. With several children her career break would no doubt be even longer. For example, in the mid 1970s, the birthrate was 1.69 in Moscow and 1.55 in Leningrad but it was higher in rural areas.²⁴⁵ According to statistics from 1965, the average number of births per woman in the Moscow region was 1.7 among unskilled and low-skilled female workers, and 1.4 among skilled and highly skilled female workers.²⁴⁶ Therefore, if the state and Soviet women were to follow Tolokina’s proposal, many women would be removed from the labour force for more than 10 years. Also, maybe this made some journalists among the editorial board think Tolokina’s approach was “patriarchal” as it ended up advocating at least some form of stay-at-home motherhood.

²⁴⁴ Elena Tolokina, "Tak skol'ko dolzhna rabotat' zhenshchina?", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1989, 3–5. “Может сложиться впечатление, что мы призываем женщин, которых прежде завлекали в общественное производство, вернуться в семью и забыть о развитии своих профессиональных способностей. (Кстати, в этом нас упрекают порой женщины других стран, которые ведут борьбу как раз за равноправное участие их в общественном производстве.) Но это не так. Наш разговор только о женщинах, временно оставивших работу и воспитывающих детей до 10-11 лет - того возраста, когда ребенок уже не так болезненно воспринимает отсутствие матери в течение ее рабочего дня.”

²⁴⁵ Lapidus 1993, 146–147.

²⁴⁶ Sysenko 1974, cited in Lapidus 1988, 101.

If the ideal Soviet woman of the Soviet gender order of earlier decades, who worked side by side with men even in “masculine” occupations and at the same time was a feminine and nurturing mother at home, included contradictory elements of traditionalism and radicalism, there seemed also to have been contradictory messages on women’s roles during the perestroika era, as we have seen throughout this thesis. Of course, the contradictory messages of the late 1980s and early 1990s can be explained by the relaxation of censorship that allowed many different views to be published. Still, the contradiction in some cases was only a seeming one as is evident in the article written by Tolokina. Even though the ideal of the Soviet superwoman eventually vanished in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and most probably much to the relief of many Soviet women who worked in double shifts at home and at work, in many cases it was not replaced by endorsements of a woman whose choices and options were all equally socially acceptable, however much the right to choose was seemingly embraced. This can be seen in the articles that promoted motherhood as women’s priority and are discussed in chapter 3 but also in the article written by Tolokina, who seemingly promoted choice by ended up emphasising women’s role as mothers and wishing that stay-at-home motherhood, at least until the child was 10 or 11, would be more attractive in the future.

However, even though the choice approach had its shortcomings and people like Tolokina who promoted it might have at the same time revealed their rather traditional notion of gender roles by emphasising motherhood, I argue it is understandable why so many contributors mentioned it. Presumably after years of authoritarian rule and censorship they wanted to endorse people’s right to make their own decisions over their lives by stating that it was up to the reader to decide how to live and what to prioritise. This probably made their messages more appealing and would give the readers a sense that they had agency over their own lives. This would explain why contributors who otherwise disagreed on women’s roles still chose to use this same argument. For example, even Andrei Golitsyn, whose very conservative views were examined in chapter 3.3. argued that he did “not insist that every woman is obliged to deal only with the home, there are different needs and aspirations”. However, I assume that Tolokina, who also promoted the concept of choice, would not have agreed with Golitsyn on separate education for boys and girls through which girls learned good housekeeping skills and boys “possession of rhetoric, oratory, negotiation skills”.²⁴⁷ I assume this because Tolokina also argued that women could return to

²⁴⁷ Irina Sklyar, “Slavnyy rod prodolzhayetsya...”, *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1991, 22–23.

their careers after spending time at home with her child and acknowledged that some women were more career-oriented.

Still, what is buried under the idea that women can choose between career and family but can not successfully have both, is the idea that childrearing was especially a woman's responsibility. Husbands and fathers seemed to have been removed from this equation, though Zoya Krylova did suggest that women should be helped with their domestic tasks in her March 1989 article as examined earlier, and I assume the helper would be the husbands of these women.²⁴⁸ Similarly Igor Bestuzhev-Lada argued that those rare women who were career-oriented needed help from their husbands and relatives as otherwise they could not manage with their domestic responsibilities.²⁴⁹ Still, promoting a choice between a career and family implied that a woman who chose to have a successful career would not cope well with a family and children as supposedly they would be more of her responsibility than that of her husband. Therefore the promotion of choice between a career and a family does not in itself challenge the gender roles or gender segregation of domestic tasks.

As shown above, even though the notion of individual choice became popular during the perestroika era, it did not actually critically examine gender or gender roles and still assumed the mother was the primary carer for the child. In addition, Lynne Attwood also argues that if women chose en masse to leave the workforce, they could become less influential in society. As discussed in this thesis, many contributors who participated in the discussion on women's roles regretted that women's work at home was not appreciated enough and that they deserved to be valued more, also as mothers and wives. However, according to Attwood, it is not likely that the full-time housewife would be appreciated more in the future, especially if public life was increasingly dominated by men. Presumably, the society would then increasingly mirror and represent men's interests and values. Attwood also mentions that the concept of choice was criticised by an article published in *Kommunist* in April 1989, written by N. Zakharova, A. Posadskaya and N. Rimashevskaya, of the Institute of Socio-economic Problems. They claimed that even those women who are career-oriented often have to prioritise their family over their careers because of the pressure that is put on them at home. A woman's choice might not therefore be free and motivated by her own desires after all, but was determined by the environment. In addition, women were not seen as leaders so they learned to belittle their own

²⁴⁸ Z. Krylova, "Nel'zya ostanavlivat'sya!..", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 5.

²⁴⁹ I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

abilities. This could then lead to a situation where women opted for professions and fields of studies that were considered more suited for women and fit the stereotype. If the majority of women became full-time housewives, it would be even harder for women to build their careers successfully and the pressure put on those who chose to build one would be even greater.²⁵⁰

Therefore, not only did the concept of choice ignore gender stereotypes and the notion of a traditional gender role for women and possibly even reinforced them by suggesting that having a family was not compatible with a career, there was also a risk that it could lead to a society that was even more dominated by men. Of course one could argue that women could have influence at home and over their husbands, and this way could get their voices heard in society. However, if women were not present in places of work, and in politics too, they would not be able to influence these areas directly, and having influence only over one's husband would always be conditional on the husband and his agreement.

As examined above, the concept of choice was popular among contributors of *Rabotnitsa*. Many of them mentioned this as an option for dealing with the double burden and contributors with otherwise different views gave their approval to the idea that women themselves should make the choice how to live their lives and what elements to prioritise. As argued when analysing Tolokina's article in length, the concept of choice was also rather superficial, as it did not challenge the notion of the traditional female role of the primary childrearer in the family. This seemed also to be voiced by members of the editorial board in the leading paragraph of Tolokina's article as they thought its ideas were "patriarchal" in nature. Still, the popularity of the concept of choice could be understood in the light of the historical context of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when a person's individual choice was probably valued after decades of censorship and totalitarian rule. Therefore it probably also gave *Rabotnitsa*'s readers a sense of freedom to make their own decisions over their lives and how to lessen their own double burden.

²⁵⁰ Attwood 1990, 129–132.

5. State protection and support of women and mothers

5.1. The economics of motherhood: benefits, maternity leave, and pension

Rabotnitsa articles that commented on women's roles as mothers, wives and workers also commented on the economic and legislative aspect of these roles and their combination. For example, maternity leave was widely discussed in many articles and in addition there were articles that were dedicated to particular topics, such as working conditions and part-time work. The common element in these articles, or excerpts of articles, was that they concerned themselves with what the state could do to help women and mothers in the form of economic support or labour legislation. Therefore in this chapter I firstly examine the economic side of motherhood in the form of benefits, maternity leave, and pension. I then concentrate on comments and articles on women's employment and examine themes such as working conditions and part-time work.

As the discussion on women's roles as mothers and wives as well as workers continued, many writers started to examine the financial realities women faced as mothers of small children. Some writers warned against overly positive attitudes towards women staying at home as this seemed too unrealistic for them, while others explored options that could make stay-at-home motherhood possible without a significant decline in the family's standard of living. Whereas extended maternity leave and an increase of maternity benefits were endorsed by virtually everyone, mothers staying at home full-time did not meet the same level of enthusiasm as it could give rise to problems such as woman's complete dependence on her husband, the lack of pension for women, and the lower standard of living or even poverty for the whole family when trying to survive on one person's salary.

A few years before the beginning of perestroika, in 1981 and under the Brezhnev administration, the length of maternity leave had been extended. Women were given one year partially paid maternity leave if they had worked full-time at least one year or were studying full time. After one year they could opt for another 6 months of unpaid leave without losing their jobs. Mothers with small children could also work fewer hours or work from home.²⁵¹ Under Gorbachev the administration, maternity leave was further extended. In 1986, at the 27th Party Congress, partially-paid leave was lengthened to 18 months, and in 1989 it was decided that unpaid leave

²⁵¹ Attwood 1990, 6–7.

on top of a partially-paid period would also be extended to 18 months.²⁵² The vast majority of Soviet women worked full-time and an average Soviet woman left the workforce for a total of 3.6 years for maternity leave during her working career.²⁵³ When a Soviet woman returned to the workforce after her maternity leave, she often relied on her relatives to help with childcare. This was common in the Soviet Union as childcare facilities were often of a poor standard, overcrowded, and not everyone was able to obtain a place in one for their child. That is why grandmothers in particular played a significant role in childcare.²⁵⁴ According to Marta Bruno, the social contract there once was between the state and Soviet women had already started to break down a decade before the end of the Soviet regime and the dissolution of the contract was signed by both parties. The state no longer provided a system women could rely on and in turn, because of the declining public services, women had started to use “private solutions” instead.²⁵⁵ Therefore it is important to understand the historical context of the discussion on maternity leave and maternity benefits, and take into account the reality many Soviet women lived in. For these reasons, and considering how many times maternity leave was extended in the 1980s, it is understandable why maternity leave and maternity benefits were continuously discussed and mentioned in many *Rabotnitsa* articles that dealt with motherhood, and also why the extension was widely welcomed.

The prolongation of the leave was received positively by contributors and many expressed their support for it even before it was extended to three years. For example, the editorial of the December issue of 1987, written by Irina Sklyar, praised the decisions made as well as discussions the party and government officials had had that supported women. According to her, they added “up to a strong system of social protection for the mother and child”.²⁵⁶ However, as already noted in chapter 3.2., this piece was written in a pre-perestroika propagandist style and it merely concentrated on listing all the good things the Party and the state had done for women during the year that was then coming to an end. Therefore, it probably would have praised any decisions made by the Party even if they had been different. Longer maternity leave was nevertheless endorsed and decisions to prolong it lauded in later articles, too. The chair of the Soviet Women’s Committee, Zoya Pukhova, noted in her speech at the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, which was published in *Rabotnitsa*’s December issue of 1989 instead of an

²⁵² Attwood 1990, 6–7; Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 26.

²⁵³ Bridger 1992, 187.

²⁵⁴ Pilkington 1992, 211; McKinney 2020, 93.

²⁵⁵ Bruno 1997, 60.

²⁵⁶ Irina Sklyar, “God nashey zhizni”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1987, 2.

editorial, that “after many years of indifference, society gradually began to turn its face to women's problems and needs”, and gave lengthened maternity leave as an example of this.²⁵⁷ Therefore she positively welcomed this change and commended the state's recognition of women's problems. Given the reality, as examined above, this type of decision was probably welcomed by many Soviet women.

However, other contributors or interviewees would have liked to see longer maternity leave and more extensive maternity benefits. They thought the current leave was not long enough a period for mothers to dedicate time exclusively to their child or children. For example, in December 1988 the sociologist Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, whose interview is examined at length in chapter 3, demanded that every woman have the right to take up to three years paid leave after giving birth, and in addition proposed that women be given an option to work only half a week for the next seven years.²⁵⁸ Similarly, the editor-in-chief, Zoya Krylova, remarked in January 1990 when longer maternity leave had already been introduced that although it was an accomplishment that after giving birth a woman could now spend up to three years with her child at home, it was still “not too much”. Krylova nevertheless thought that the extension to maternity leave was a positive change because “thousands and thousands of children will stop crying in the mornings and stop catching colds on buses or sleds while rushing to the kindergarten“ and “thousands and thousands of young women, having devoted an unbroken day and an unbroken soul to a child, will be able to feel more deeply what great happiness and responsibility Motherhood [her emphasis] is”.²⁵⁹ Longer maternity leave would therefore give women the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in motherhood, and children would not need to spend their days in public childcare institutions. As the standard of the state childcare facilities was poor, this is also understandable. However, both Krylova and Bestuzhev-Lada also considered the option of women's withdrawal from the workforce for a longer period of time and therefore implied that at least a limited period of stay-at-home motherhood would be an even better option.

Moreover, as discussed in subchapter 3.1., Igor Bestuzhev-Lada was not in favour of public day-care institutions. He argued that “having entrusted the matter of raising our children to professionals only, we ourselves have programmed the now-broken gap between the generations”, therefore suggesting that the childcare provided by the state and given by childcare

²⁵⁷ Zoya Pukhova, “Bol'she zhenshchin v organakh vlasti!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1989, 3–4.

²⁵⁸ I. Zhuravskaya, “Variant na zavtra?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

²⁵⁹ Zoya Krylova, “God ispytaniy, god nadezhd”, *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 2.

professionals had somehow damaged family relations, or the relationship between the mother and the child. Similarly, Krylova had argued that devoting “an unbroken day and an unbroken soul to a child” was better than sending the child to a kindergarten. Also, instead of state provision of childcare, Bestuzhev-Lada suggested that mothers could organise their own day-care system.²⁶⁰ Longer maternity leaves were therefore wholly welcomed by those who wished women would devote more time to their children and remove themselves from the workforce at least for some time. This way the declining state provision of childcare would not cause further problems either as mothers would care for their children at home.

Advocating women’s rights and issues in the field of nation-wide politics also seemed to have had a strong emphasis on supporting motherhood by giving women more time to spend at home with their children. This is evident from the list of instructions and objectives the Soviet Women’s Committee compiled for the People’s Deputies who had recently been elected to represent them in the newly established Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union in 1989. In its May issue that year, *Rabotnitsa* published these objectives together with the list of 75 elected women. According to the objectives, the Committee wished to seek solutions that would improve conditions so that women could better combine work and motherhood. These conditions consisted of, for example, the promotion of so-called preferential working regime, a gradual reduction in women’s working time, and improving maternal and child welfare that included increasing the length of paid leave until the child reached three years of age. However, the objectives also included the development of the network of children’s preschool institutions and the improve the status of fatherhood together with motherhood.²⁶¹ This implies that the Soviet Women’s Committee did not support removing mothers from the workforce completely and kept its support for the combination of roles as mothers and workers. Still, it is unclear how strictly the elected deputies had to follow these objectives while working at the Congress, as the editor-in-chief of *Rabotnitsa* Zoya Krylova was one of the women elected to represent the Committee and only seven months later she wrote an editorial in which she supported even longer maternity leave than had just been introduced and gave a rather negative view of sending children to day-care.

²⁶⁰ I. Zhuravskaya, “Variant na zavtra?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

²⁶¹ “Nakaz: narodnym deputatam, izbrannym ot sovetov zhenshchin, ob”yedinyayemykh Komitetom sovetskikh zhenshchin”, *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1989, 11.

Krylova's views seemed to have changed over the years as well. For instance, in August 1989 she argued in her report on the first meetings of the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, or "Diary of a Deputy" as it was called, that in order to give women agency over their own lives, the responsibility for the family should lie with both parents and not just the wife as it did with the current system of benefits. This meant that the husband could take some of the maternity leave as well as take time off work to stay at home when a child was sick. According to Krylova, this would enable women to decide more freely what worked best for them: to stay at home with her child or children, take turns with her husband, or something else. Krylova noted that women did not wish to return to the past, "the kitchen, the children, the church" as she put it.²⁶² Yet, in January 1990 she argued that three years of maternity leave was not long enough, sending children to day-care was somehow cruel, and longer maternity leave enabled women to "feel more deeply what great happiness and responsibility Motherhood is".²⁶³ Again, in December 1991 she criticised how women who stayed at home to raise their children and keep the family hearth warm for their husbands were called "dependents" and how the society put too much value on work that was performed outside the home when people should be allowed to do whatever made them happy.²⁶⁴ This suggests that over time she became more supportive of stay-at-home motherhood of some kind.

Women becoming financially dependent on their male partners might not have bothered Zoya Krylova but there were people who were worried about this development. Whereas the introduction of longer maternity leave was welcomed positively, the possibility of women also staying at the home after the 18 months of post-natal leave created concerns. As examined in subchapter 4.1. there were contributors who challenged the notion that women should devote more time to motherhood and home to get in touch with womanhood or femininity again, such as Vladimir Pozner²⁶⁵ and Ol'ga Lipovskaya²⁶⁶. However, there were also arguments that challenged stay-at-home-motherhood because it was unrealistic and it put women in a vulnerable position financially. One of the weightiest of reasons why some people argued against removing women from the workforce completely was the lack of pension. Larisa Kuznetsova, for instance, asked in September 1988 why those who promoted more traditional roles for women were silent about women's old-age or disability pensions. She suggested that it might also have something to

²⁶² Z. Krylova, "Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

²⁶³ Zoya Krylova, "God ispytaniy, god nadezhd", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1990, 2.

²⁶⁴ Zoya Krylova, "Slovo - uchreditelyam: I zhit', i verit'", *Rabotnitsa*, 1/1991, 3.

²⁶⁵ Irina Sklyar, "Ne nado zhdat' milostey ot... muzhchin!", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 22–23.

²⁶⁶ Ol'ga Lipovskaya, "Chelovek 'vtorogo sorta'?", *Rabotnitsa*, 7/1991, 16–17.

do with the stance that women's domestic and maternal labour is not "socially useful".²⁶⁷ Bestuzhev-Lada then mentioned this issue in his own interview a few months later in December 1988 and added that he agreed with Kuznetsova that there remained a risk for women who stayed at home even if the family survived on the husband's salary alone. He proposed that the time spent at home caring for a child or children should be counted towards their pension as work experience.²⁶⁸ Even though Kuznetsova's and Bestuzhev-Lada's views on women's roles might have differed in other ways, as Bestuzhev-Lada emphasised women's role as mothers and Kuznetsova expressed views that leaned more towards Western feminism, they nonetheless somewhat agreed on this matter.

Kuznetsova and Bestuzhev-Lada were not, however, the only ones to bring up this issue of pensions and stay-at-home motherhood. Zoya Pukhova, the chair of the Soviet Women's Committee, too, addressed the lack of pension in her interview in September 1988 by stating that women who wished to dedicate their lives to their families were deprived of many subsidies that state offered to working women, such as old-age pension and sick pay. She added that the Soviet Women's Committee thought it was time to discuss social guarantees for non-working mothers. Further on she linked this issue to the problem of "cuckoo mothers", mothers who had abandoned their children, and how the reasons for such behaviour, whether they were economic, social or moral ones, should be fully understood.²⁶⁹ Therefore, instead of just condemning "cuckoo mothers", she suggested there might be economic and social reasons and explanations for such behaviour. Pukhova also touched upon this issue of social insurance later that year in the December issue which saw the publication of her report on the Plenum of the Soviet Women's Committee. She argued that 70 percent of women would like to continue working even in case of "full material wealth" because work guaranteed them all kinds of social insurance and in addition they would have access to food orders that were issued at workplaces. Pukhova added that working was a question of women's, as well as their children's, existence and they would like to work in order to have normal lives.²⁷⁰ As argued by Pukhova, apart from a wage, work also provided other economic benefits for women and mothers such as pension, sick pay and food orders. Therefore, sending women back to the home put these benefits at risk.

²⁶⁷ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

²⁶⁸ I. Zhuravskaya, "Variant na zavtra?", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

²⁶⁹ L. Gavryushenko, "Pust' budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12.

²⁷⁰ Z. P. Pukhova, "Nastupilo vremya energichnykh prakticheskikh deystviy", *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 10–12.

Larisa Kuznetsova raised a similar point on the same issue in September 1988. According to her, a vast majority of women would not like to give up their work even if they were provided a full income. She continued her argument by stating that even the minority of women who would choose to stay at home, would not in reality be able to do so as the family depended on their income as well, and in case of an alcoholic husband the need for two salaries was even more crucial.²⁷¹ In her next article, in March 1990, Kuznetsova went even further and criticised the way benefits were given to women. She argued that the problems ran deeper in society and current gender roles. She asked: “After all, once a woman was pushed into production, which for many years had been knocked together by a rough male ax from the size of machines to the work regime – is she really feeling better from receiving benefits?”²⁷² Kuznetsova suggested that society was more or less made for men by men, even to the size of the machines women had to operate, and implied that giving women benefits was only a lazy way of trying to fix women’s problems so they could cope in this type of society.

Apart from these few critical notions by Kuznetsova, the extension of maternity leave and benefits were well received in *Rabotnitsa*, as examined in this subchapter. Some contributors wished for an even longer maternity leave so women could spend more time at home, therefore emphasising women’s reproductive role. Then again, longer maternity leave could have also been supported because of the poor state of the Soviet childcare facilities instead of advocating for a gender order where the mother stayed at home permanently. Also, women being financially dependent on their husbands and leaving the workforce for a longer period of time was not welcomed by all due to reasons such as lack of pension. Still, the problems women faced by becoming financially dependent on their male partners, besides the lack of pension, were not discussed in depth. Therefore it seems that there was a lack of articles in *Rabotnitsa* that discussed both women’s double burden and the consequences women’s financial dependency might have on their lives. Surely, financially dependent wives would find it more difficult to separate from their husbands. Similarly, problems single mothers or single-parent families faced were not examined in-depth in the articles that specifically discussed women’s roles and women’s double burden. Thus, the initial position of these articles, regardless of their viewpoint, is very similar and is based on a family that includes both parents and their child or children. This is, however, at least to some degree, understandable since these are not articles that dealt with particular cases but were part of a wider discussion on women’s roles. Therefore they

²⁷¹ Larisa Kuznetsova, “Val i Valentina”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

²⁷² Larisa Kuznetsova, “Razgovor pered zerkalom?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1990, 11–14.

discussed matters at a general level and most probably contributors wanted them to be relatable to the majority of their audience. Then again, it could be argued that possibly some of the contributors did not want to promote divorce by discussing it as an equal and normalised option for women.

5.2. Working conditions and protection of female workers

As shown in this thesis, a lot of the discussion on women's double burden in the articles that more or less directly took part in the discussion on women's roles in society, especially the ones that promoted the resurrection of traditional gender roles, revolved around motherhood, women's domestic roles, and how to help women perform this role better. Still, motherhood and housework was only one part of the issue of the double burden. Women's subordinate position within the Soviet society was reflected in the working life, views on women's roles and what was considered "women's work" further strengthened it, and women's double burden and the unequal distribution of domestic chores limited women's occupational mobility.²⁷³ However, even though many of the articles and interviews that were written on the topic of the woman question tended to emphasise or discuss women's roles as mothers, women's employment and issues surrounding work were also addressed in many articles published by *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Rabotnitsa* published many labour-themed articles, and addressed, for example, the harsh working conditions some women faced on a daily basis. Moreover, working conditions were also mentioned in articles that commented on the woman question even though motherhood seemed to have been a more pronounced topic.

Women in general had a weaker position among the industrial workers. Many "feminised" light-industry sectors, such as textiles, were high-intensity ones. Also, the more "feminised" the branch was, the lower the pay, generally. Furthermore, women performed many of the jobs that men refused to do and they were a majority in the lower skilled occupations. 44% of women and 27% of men performed manual labour in 1985. During the late 1980s and early 1990s three out of four unskilled industrial workers were women and 58% of workers performing manual labour were female, even though their proportion of the whole industrial labour force was 50%.²⁷⁴ According to Donald Filtzer, the subordination and exploitation of women was embedded in the structures of the Stalinist economy. It allowed the elite to have control over a economy that was

²⁷³ Lapidus 1988, 93–99.

²⁷⁴ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 18; Filtzer 1996, 215–218.

not otherwise efficient enough. This way they could fund the heavy industry with the revenues that the “feminised” light-industry branches produced. Therefore women were in a greatly disadvantaged position in the Soviet economy but the economy depended on this exploitation. Moreover, the marginalisation of women was further strengthened by a tendency to replace female workers with male ones when their jobs were mechanised, and this way the mechanisation of their work did not bring change to the situation.²⁷⁵ However, many women working in hazardous jobs in the heavy industry sector preferred to do so because the pay was higher and benefits, such as longer holidays, were better than with jobs in the light industry sectors or less dangerous lines of work.²⁷⁶

This marginalisation of women among industrial workers was also linked to the unequal distribution of housework. As discussed in chapter 4.2., women had less time to study for higher qualifications and search for better jobs so their professional development lagged behind their male counterparts. In addition, women did not believe higher qualifications would bring them promotion or increased pay so they did not seek to raise their qualifications. Filtzer argues that the unequal situation at home was echoed in the workplace as both men and women were conditioned to think that certain kinds of duties and work were more suitable for women.²⁷⁷ The effects of the double burden and gender roles can also be seen in the results of a nationwide poll conducted in 1990 where the respondents were able to give several answers to the question “Why is it, in your opinion, that not all women achieve the official position which they would like to?”. The most common replies were “Family and upbringing of children take a lot of time” (64.9%), “Not all women strive for promotion” (39.6%), “Women lack sufficient skill to lead” (16.4%), and “Women don’t have enough persistence and purposefulness” (14.1%).²⁷⁸ It is, therefore, clear that the double burden further exhausted women outside the home as they were not able to move up the ladder the way their male colleagues were, and they were concentrated in branches of the industry where the wages were low and the work was intense. Moreover, many people thought women did not share the same level of professional aspiration as men, and some Soviet citizens shared the view that women were not suitable for managerial positions.

²⁷⁵ Filtzer 1996, 215–218.

²⁷⁶ Ilic 1996, 231–232.

²⁷⁷ Filtzer 1996, 220.

²⁷⁸ The poll “Labour Activity of Women” 1990, cited in Bodrova 1993, 188.

This marginalisation and the subordinate position of women was acknowledged by some authors in *Rabotnitsa* as well. Larisa Kuznetsova wrote in September 1988 that “the tides of the labour force in our national economy were mainly solved at the expense of women” and that women would not be able to leave their jobs because in the “vast and unorganized economy” that lacked mechanisation no one but women would do such jobs.²⁷⁹ In light of the reasons for women’s poor position within the workforce given above, this was an insightful observation. The disadvantaged position of women and discrimination against women was also described in other articles. For example, Zoya Pukhova’s interview, in which the letters the Soviet Women’s Committee had received from women were discussed, highlighted the issue. Women complained in the letters about unlawful dismissals and trouble finding work if they had small children or were expecting a child. Even though the Soviet Women’s Committee helped these women, Pukhova was worried about the situation and asked why these violations were allowed to happen at a local level in the first place. She regretted that women had to search for justice by writing to the Soviet Women’s Committee in Moscow. She put her hope in the women’s councils²⁸⁰ but also remarked that the society as a whole should notice how badly women were treated. Therefore she had, on behalf of the Committee, made a proposal at the Council of Ministers to look into this issue and develop a programme for women when preparing comprehensive social programmes.²⁸¹ Also *Rabotnitsa*’s editor, Zoya Krylova, brought up discrimination against women in her article, which she wrote about the meetings of the the Congress of People's Deputies, in August 1989. Krylova argued that even though women in general were more educated than men, they were still in a subordinate position and nobody cared. For a long time there had been a silence about the discrimination women experienced and people had deceived themselves by thinking there was no gender discrimination in the USSR, she claimed. According to Krylova, the wage gap, the absence of women from the leadership positions, and the discrimination women faced were all consequences of the patriarchal thinking of the society.²⁸²

As seen above, many contributors therefore acknowledged the weak position women had when it came to employment. Not only did they bring up the discrimination of women but also argued

²⁷⁹ Larisa Kuznetsova, “Val i Valentina”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

²⁸⁰ Women’s councils (zhensoveti) were women-only councils “re-activated” by Gorbachev. In the 1980s women’s councils were put under the Soviet Women’s Committee and they were meant to concentrate on women’s issues. Before the Gorbachev administration, they were most active under Khrushchev. These groups that consisted of female members were formed in places of work. They were not very influential and the work they did depended on the institution they worked in. Buckley 1989, 209–217; Browning 1992, 97–99.

²⁸¹ L. Gavryushenko, “Pust’ budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12.

²⁸² Z. Krylova, “Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

that this was something embedded in the Soviet system. It is interesting that these women very directly criticised the system that was meant to be based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and therefore men and women should have been treated equally and should have enjoyed equal opportunities. In these comments they admitted this did not take place in reality. On the contrary, women were discriminated against, they earned less, and they worked in questionable conditions. Something that should also be noted is that some of these arguments and words used were already leaning towards Western feminism, such as Krylova's use of the word "patriarchal" to describe the widespread thinking in the country. Therefore feminist-leaning comments had already been published in *Rabotnitsa* before the 1990s.

One widely discussed topic in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the poor working conditions many women worked in. Many contributors also commented on how some places of work were not meant for female workers due to their hazardousness, and in 1988-1990 the magazine ran an article series called *Nezhenskaya rabota* (Unwomanly work) about female workers, such as fitters and slaughterhouse workers, who performed manual work in questionable work conditions.²⁸³ Just like the name of the article series *Nezhenskaya rabota* (Unwomanly work) implied, there was a sentiment that some work was not suitable for women. Similarly, a reader called T. M. Danchenko, whose letter²⁸⁴ was published in place of the editorial in June 1990, was also very much against women performing hard manual labour, such as laying asphalt. She wrote that one might come across a scene where the majority of workers at an asphalt laying site were female, and argued: "We women just should not be in such places! Should not! Otherwise, society has no right to respect itself."²⁸⁵ Moreover, the editor-in-chief, Zoya Krylova, claimed in March 1989 that people, including women themselves, were so used to this state of affairs that "they do not even understand all its unnaturalness".²⁸⁶ Krylova returned to the topic in August 1989 in her report on the first meetings of the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. She compared the USSR to the West where workers from other countries were brought in to tackle the labour shortage in low-skilled occupations during the

²⁸³ See, for example, Valeriy Baryshev, "O chem signalyat oranzhevyye zhilyty?", *Rabotnitsa*, 7/1988, 16–18 and Nadezhda Os'minina, "Ona s nozhom i bez kol'chugi...", *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1990, 4–7.

²⁸⁴ Like discussed in subchapter 4.3., not all issues had an editorial written by a member of the editorial staff. Instead of an editorial, different articles on various topics were often located on this page. In this particular issue it was a letter from a reader, who was a 39 year old woman from Ukraine. She worked as a radio equipment installer and had a 12 year old daughter and a husband. Like most readers' letters that were published in *Rabotnitsa*, she also wrote about some difficulties she had faced in her life, though she also made comments about women in general, such as the comments examined above.

²⁸⁵ T. M. Danchenko, "Ne terplyu bezrazlichiya", *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1990, 2.

²⁸⁶ Z. Krylova, "Nel'zya ostanavlivat'sya!..", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1989, 5.

post-war years. Krylova argued that in the USSR the situation was similar in the 1960s but the workers who were employed in the Soviet Union were female whereas in the West they were men. Like Danchenko in her letter, Krylova asked: “Does society feel no guilt in front of them?”²⁸⁷

The comments above show that there was a strong sentiment among *Rabotnitsa* commentators that women should not be allowed to work in low-skilled occupations that were one way or another dangerous. There was also an implication that working in such occupations was somehow unnatural for women and should not therefore be allowed. Then again, as examined in the beginning of this subchapter, women were overrepresented among workers performing manual work in industry and the mechanisation of a branch often meant that female workers were replaced with male ones. Against this background such comments are understandable as the Soviet system seemed to have somewhat exploited women and unashamedly used them in occupations that required manual labour.

Further, authors who otherwise had very different views on women’s roles in society still agreed that women should not continue working in occupations that were dangerous. In like manner with Krylova and Danchenko, Larisa Kuznetsova brought up shame in her article in March 1988. Kuznetsova argued that if there were “no other mechanisms in our economy to reduce the proportion of women where they do not belong, we should use both prohibitions and shame.”²⁸⁸ Therefore she suggested that there should be laws against using women in such occupations but it should also be made socially unacceptable to do so. Similarly, Andrei Golitsyn, whose article was examined in subchapter 3.3, argued that it was not a woman’s place to lay asphalt on the street.²⁸⁹ As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, otherwise Golitsyn’s views on women were very different to those of Kuznetsova, as he wished women would return to the home and whereas Kuznetsova’s hoped women could combine work with motherhood and called for better public services to make this possible. However, it is interesting that even Kuznetsova, who in her *Rabotnitsa* articles shared somewhat feminist ideas and was critical towards the current gender roles, also saw that women did not belong in certain kinds of jobs. Such sentiment was more in line with views by authors who were concerned about the “masculinisation” of women and supported gender division of labour and often promoted women spending more time at home, as

²⁸⁷ Z. Krylova, “Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

²⁸⁸ Larisa Kuznetsova, “Val i Valentina”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

²⁸⁹ Irina Sklyar, “Slavnyy rod prodolzhayetsya...”, *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1991, 22–23.

examined in chapter 3. On the other hand, as argued earlier, given the historical context, the subordination and exploitation of women, and their harsh working conditions, could again explain why even contributors such as Kuznetsova thought that there should be an outright ban on using female labour in such a way if nothing else worked. Also, in her latter article, in March 1990, she returned to the subject and argued that harsh working conditions were probably the reason why there had been a “revival of traditional aspirations” among women and that was why women would rather stay at home than be subjected to those conditions at work.²⁹⁰ Kuznetsova therefore concluded that it was not only the double burden that made stay-at-home motherhood seem like an attractive option in the eyes of many women, it was also the questionable working conditions that were pushing women back to the home.

Other contributors also commented on measures that should be taken to improve the position of female workers. Zoya Pukhova, the chair of the Soviet Women’s Committee, regretted in her interview in September 1988 that the conditions of combining the roles of motherhood and worker had not been paid enough attention. She argued that the creation of these conditions had been “relegated to the background” even though for decades women had been urged to be both “a good worker in the workplace, and a worthy mother”. Still, Pukhova did not promote sending women back to the home. She saw the involvement of women in the workforce as an accomplishment of a task that had been set by Lenin. However, she was still sorry to see women facing such conditions. She also spoke of her own experience:

My heart aches from the knowledge that still half of the heavy, low-skilled jobs in industry, construction, transport, and trade fall on women’s shoulders, that almost three and a half million women work in conditions that do not meet the requirements of labour protection standards and rules: dusty, gaseous workshops, some in the cold, some in the heat, with an increased level of noise. How a woman feels after such a shift, I know for myself – for more than thirty years I worked in weaving.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Larisa Kuznetsova, “Razgovor pered zerkalom?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1990, 11–14.

²⁹¹ L. Gavryushenko, “Pust’ budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12. “Сердце болит от сознания, что у нас пока половина тяжелых, малоквалифицированных работ в промышленности, строительстве, на транспорте, в торговле ложится на женские плечи, что почти три с половиной миллиона женщин трудятся в условиях, не отвечающих требованиям норм и правил охраны труда: в пропыленных, загазованных цехах, то в холоде, то в жаре, при повышенном уровне шума. Как себя чувствует после такой смены женщина, знаю по себе - более тридцати лет отработала на ткацком производстве.”

She put her hope in the women's councils who could supervise the places of work so violations would not occur. Furthermore, the women's councils could help bring household services closer to the workplace and inform women about their rights.²⁹² Pukhova therefore saw that conditions could be made better locally and women's councils could play an active role in overseeing this improvement and also help these women in other ways.

Still, other commentators were not convinced that the re-activated women's councils could bring about change. *Rabotnitsa's* reader, T. M. Danchenko, whose letter was introduced earlier in this subchapter, commented that "no clubs, organizations or movements" would help the woman laying asphalt, simply because women should not even be doing such work.²⁹³ Also, Kuznetsova criticised the women's councils in her March 1990 article and accused them of being more occupied with irrelevant issues and self-interest, and that they were "less puzzled by the protection of female labour, even less by the observance of labour legislation and not at all puzzled by the promotion of women to senior positions".²⁹⁴ Pukhova's solution was therefore not shared by everyone, especially later on and by those who did not hold a post in the CPSU or party affiliated organisations. Moreover, it seems that later on Pukhova's organisation, the Soviet Women's Committee, did not think improvements should, or could, happen locally only as one of the objectives the organisation had listed for its deputies in the newly formed Congress of People's Deputies was "the gradual withdrawal of women from night shifts" together with "the release of women from hazardous industries from heavy physical labour". This was published in *Rabotnitsa* eight months after Pukhova's interview, in May 1989.²⁹⁵ Therefore the Soviet Women's Committee, chaired by Zoya Pukhova, also promoted removing women from occupations with questionable working conditions.

Labour law and violations against it were also brought up by other contributors. *Rabotnitsa's* editor Zoya Krylova commented on these violations by telling the readers how a workshop manager had once told her that he had seen and yet "not seen" safety restrictions being violated in his workplace. She argued that society as a whole had turned a blind eye to this matter, just as this manager had.²⁹⁶ Similarly, Valentina Kiseleva, a member of the Congress of People's

²⁹² L. Gavryushenko, "Pust' budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12

²⁹³ T. M. Danchenko, "Ne terplyu bezrazlichiya", *Rabotnitsa*, 6/1990, 2.

²⁹⁴ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Razgovor pered zerkalom?", *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1990, 11–14.

²⁹⁵ "Nakaz: narodnym deputatam, izbrannym ot sovetov zhenshchin, ob'yedinyayemykh Komitetom sovetskikh zhenshchin", *Rabotnitsa*, 5/1989, 11.

²⁹⁶ Z. Krylova, "Dnevnik deputata: Chto ostanetsya - sled ili doroga?", *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1989, 4–5.

Deputies, argued that even though there were laws that protected women, there were also amendments and exceptions, and women self-sacrificingly put themselves in harm's way because it meant they could earn more for their families. Just like Krylova, she saw that society allowed women to do this freely, and compared this state of affairs to a situation within a family where a husband sees his wife taking something on her shoulders but does not stop her either. Moreover, Kiseleva also connected the poor working conditions to women's role as mothers. She asked why women were allowed to work in such places when "only a healthy woman can give birth to healthy children", which is not surprising given that she also thought women should spend more time at home with her children.²⁹⁷ Therefore, both Krylova and Kiseleva argued that it was a common practice to allow women to perform their work in questionable conditions and even though there were restrictions, they were either ignored or the rules were somehow circumvented.

Krylova and Kiseleva's concerns were not without reason either as there were 14.5 million female industrial workers in the country and 3.4 million of them worked in hazardous working conditions. Moreover, 20–50 percent of the workplaces with female workers failed to meet safety standards and the situation worsened during the perestroika era. Even though workers received extra pay and benefits from working in hazardous conditions, and therefore sometimes even resisted improvements because they would strip them of their privileges, the violation of safety standards and regulations added to the already difficult circumstances many women worked in. In addition to normal safety regulations, there were regulations in the Soviet law that related specifically to female workers. For example, during their work shift women could lift a maximum of 7 tonnes of weight, something Krylova referred to in the article about the manager who had turned a blind eye, and women were not allowed to work in night shifts unless it was temporary or of "extreme necessity".²⁹⁸

As shown above, contributors without exception condemned the harsh working conditions many low or unskilled female workers had to work in and called for the removal of women from such workplaces. Still, the danger that special regulations for female workers might actually work against the interests of women was absent from these articles. Later, in 1994, after the Soviet Union had already ceased to exist, the economist Zoya Khotkina pointed out that the new Russian employment law, which continued in the same path as the preceding Soviet ones when it

²⁹⁷ I. Sklyar, "Ya iz sredey rabochikh lyudey, oni mne blizki..." *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1989, 14–15.

²⁹⁸ Filtzer 1996, 217–219.

came to characterising women as individuals who needed special protection, did not actually work to women's advantage but labelled them as "social invalids" and therefore did not give them equal opportunities.²⁹⁹ According to Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick, Khotkina's observation should not be ignored "as a simply feminist rhetoric". This is because of the prevalent attitudes towards women's employment. Bridger, Kay and Pinnick refer to an article from 1991 written by Georgy Kanaev of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR. Kanaev argued that the system could not protect certain groups, such as handicapped and women, from unemployment and find them new work.³⁰⁰ Moreover, according to Mary Buckley, these arguments were voiced by some economists as early as in the late 1980s.³⁰¹ In other words, women were not on an equal footing with men in the labour market. Also, Khotkina was not the first one to caution that women were labelled as second-class employees. According to Lynne Attwood, the pedagogical writer E. Andreeva had already voiced these concerns in the 1960s. In an article published in 1967, in the journal *Semya i Shkola*, Andreeva had argued that giving women shorter working hours would merely "legalise her subordinate position".³⁰² Even though arguments such as those voiced by Andreeva and Khotkina did not gain support in the articles on women's roles and the double burden published in *Rabotnitsa*, the contributors recognised that women were discriminated against and that their position was not equal with their male counterparts. However, it seems that contributors did not make the same link between protective legislation aimed only at women and how this might result in making them undesirable employees.

As shown in this subchapter, the marginalisation and subordinate position of women within the labour force seemed to have been acknowledged by the contributors of *Rabotnitsa*. The poor working conditions and protection of female workers were widely discussed and some contributors linked women performing manual labour in dangerous conditions to the disrespectful attitude towards women in society. The questionable working conditions many women had to perform their work in were without exception condemned, something that was common even in articles with otherwise opposing views on women's roles. Though there were proposals that working conditions and labour law violations could be fixed locally, contributors mostly wanted to have women removed from occupations with hazardous conditions altogether.

²⁹⁹ Khotkina 1994, 98–101.

³⁰⁰ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 47; Kanaev 1991, 267.

³⁰¹ Buckley 1989, 195.

³⁰² Attwood 1990, 141.

Protective legislation was therefore endorsed, too. Contributors' willingness to remove women from places of work that were dangerous can be explained by the weaker position women held among industrial workers and their overrepresentation among those who performed manual labour. However, there were also quite clear implications of a sentiment voiced by some contributors that this type of work was "unwomanly" or "unnatural" for women. This suggests these contributors wished to see a gender segregation of professions in this line of work because such "masculine" work was not compatible with the female sex; therefore at least some of the contributors advocated a gender order in which some professions would be reserved for men only. In addition, contributors brought up labour law violations and how restrictions were often ignored or not obeyed. This could also explain why these contributors thought that removing women from these places of work was the only way to solve the issue. In other words, as a solution for a woman who suffered from the double burden, whose qualifications lagged behind because of it, and because of this she had to perform manual work in questionable working conditions, the contributors offered stricter restrictions on female labour, presumably in the form of labour legislation, which would remove only women from this type of work. It should be noted, however, that this option could have been unfavourable for those women who worked in heavy industry jobs where the pay and benefits were better and moving them to less dangerous lines of work probably would have lowered their income.

5.3. Combining work with motherhood

Another discussed theme in *Rabotnitsa* that concerned itself with women's employment and how the state could support mothers who were squeezed between work and home, was part-time and flexible working hours. As part of the demographic programme to boost the birthrate these options had already been made more widely available during Khrushchev and Brezhnev administrations, but the legislation was amended under the Gorbachev administration to further increase the provision of part-time work together with longer maternity leave and the possibility to work from home.³⁰³ From 1987 onwards places of work had to offer pregnant women and women with small children (0-8 year olds) part-time work if they requested it from their managers. Work performed part-time would be paid proportionally. Before this change, employees could work part-time but this had to be agreed with the management. The introduction of part-time work at the request of the female employee did not, however, make it a

³⁰³ Ilic 1996, 230; Bridger 1996, 244.

common practice in places of work. Only about 1% of the female labour force worked part-time at the end of the 1980s.³⁰⁴

Even though part-time work for women did not turn out to be widely used by Soviet women, it was still widely endorsed in the *Rabotnitsa* articles, and the introduction of new legislation was recognised in *Rabotnitsa* as well. Summing up the year coming to an end in December 1987, the journalist Irina Sklyar praised the changes that had made the preferential work regime (part-time work) obligatory for the workplace at the request of their female workers who had children under the age of 8. Sklyar remarked that this amendment strengthened the “social protection” of both the mother and the child.³⁰⁵ The chair of the Soviet Women’s Committee, Zoya Pukhova, too, welcomed the new law in her interview published in September 1988. She was pleased that the Committee’s proposal had been taken into account in the process, and women would now be granted the possibility to work part-time at their own discretion instead of at the discretion of the management. However, the letters sent to the Committee, and discussed in the interview, revealed how difficult it actually was for women to use this option because of the resistance of management. Pukhova blamed the managers who, in her view, hung on to the pre-perestroika way of doing things when they should be seeking solutions. Pukhova stated that every letter about possible labour law violations the Committee had received would be attended to and the Committee would contact the local authorities and seek justice.³⁰⁶ Therefore, even though the new legislation was welcomed in *Rabotnitsa*, they also published articles that revealed that the implementation of the law had turned out to be difficult for many women.

Larisa Kuznetsova, too, acknowledged these difficulties in her article that was published in the same issue as Pukhova’s interview. Kuznetsova, however, was rather more sceptical than Pukhova when it came to the implementation of part-time work. She based her criticism on what a delegate of the 19th All-Union Party Conference, who was also a director of a plant, had said at a meeting of the Soviet Women’s Committee. According to Kuznetsova, women were for the most part opposed to working in shorter shifts because the hours lost had to be compensated by someone else, and only 20 out of 2660 female workers at the plant used this option. In addition, part-time work and flexible hours were also difficult to organise in practice because most women

³⁰⁴ Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 26.

³⁰⁵ Irina Sklyar, “God nashey zhizni”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1987, 2.

³⁰⁶ L. Gavryushenko, “Pust’ budet zhenshchina schastlivoy!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 10–12.

wanted to work in the morning but fewer could take the later shift in the evening.³⁰⁷ In other words, Kuznetsova brought up another problem with part-time work as she argued that women themselves did not want to work part-time because their colleagues would have to compensate for their free hours. Moreover, probably because these women had families they preferred to work during the day instead of during the evening and therefore part-time work was not an option that could be offered to every female employee. According to Melanie Ilic, there was resistance within the workplaces to giving mothers flexible hours, just as Kuznetsova and letters sent to the Soviet Women's Committee revealed. Also, female employees feared their income would decrease because of part-time work, and in some cases, women were not even aware they had this option.³⁰⁸ The labour legislation seemed to have been based on a male norm that resulted in difficulties with female workers who were expected to perform their duties as mothers as well, and therefore an amendment was made to allow pregnant women and women with small children to work reduced hours. However, this also put women in an unfavourable position as it made them undesirable employees.

The difficulties in the implementation of this law were further picked up on in an article by Ol'ga Laputina, which was published in *Rabotnitsa* in November 1988, and dealt with part-time work and why this option was not more widely used by working mothers. Laputina wrote that judging by the letters *Rabotnitsa* had received, the problem was the new economic policies that had been introduced. Because of these policies the management level was unwilling to let women work part-time even after the legislation was changed. Laputina did not, however, agree that these policies were to blame. She wrote about a workplace where part-time work was in use and argued that women working part-time were actually more effective during their shifts. She believed that women were scared that they would lose their jobs if they showed a willingness to reduce their working hours. This way they would be the first ones to be made redundant if the newly introduced perestroika policies that were meant to boost the economy resulted in a lower number of employees needed. She also blamed the managers of these enterprises for further stirring up this fear and working against the new policies by concentrating on quantity instead of quality. Laputina finished her article by appealing to these managers to allow women to temporarily or permanently perform their duties as mothers, as this would put an end to teenagers wandering around town with keys around their necks, a phenomenon she called "modern

³⁰⁷ Larisa Kuznetsova, "Val i Valentina", *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, 21–23.

³⁰⁸ Ilic 1996, 233.

homelessness”.³⁰⁹ Laputina therefore implied that a better implementation of the law was needed and part-time work should be more widely used so women could better perform their duties as mothers, echoing the sentiment that home and children were women’s responsibilities. Teenagers were wandering around town with their homekeys around their necks, which in this context presumably meant that their mothers were still at work and not waiting for them at home, so they were left without supervision after finishing school. Just as with Pukhova, she also defended the perestroika policies and the introduction of the part-time law and blamed the managers of these enterprises who did not allow women to work part-time.

The worries voiced by *Rabotnitsa*’s readers about the possibility of unemployment in case they requested part-time work was acknowledged by another contributor who, in February 1989, offered a different kind of solution to the problem. Nina Kungurova, the associate professor at the Department of Social Sciences of the National Institute of Teacher Training of Belarus, proposed creating a special fund to solve the social problems of working women. In her article, which was part of the *Otkrytaya tribuna* article series, Kungurova argued that the economic reforms of perestroika had put more strain on working mothers. The changes had turned women into second class workers and they ended up being the first ones to be made redundant. Women also had less time for their children, their husbands, and they had put their own health at risk. The fund would be managed by the state but the money would be gathered by making deductions from the profits made by enterprises that had female workers. The money would then be used to support these female workers by paying the expenses of, for example, flexible hours, protection of women's health, and days taken off work because of a sick child. In addition, enterprises could receive money for vocational training and retraining of mothers, as well as for improving the living conditions of working women and childcare. The women’s councils would be involved in the decisions and allocation of funds, and this would give more independence and political strength to the councils. Kungurova asserted that all this ensured that women and mothers would not be seen as a burden to the enterprises, and the enterprises would benefit from the arrangement financially if they invested in measures that improved the lives of their female workers.³¹⁰ Therefore, Kungurova recognised that women might not be seen as desirable employees for enterprises to keep or hire because they were, in a way, “a special category” due to their role as mothers. In other words, Kungurova in a sense understood that this meant that women were not on an equal footing with men in the labour market. However, she argued that it

³⁰⁹ Ol’ga Laputina, “Nepolnyy rabochiy den’: blazh’ ili neobkhodimost’?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 11/1988 18-20.

³¹⁰ Nina Kungurova, "Zhenskiy khozraschetnyy fond - pora reshat!", *Rabotnitsa*, 2/1989, 14–15.

was the new policies that might result in enterprises having fewer employees and some, probably women, would be made redundant. Therefore, she did not agree with Pukhova and Laputina who asserted that it was not the new policies that were the blame.

In the difficult economic situation the Soviet Union was in the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, such a fund was probably an unrealistic idea to implement as it would mean profits made by enterprises would be deducted, and Gorbachev's policies aimed to make the economy more efficient and enterprises more profitable. Nevertheless, Kungurova's observation that women might be labelled as second-class workers in such a situation, were, in a sense, similar to those voiced by the economist Zoya Khotkina and examined in the previous subchapter. Khotkina argued in 1994 that the new Russian employment law labelled women as "social invalids" who needed protection and therefore made them undesirable employees.³¹¹ However, I would argue that Kungurova would probably not have supported removing the state's protection of mothers and women from the labour legislation as she regretted that women did not have enough time for their families and husbands. Therefore, she probably wanted to keep the law that obliged workplaces to offer women part-time work and flexible hours to women so that they could spend more time with their families, and presumably lessen their double burden as well. Kungurova clearly still relied on the state to support women, whereas Khotkina expressed her criticism when the Soviet Union had already ceased to exist. Still, comments by both of them reveal that the society was built on a male norm and because of this women were in a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts.

The common element in most of the concerns voiced and the solutions given in *Rabotnitsa* for the problems women faced in the labour market and at their places of work, is that they underline women's responsibility over matters connected to the home, as outlined in the articles by Kugurova and Laputina. These contributors supported part-time work for women as it meant women could spend more time doing other things, those connected to the domestic sphere, such as spend more time with their children and husbands. The same was not demanded of men, so the presumption was that the woman was the one who bore the main responsibility for matters connected to the home and children. However, it was the law itself that made this assumption in the first place as it only obliged managements to provide part-time work at the request of a pregnant woman or a woman with small children. As argued by Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick, this sentiment was further emphasised when women were also given longer

³¹¹ Khotkina 1994, 98–101.

maternity leaves around the same time, something that is examined in chapter 5.1.³¹² Then again, the contributors and interviewees might have looked at the issues from a purely practical point of view, as it was acknowledged that women were in a subordinate position in working life – such as is examined in the previous subchapter – and the double burden was exhausting them. One could always voice concerns over the gender roles and how they impact the unequal distribution of housework as well as the pay gap, but these concerns did not offer practical solutions to the acute situation women were in. It is therefore understandable why articles concentrated on offering some relief for employed women who had been forced to work two shifts a day, one at work and another one at home. When it came to employment, the answers to the question of how women could be helped came in the form of part-time work, flexible hours, safety restrictions, and other suggestions on how to lighten the employment side of the double burden.

Still, unemployment became an increasingly serious threat for women as the years moved on. In 1991, 70–80 percent of the newly unemployed people who were registered in the labour exchanges were women.³¹³ Arguably, for those who supported returning women to the home, the idea of female unemployment was most probably not a cause of worry as it went hand in hand with the sentiment that women could take even greater responsibility over domestic work and childrearing. Vladimir Zubkov, whose article is examined in subchapter 3.3, even commented on the matter in March 1991 and stated that it did not bother him too much that women were being made redundant. He argued that “a woman will suffer again as the weakest link in the workplace” and therefore “the male army, of course, will push her out”. As already discussed, he suggested women could be retrained, become entrepreneurs and work from home.³¹⁴ These comments again reveal that the society was built on a male norm and for this reason women could not compete with men and had to find alternative ways to make a living. For Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, too, it was only logical that some women stayed at home and dedicated their lives to their children as unemployment seemed to be on the horizon for many women.³¹⁵ However, in 1990–1991, *Rabotnitsa* also ran an article series called “Club of Businesswomen” (*Klub delovykh zhenshchin*) in which they helped women and answered readers’ questions about how to start their own business, for example, if they were made redundant.³¹⁶ Therefore the

³¹² Bridger, Kay, and Pinnick 1996, 26.

³¹³ Attwood 1996, 256.

³¹⁴ Vladimir Zubkov, “Lyubite zhenshchin!”, *Rabotnitsa*, 3/1991, 7.

³¹⁵ I. Zhuravskaya, “Variant na zavtra?”, *Rabotnitsa*, 12/1988, 16–17.

³¹⁶ See, for example, Tamara Musayeva, “Klub delovykh zhenshchin”, *Rabotnitsa*, 8/1990, 11–13, and “Ispoved’ predprinimatel’nitsy”, *Rabotnitsa*, 4/1991, 14.

magazine offered help for those women who did not wish, or simply could not, stay at home and attend to their families alone.

As examined in this subchapter, part-time work for women was supported and commented on by many contributors who discussed women's roles in society in *Rabotnitsa*. The problems implementing the law that obliged managements to provide part-time work for expectant women and women with small children, at their request, were acknowledged too. Some thought the problem with implementing the law was due to the reluctance of the managers, others thought that the law might be a bit unrealistic because it was difficult to implement in reality. Moreover, the need for an amendment to the labour legislation suggests it was based on a male norm that made motherhood, or what was expected of women, incompatible with the labour legislation. However, the new law also put women in an unfavourable position as it made them undesirable employees, something that came up in the articles published in *Rabotnitsa*. One contributor offered a more practical solution as to how this could be solved in the form of a fund that would make it easier for management to provide part-time work and in this way make it easier for women to work fewer hours without fear of being made redundant. The problems with receiving part-time work to reduce women's double burden were nevertheless addressed in *Rabotnitsa*. Still, the sentiment that women had more responsibility for the home and children was present in both the law itself and in some contributors' comments. Most of these comments and articles took a favourable stance towards reducing women's working hours so they could spend more time at home and therefore offered this as a solution for the double burden. Even though this could be understood that all who supported giving women reduced working hours promoted a gender order in which women's role as mother and wife were her most important occupations, the contributors might have looked at the issues from a purely practical point of view, too. Women's weaker position in the labour force was known and therefore they could at least be helped by being offered part-time work, flexible hours, and safety restrictions in order to reduce their double burden.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to examine how the problems Soviet women faced when trying to combine motherhood with work were addressed in the women's magazine *Rabotnitsa* between 1987 and 1991, and what kind of roles were promoted by the contributors who took part in the discussion on women's roles as mothers, wives and workers. I have mainly focused on articles that commented on women's roles, as through them the contributors took part in a wider debate on the woman question that took place in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and 1990s. However, I have also examined the magazine as a whole to see what kind of a picture of women's roles in society it gave more generally. The main focus of this thesis has been the combination of women's roles as mothers and workers, and Soviet women's double burden of work and domestic labour, a theme that a large part of the discussion in *Rabotnitsa* revolved around. The double burden was a result of the Soviet gender order in which women worked outside the home but also shouldered the main responsibility for the domestic chores and childrearing. The poor service sector and the lack of consumer goods made these tasks even more difficult and time-consuming, and women's career advancement was often hindered by the double burden as well. In addition, gender was not systematically and critically analysed by the Communist Party either. Therefore domestic duties remained a female function as old gender roles were deep-rooted. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Soviet gender order, which had resulted in the double burden, was challenged and debated. The relaxation of censorship allowed arguments and opinions that had previously been condemned or silenced to be voiced, including feminist ones. At the same time, the promotion of traditional gender roles also gained momentum as the constraints of the ideology gradually disappeared.

The analysis of primary sources in this study has been of a qualitative nature, and this thesis falls into the category of gender history as it both deals with the position of women and the construction of gender and gender roles. Even though this thesis is not theory-driven, I have used the concepts of gender and gender order in my analysis of the primary sources. Here, gender has been understood as roles, characteristics, and behaviours allocated to men and women, something that is historically, culturally and socially constructed, something that interacts with biological sex but is not derived directly from it as gender is not fixed or immovable. The gender order in this thesis is used to describe wider structures and practices of gender relations in society, how labour was, or should be, segregated or divided, and how society was based on a male norm. It is also used when describing the roles and tasks the contributors of *Rabotnitsa*

proposed women, and men, should have in society. Therefore concepts drawn from gender order theory have been used as tools to analyse the specific gender order that existed in the Soviet Union, and to frame those that contributors wished to see instead. The alternatives to the Soviet gender order have been understood as solutions to the double burden offered to *Rabotnitsa*'s readers, but I have also examined more practical solutions to the double burden, such as part-time work, maternity leave and equal parenting.

Even though the Soviet gender order was challenged in the late 1980s, some elements that had already emerged in the 1970s remained and they were present in articles published *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s, too. These included a more pronounced emphasis on women's reproductive role, traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and traditional gender roles. Some contributors continued to emphasise femininity, the difference between men and women as something that was inherent, and women's roles as mothers. They seemed to have promoted a gender order where tasks were, at least to some extent, divided between men and women. However, there were also differences between these contributors. Some argued that women's feminine qualities could be very useful when used in professional life and in the public sphere, while others emphasised women's roles as mothers more. Many of the articles that shared a more traditional notion of women's roles also mirrored sentiments expressed by Mikhail Gorbachev in his book *Perestroika*, in which he argued that women should be able to return to their "womanly mission" as mothers and wives. As the years moved on, the sentiment of motherhood as women's most important function, and the need to strengthen the home and reinstate traditional gender roles became more pronounced in many *Rabotnitsa* articles. In these articles, domestic tasks and childrearing were seen as female functions. Some contributors wished to see women removed from politics as well, arguing it was not a suitable place for women.

Articles that emphasised women's femininity and women as mothers, and comments that promoted reinstating traditional gender roles, were not the only views and opinions readers of *Rabotnitsa* were exposed to on the magazine's pages. Some of the contributors who took part in the discussion on women's roles suggested very different solutions to women's double burden than returning women to the home. These contributors argued that there should be a better understanding and handling of women's problems in society and women should be supported by, for example, better public services. This suggests they were critical towards how the society was built on a male norm, that they supported less gendered division of labour, and that they thought women's tasks should not be limited to those in the domestic sphere. Women's problems were

also emphatically voiced in *Rabotnitsa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially in articles like those that did not support returning women to the home. Views presented in articles became increasingly polarised, whether those with the most conservative views on gender roles, or those with the most feminist-leaning. However, articles in which child-rearing and home were seen as female functions were more common. This suggests that in the late 1980s and early 1990s parenting and domestic chores were still considered women's responsibilities.

As has been examined in this thesis, readers of *Rabotnitsa* were also able to read about more practical solutions to the double burden, such as more equal parenting, choice between career and family, part-time work, better working conditions, and state support of motherhood. Equal parenting and housework was brought up by several contributors. Many thought maternity benefits and maternity leave should be allocated to the family unit instead of just the mother, so that fathers could take part of the leave too and the family itself could decide what would be the best way to spend it. Later on the state also amended the legislation, allowing fathers and grandfathers and other close relatives to take partially paid or unpaid leave to look after the child. Because equal parenting was mentioned quite often in *Rabotnitsa*, this type of feature within a gender order seemed to have been a popular option among contributors to reduce the double burden. However, a few contributors also took a more critical stance towards gender roles in the home and implied that there should be a critical examination of these roles so that childrearing was not considered a mother's responsibility alone.

The concept of choice, too, was popular among contributors of *Rabotnitsa*. This choice meant that women could choose between a career and a family. Many contributors mentioned that women themselves should decide what they wanted to do with their lives, and that some women were more career-oriented whereas others were more oriented towards the home. In *Rabotnitsa* the concept of choice could also be a rather seeming one as it did not necessarily challenge the notion of a traditional female role, and women who chose to have children were expected to then become the primary childrearer in the family. Still, the emphasis put on choice in many articles could be understood in the light of its historical context of the late 1980s and early 1990s when a person's individual choice was probably very much valued after decades of censorship and totalitarian rule.

The extension on maternity leave was well-received in *Rabotnitsa*. However, some of the contributors emphasised women's roles as mothers and thought maternity leave should be

extended further so that mothers could stay home with their children even longer. This wish could also be explained by the poor state of Soviet childcare facilities and the common practice that many women already had to rely on their relatives to help with childcare. Still, women spending longer periods at home on benefits or without an income was not endorsed by everyone because it was unrealistic and because of the loss of pension and other benefits they might receive through work. However, the problems that might result from being financially dependent on their husbands were not widely discussed by the contributors of articles on women's roles, even though such dependency would make it much more difficult for women to file for a divorce and separate from their male partners. Single-mothers or single-parent families were not examined in-depth in these articles either. Therefore the setting in most of the articles that discussed women's roles in *Rabotnitsa* was that of a family with married parents. This might be because they discussed matters at a general level, and as a part of a wider discussion on women's roles, and wanted to address the wider audience. Possibly some of the contributors did not want to normalise divorce by emphasising it as an option for women.

As it has been shown in this thesis, women's position within the labour force was marginalised and subordinate. Many suffered from harsh or hazardous working conditions and they were overrepresented among unskilled workers and workers who performed manual labour. Women's double burden also further weakened their position within the labour force, as women did not have time to study for higher qualifications and move up the career ladder. This is why it is understandable that poor working conditions, discrimination of women, and protection of female workers were widely discussed in *Rabotnitsa* articles in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The dangerous working conditions of women were without exception condemned by the contributors, no matter what their stance towards women's roles in general was. Some also saw them as an example of a widespread disrespectful attitude towards women in society. Some suggested local solutions to working conditions and labour law violations but in most cases the contributors argued that women should be removed from such occupations completely. For this reason, state protection of female workers and protective legislation was endorsed in *Rabotnitsa* articles. As it seemed that women's subordinate and marginalised position among the labour force and labour law violations were all acknowledged by the contributors, it could explain the contributors' willingness to leave these jobs to men as they might have seen this as the only option that could fix this situation. However, some contributors also argued that such work was also "unnatural" or "unwomanly". Therefore there were also implications that some contributors promoted gendered segregation of professions because this line of work was not suitable for the female sex because

of its “masculine” nature. For women whose qualifications were lower because of the double burden and who performed manual labour in harsh conditions, these articles offered a solution that women should be removed from such lines of work completely. This might have been welcomed by some readers but since female workers in heavy industry also received better pay and benefits, this might not be welcomed by them as it might have lowered their income.

Part-time work and flexible working hours was another solution that was discussed in *Rabotnitsa* articles. There were problems implementing the law as managements of enterprises were reluctant to provide part-time work for pregnant women and women with young children at their request even though a new law obliged them to. This was addressed in *Rabotnitsa* and discussed by the contributors. Some of them claimed that the problem lay with the management and defended the new law. However, problems with the implementation of the law, resulting from difficulties organising part-time work and flexible working hours, were also raised. Still, the need for such a law implied that labour itself was based on a male norm and because of that women as mothers were not compatible with the way labour was performed. This law also labelled women as undesirable employees and this was something that emerged in some of the articles, as women were afraid that they would be made redundant if they asked for part-time work. One contributor suggested a fund for women that would help cover female employees fewer working hours but this did not seem like a realistic solution in the economic situation the Soviet Union was facing during the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, part-time work and flexible working hours for female workers suggest that children were women’s responsibility more than men’s because women’s role as mothers was the reason women were given this option. This sentiment was also present in *Rabotnitsa* articles, and most contributors viewed women’s reduced working hours favourably. Therefore this suggests they also took a favourable stance towards a gender order in which women had the main responsibility for the care of children. However, their viewpoint can also be explained by women’s weaker position among the labour force and a desire to offer practical solutions for female workers so that their double burden could be lessened.

As I have examined and shown in this thesis, many different kinds of views were present in *Rabotnitsa* during the last five years of Soviet rule and many different kinds of solutions to the double were suggested and addressed, from different kinds of gender orders to more practical solutions. The Soviet gender order was challenged and the discussion on women’s roles only really began in 1988 in *Rabotnitsa*. As the years passed, views and comments became more

critical of the old ideal of the Soviet woman who combined work and motherhood. However, not all contributors agreed on what kind of roles women should occupy in society. As it has been shown throughout this thesis, *Rabotnitsa* opened its pages to both conservative and feminist ideas and contributors; and not only staffers wrote articles in the magazine. With time both of these views became more pronounced rather than disappearing. However, in 1991, articles that supported returning women to the home became more common. On the other hand, a feminist critique of Soviet society was also published during the same year. This suggests the editorial board of the magazine wanted to show readers a variety of views, but perhaps it is also an indication that the “back to the home” sentiment grew more popular in 1991 or at least drew more attention. It was also clear that the journalists of *Rabotnitsa* were not a homogeneous group as they expressed different views and sometimes readers were even openly informed of this approach. Still, when I have examined *Rabotnitsa* as a magazine, outside the discussion and debate on women roles that took place on its pages, the assumption seemed to have been that home and children remained women’s responsibilities. This is because *Rabotnitsa* was a magazine aimed at women and in every issue it published articles related to domestic tasks, such as recipes, children’s stories, patterns for clothes, home decorating ideas and so on. Therefore it offered women help on how to successfully perform women’s duties as a mother and a wife. In other words, some of its articles challenged the traditional gender role for women and other ones reinforced it. The influence of women’s magazines, such as *Rabotnitsa*, should not be underestimated either. *Rabotnitsa*’s circulation was higher than any other magazine in the country, and therefore it drew a large audience. That is why it is important to study popular women’s magazines, just as I have done with this thesis.

This has been a study on the discussion of women’s roles as mothers, workers and wives on the pages of a popular women’s magazine in the last five years of the Soviet regime. Even though the Soviet Union ceased to exist within a month of the publication of the last issue of *Rabotnitsa* studied in this thesis, the contributors, *Rabotnitsa*’s readers, and women who used to live in the Soviet Union, and whose roles had been discussed in *Rabotnitsa* between 1987–1991, did not disappear with it. Therefore, in further studies, it would be interesting to look at how the discussion on women’s roles and the double burden continued in *Rabotnitsa* during the turbulent times of the 1990s in Russia, if contributors’ viewpoints changed significantly when the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and if new and different solutions were put forward when the last remnants of state socialism were replaced by market economy and shock therapy.

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