

Summer 2013

Debating the Ideal Soviet Woman: Public Discussions of Gender and Morality in Khrushchev's Russia

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DEBATING THE IDEAL SOVIET WOMAN: PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS OF
GENDER AND MORALITY IN KHRUSHCHEV'S RUSSIA

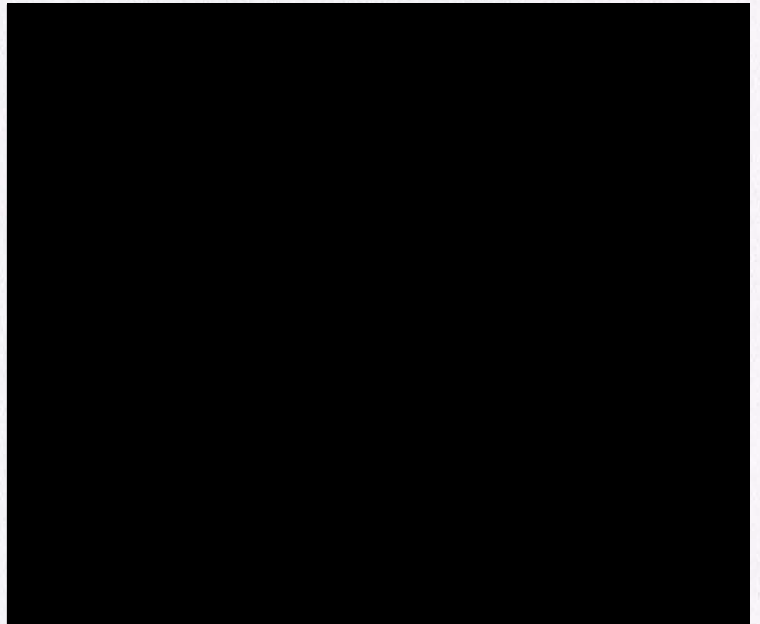
by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:



August 2013

ABSTRACT

DEBATING THE IDEAL SOVIET WOMAN: PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS OF GENDER AND MORALITY IN KHRUSHCHEV'S RUSSIA

by Chelsea Jo Miller

August 2013

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union's 1961 Third Party Program and its "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" dictated that Soviet society would be transformed into a Communist utopia over the course of twenty years. As part of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's larger reform program, the "Moral Code" detailed the ideal characteristics of future Communists while also outlining their relationships with each other, the collective, and the state. Recently, scholars such as Deborah Field and Susan E. Reid have begun to address the tensions between public and private life that characterized this period. Both find that the state actively sought to intervene in the lives of Soviet citizens. Additionally, Miriam Dobson and Brian LaPierre have stressed the presence of illiberal currents in the Khrushchev era, finding that this period featured greater repression and state control, as opposed to the traditional interpretation of the era as a time of liberal reform and greater freedom of expression. Utilizing the drafts of the Party program, suggestions submitted to the Party, contemporary articles and editorials, and the relevant secondary literature, this thesis argues that the ambiguity surrounding the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" created an opportunity for public participation and debate, which Soviet men and women used to forward their own gender ideals, even those which ran counter to the liberal ideas of the Thaw era and called for greater intervention in the family and the workplace.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank The University of Southern Mississippi's Office of the Vice President of Research and the Department of History for supporting my research.

Without their financial assistance, conducting research in the Russian archives would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Alison Abra and Dr. Heather Stur, for their time in reviewing my thesis. I would especially like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Brian LaPierre, for his assistance throughout this process and for pushing me to create a thesis in which I could truly take pride. His advice and suggestions have made this thesis possible, without which I might still be wandering the streets of Moscow wondering where to even begin.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for supporting me over the last two years. A special thanks goes to Spencer, who has lived with me throughout this process, listened to me talk endlessly about my research, and has patiently learned more about Soviet history than he could have ever imagined. To all of you, thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On 14 August 1961, the editors of *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published an article written by Vera Panova, a well-known writer.¹ In her article, she recounted the typical day of a Soviet woman. After working long hours at a factory, the woman of Panova's piece did not immediately return home to rest. Instead, she waited in numerous lines at various stores, continuing the never-ending search for food, clothing, and other household products in a country chronically plagued by shortages in consumer goods. Panova continued that when this ideal woman finally returned home, she tended to the children, prepared dinner, and cleaned the apartment, all while her husband rested. Holidays, in Panova's opinion, served only as a rare break for this Soviet worker and mother – granting her a short opportunity to meet with her friends or attend the local theater. She was calling on the Party to lighten women's burdens at home so that they could be more active participants in Soviet society.

At the same time that Panova was promoting her opinions in the pages of *Pravda*, unnamed individuals from a different area of Soviet Russia, the Kirov region, were forwarding their own ideas on the ideal Soviet woman. In a suggestion submitted to the Party, these individuals promoted the more maternal aspects of Soviet women. They advocated mutual respect in the family, concern for children's moral upbringing, and care and attention for the "woman-mother," an individual simultaneously fulfilling her public

¹ Vera Panova, "Zhivet so mnoi riadom zhenshchina," *Pravda*, August 14, 1961.

duty and also caring for her family.² Instead of freeing women from the home, these individuals wanted the Party to stress a woman's connection with the family. Both Panova and the individuals from Kirov were taking part in a large public discussion on the Party's newly unveiled Third Party Program and "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism." The morality code's ideals for the future Communist society served as a base for individuals to voice their own opinions on the ideal woman of Khrushchev-era society.

Both of these opinions, from individuals at the top and bottom of Soviet society, argued for a particular gender ideal for Soviet women – a Soviet woman, who simultaneously fulfilled the roles of worker, wife, cultured subject, and mother – while differing on which component of this ideal should be raised above the others. Their ideas, however, excluded many Soviet women. Despite Panova's lengthy description of the average woman's day, she did not account for women who were single, divorced, or simply did not see the value in devoting their off-work hours to raising their children or tidying the apartment. Through attempting to describe the average Soviet woman's life, Panova pushed for greater Party attention to the task of lessening women's burden in the home. Both suggestions, however, were promoting their own ideas of what it meant to be a Soviet woman in the Khrushchev era.

Neither of these suggestions was seen as remarkable or absurd. By publishing Panova's article, the editors of *Pravda* endorsed it. They were allied with the Party, especially as the chief editor, Pavel Satiukov, was also serving as a member of the

² Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), fond (f.) 1, opis (op.) 4, delo (d.) 31, list (l.) 108.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the time.³ Panova's article was part of a much larger public debate surrounding the Communist Party's new Third Party Program. The Party unveiled its new Party program in 1961, promising the construction of a new Communist society over the course of twenty years. In addition to dictating the ambitious economical quotas needed to build Communism, the program's "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" detailed the moral values of the ideal Communist. This thesis argues that while the Third Party Program was primarily focused on constructing this ideal future society, it also allowed men and women an opportunity to debate ideal gender roles. The ambiguous messages from the state provided no clear direction as to women's proper role in society. The Party was simultaneously promoting a renewed campaign for women's equal treatment in the workplace and stressing her role as mother and caregiver. During the period of public commentary, Party leaders openly solicited public participation in order to educate subjects on the provisions of the Party program and ensure that the tenets of the "Moral Code" were aligned with society. It also allowed individuals from all levels of Soviet society to promote their own opinions on women's roles in the family, the workplace, and the upbringing of their children, leading to a diverse and often contradictory discussion of moral values and social norms.

The Third Party Program and its "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" are commonly viewed as part of a larger period of liberalization and reform in the Soviet Union, known as the Thaw. In 1956, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev denounced Joseph Stalin in his famous "Secret Speech." The era of de-Stalinization brought a relaxation of state terror, a greater concern for standards of living, and the emergence of a

³ "In Memory of a Comrade," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, no. 46 (1973): 31.

limited pluralism.⁴ Stalin's death and, later, the "Secret Speech" also signaled an easing of artistic restrictions, allowing artists to deviate from Socialist Realism, the official artistic style, and experiment with abstraction. Finally, the 1950s also featured a downsizing of the Gulag system. The Party granted amnesties to nonpolitical prisoners and later began to reexamine the cases of those arrested for political crimes.⁵ All of these policies sought to relax Stalin-era repression and allow a small measure of personal expression.

The Thaw era, however, was also characterized by the stop-and-go nature of Khrushchev's reforms. While Khrushchev initially tolerated artist experimentation, in December 1962 he erupted during an exhibition of nonconformist art at the Manezh gallery. He attacked the abstract nature of the paintings, saying, "What is hung here is simply anti-Soviet. It's amoral. Art should ennoble the individual and arouse him to action."⁶ Similarly, by the early 1960s the state had also reversed its policies on combating crime and hooliganism. Incarceration rates were once again growing and the policy of downsizing the Gulag system was being reversed.⁷

Amid these reforms, Khrushchev announced, as part of the Third Party Program, that Communism would be built in the Soviet Union.⁸ More importantly for the purposes

⁴ Jeremy Smith, "Introduction," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, ed. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 2.

⁵ Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, ed. and trans. by Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 165-166.

⁶ Priscilla Johnson and Leopold Labedz, ed., *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1965), 103.

⁷ Brian LaPierre, "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale: The Campaign against Petty Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1956-1964," *Cahiers de monde russe* 47, no. 1/2 (January – June 2006): 352.

⁸ "Proekt programmy kommunisticheskoi partii sovetskogo soiuza," *Kommunist*, no. 7 (July 1961), 69.

of this thesis, its morality code specified the moral values of an ideal Soviet subject. The code's tenets praised loyalty to the Communist Party, allegiance to the collective, intolerance of parasitism and hooliganism, and defense of the Soviet motherland. Due to the emphasis the "Moral Code" placed on the future Communist society, Catriona Kelly positions it within the broader sphere of post-Stalin advice literature. De-Stalinization caused people to question the implications of both the eased relations with capitalist nations and the increasing availability of some consumer goods for a Communist society. As a result, Kelly argues that in addition to hygiene and self-education, hallmarks of advice literature of the Stalin era, the Moral Code strove to harmonize Communist ideology and material comfort. This literature not only encouraged people to practice self-restraint and modesty, but it also served as a means of discussing what it meant to be a morally-upright Soviet man or woman in the family and the workplace.⁹

During the two months of open discussion on the Third Party Program, the Party received roughly 170,800 letters with suggestions and comments on the program's draft. In addition to these letters, approximately 3.5 million people took part in discussions of the draft and submitted their collective opinions to the Party.¹⁰ Their suggestions included placing a stronger emphasis on military defense, strengthening the collective, and advocating for more attention to children's upbringing, whether this meant promoting a nuclear family, multi-generational family, or the replacement of these by state institutions. After reviewing various suggestions, the Party leaders submitted a final version of the Third Party Program to the XXII Party Congress for ratification in October 1961.

⁹ Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 314-320.

¹⁰ RGANI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 305, l. 1.

Citing Party leaders' efforts to prescribe specific moral values for their subjects, scholars of Soviet morality have interpreted the "Moral Code" as an example of Soviet paternalism. The code's tenets encouraged good relations at work, solidarity with other nations, and care for the public good. Its authors designed the "Moral Code" to reshape Soviet society into a better ideologically-based and collectively-oriented unit. According to Richard T. de George, the Party leadership felt that they needed to form the new Soviet man. The primary objective would be to instill in Soviet subjects obedience to the Party, evidenced by calling for "devotion to the cause of Communism" in the first tenet of the "Moral Code."¹¹ Their paternalistic goals continued through prescribing their own ideals of proper family, work, and social relations onto Soviet society, dictating, for example, exactly how a Soviet woman should feel and act in relation to her family, workplace, and Soviet society in general.

Despite these paternalistic aspects, the Party did not use the secret police to force the ideals of the Moral Code onto society. Instead, collectives oversaw the transformation of their own members into morally correct Communists. This collective element required state leaders and members of society to work collaboratively, shaping and enforcing proper Communist morality both from above and below. Everyone would be mobilized for the construction of the new Communist society. Limited archival access forced early scholars of the Thaw and the Third Party Program to focus on published versions of the program. By studying the public commentary on the "Moral Code," this thesis complicates previous scholars' interpretations of Soviet moral paternalism, stressing the participatory nature of the Thaw.

¹¹ Richard T. de George, *Soviet Ethics and Morality* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), 99.

Party leaders did not force these moral tenets on society but invited public participation. They wanted to reform society, openly soliciting a public debate on the future values of Communist society. Furthermore, the ambiguous wording of the code's tenets required individuals in society to discuss the true meaning of the tenets and their implications for day-to-day life. The resulting suggestions for revising the "Moral Code," whether submitted by members of the program commission or Soviet subjects during the period of public debate, argued for a variety of moral ideals. Individuals simultaneously pushed for greater equality in the workplace, more aid for mothers, increased attention to boarding schools, and praise for parents' role in the moral upbringing of their children. Each suggestion hoped to improve the moral character of the future builders of Communism but through drastically different approaches. Moral reform would be achieved through public participation, not through paternalism.

The authors of the "Moral Code" focused on both public and private morality, because in the Soviet Union these two spheres were entangled. The moral mission to reshape society led Party leaders to view the family as part of public life. Authorities printed advice literature on proper parenting techniques, using pedagogical research to create better families. Parents' collectives then used this literature not only to help each other with family issues, but also to educate individuals remaining outside the collective. Oleg Kharkhordin finds that the post-Stalin era featured a growing emphasis on social control groups, such as collectives, enforcing moral standards in individuals' personal lives and at work through guidance and education, not punishment.¹² The suggestions submitted to the Party regarding the "Moral Code" highlight the blurred line between

¹² Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 122.

private and public. Individuals felt comfortable submitting their opinions on the proper role of the family in society and debating the nature of the family. Furthermore, suggestions debated the roles of men and women in the family and in the workplace. Due to their implications for state goals and the betterment of society, these private areas became part of public Soviet discourse. The suggestions submitted regarding subjects' moral education and the role of women in society highlight this entangled nature of public and private life. By calling for Soviet men and women to publicly discuss such topics, the Party encouraged people to propose their own ideas for how others should live their lives, even when these suggestions called for more intervention into people's lives.

Historiography

As evidenced by the mass public participation surrounding the Party program and the code, the debate on Soviet moral ideals extended beyond Khrushchev and the program commission. Soviet men and women, industrial and agricultural workers, teachers, activists, and academic scholars all strove to influence these policies and advance their own agendas, whether advocating gender equality, increased privacy, or children's education. Utilizing the drafts of the Party program and the large public input that it generated, this thesis builds upon previous research to add a gender lens to the public commentary surrounding the "Moral Code." It will demonstrate that the confusing and participatory nature of the Thaw led to active debate of the proper roles for men and women in society.

Stephen Bittner's study of Moscow's Arbat region examines the implications of the Thaw's ambiguous nature for Soviet society. He argues that Party authorities' mixed messages regarding new policies allowed individuals to participate in policy making by

implementing their own interpretations of these directives. The de-Stalinization process happened so quickly that individuals had a difficult time understanding exactly how leaders wanted them to think and act. In the early 1960s, for example, a new highway was constructed in Moscow, connecting the city center with the residential neighborhoods west of the center. Due to de-Stalinization, however, some architects used the design of this highway as a way to resurrect constructivism, an avant-garde architectural school of the 1920s that strove to combine new materials and geometric designs with a minimalist approach to the role of art in everyday life. However, while these architects interpreted state messages as a call for new construction, other individuals intensified efforts to preserve the pre-revolutionary buildings of the area. As Bittner shows, the ambiguous nature of these messages allowed people in the Arbat region to propose their own interpretations of certain policies, creating a window of participation in an otherwise authoritarian regime.¹³

In addition to debating the meaning behind ambiguous Party and state decrees, Soviet society was also examining what it meant to be a Soviet man or woman. The easing of Cold War relations resulted in Soviet subjects increasingly coming into contact with music, film, art, and even people from Europe and the United States. Additionally, the return of Gulag prisoners confronted Soviet society with individuals it had previously cast off as *anti-Soviet*. These tensions are part of the illiberal undercurrents circulating in the Khrushchev era. While the standard interpretation of this period focuses on the progressive reforms and easing of restrictions, recently some historians have emphasized efforts by the state and society during this period to intervene in individuals' lives to

¹³ Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

make them more ideologically appropriate. In an analysis of public reactions to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Miriam Dobson finds that Solzhenitsyn's novella functioned as a point of debate for the changes taking place in the post-Stalin era. She argues that there were not specific factions in society in favor or against reform, but rather people often welcomed some changes while opposing others. For example, Dobson shows that while people were in favor of rehabilitating political victims of the terror, they also felt that petty criminals in the camps would threaten cultured Soviet society.¹⁴ Dobson's work challenges the traditionally liberal interpretation of the Gulag amnesty by highlighting the views of those opposed to the amnesty and concerned about its potentially destructive effects on society.

Brian LaPierre also challenges the liberal interpretation of the Thaw. Dobson's analysis focuses primarily on society's reactions to Thaw-era reforms and, as a result, does not discuss whether or not the illiberal elements of the Thaw era extended into policymaking. LaPierre argues that the decree on petty hooliganism was not only about decriminalizing petty hooligans and lessening harsh sentences, as scholars of the liberal Thaw would argue. The decree also strove for "universal punishment."¹⁵ Everyday activities, such as drunkenness or vulgar language, became anti-social behavior. Petty hooliganism served as a method of policing public and private space and extended the state's reach into the daily lives of its subjects. LaPierre's analysis of the petty hooligan campaign shows that the Thaw, a period known for liberalization, was also the scene of increasing persecution and intolerance.

¹⁴ Miriam Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,'" *Slavic Review* 64, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 587.

¹⁵ LaPierre, "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale," 352.

State efforts to crackdown on hooliganism were part of a larger effort to instill Communist morality in Soviet subjects. Hooligans' drunkenness, theft, and *parasitism* were seen as a threat to Soviet society. In her study of Communist morality, Deborah Field argues that through creating new lifecycle rituals, leaders in the Khrushchev era hoped to inculcate a new Communist morality in society and strengthen the ties between public and private life. While the Thaw is typically known for a decrease in state terror and coercion, Field's research shows that the regulation of personal lives actually increased. Communist morality was designed to further intertwine the private and public spheres in order to work for the greatest common good. Collectives, the Komsomol or Youth Communist League, and the Party were all prepared to correct individuals and steer them on the morally proper path. Field is clear, though, that "Communist morality resembles a screen window: slightly pliable with holes that allow some permeability. At the same time, it was not infinitely flexible, especially for the people charged with enforcing it."¹⁶ Discussions of morality functioned within the realm of Communist ideology. Limited resources and ineffective implementation hindered authorities' efforts to reshape society. More so, though, Soviet citizens refused to concede their individual interests. Field's work demonstrates the rich battle between Khrushchev's attempts to intervene in people's lives to strengthen social control and individuals' desires to structure their lives and families in a manner of their choosing.

Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia devotes great attention to the conflict of private versus public. Field includes chapters on love, sexual morality, and parenting to highlight relationships between men and women. However,

¹⁶ Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2007), 7.

she focuses her analysis on the moral discourse in these realms. Specifically in regards to gender, Field mentions contradictory attitudes toward men and women on topics such as sexuality and proper parental roles. Beyond this, she does not delve deeply into attitudes surrounding gender roles. This thesis hopes to add a gendered element to her analysis of how individuals reacted to Communist morality. It will show how people used this pliable ideological and moral "screen window" to discuss their views on gender relationships.

The debates on Communist morality and Soviet gender ideals did not distinguish between public and private spheres. As discussed earlier, the Party viewed families as part of a larger collective Soviet society. Families served as another institution that the Party could mobilize for its own goals. Susan E. Reid argues that not everyone agreed with this view of the family. She finds that many families saw the kitchens of the new single-family apartments as a site of private life, free from state intrusion. For the state, however, the kitchen served as an object of scientific modernization, one of the main paths to the construction of Communism. Following *Sputnik's* launch in October 1957, it seemed apparent that socialist science was superior to all others. As a result, the Third Party Program repeatedly aligned the building of Communism with scientific and technological progress. Reid shows that the Party felt a strong need to penetrate the unregulated private realm, especially that of the Soviet housewife. Party leaders feared that private apartments would weaken the collective and wanted to combat the one-family mentality. The Party hoped to achieve this through advice and education campaigns on proper housework techniques, advances in household appliances, and the scientific design of the kitchen, which would squeeze maximum efficiency into the smallest possible

space. Reid argues that the state's intrusion into the kitchen was not designed to alter gender roles or in any way free women. Instead, it placed additional requirements on women and alienated them from all that they knew about the home.¹⁷

Reid's work provides great insights into how the state sought to intervene in the domestic sphere. She focuses on the debates between the state and women, scientific advances and established cleaning and cooking practices. This thesis will also look at the interactions between state policy and opinions on gender, although doing so in a more public arena. The stress on the scientific and technological revolution, as seen throughout Reid's argument, illustrates the state's prioritization of progress and steadfast focus on building Communism. This thesis will also study how the state's fixation on progress and technology affected its interactions with society. By focusing on gender instead of just women, however, this thesis will bring men's opinions into the analysis, showing the turn of some individuals toward what they felt were more established gender roles in the face of dynamic social changes.

Arranged thematically, this thesis will address the views of the writers of the Code and those of society. Chapter II provides a history of the Third Party Program and the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism." Party programs were designed to show the way to a new stage in the Soviet Union's development. Following the "Secret Speech" and the successful launch of *Sputnik*, the leaders of the Communist Party drafted a new Party program, designed to build a new Communist society. Chapters III and IV will address the public commentary surrounding the Moral Code. In Chapter III, this thesis will show that some individuals used the opportunity for participation in the public

¹⁷ Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (April 2005): 289-316.

debate and the messages of relaxed control to promote a more nuclear family, with children raised by members of the family and not relying on nurseries, kindergartens, or boarding schools. Support was not unanimous, however, as other individuals argued for a more collective upbringing of children, calling on various state organizations to intervene in family life to regulate people's moral education. Chapter IV will then discuss how these debates carried over into the workplace. Some individuals argued for equal treatment of men and women as colleagues, but others countered that the Party should promise a reduction in hours for women. This would allow women to devote more attention to cooking, housework, and childcare. Both chapters will show that the unsettled and confusing nature of the Khrushchev era invited public participation and allowed people to promote contradictory gender roles simultaneously in the discussion of the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism."

Sources

As noted above, this thesis uses various forms of public commentary to analyze conflicting notions of gender during this period. In addition to Party publications and accounts printed in newspapers, magazines, and the so-called thick journals, archival documents are crucial to establishing the ideas circulating in society.¹⁸ The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) houses the reports of the commission members charged with reviewing the program. Their notes and changes show the ideals they prioritized and illustrate how they gradually shaped the Party program into its final

¹⁸ Thick journals are so named due to their large size. Unlike other periodicals published in the Soviet Union, the monthly-published thick journals commonly numbered over one hundred pages per issue. Popular thick journals during the Khrushchev period included *Novyi mir* and *Zvezda*. Many thick journals dealt with literary topics, but others, such as *Kommunist*, were used as another political organ of the Communist Party. These journals operated alongside smaller periodicals, such as *Rabotnitsa* and *Sem'ia i shkola*, whose monthly issues typically numbered less than forty pages.

form. Their arguments are supported by the large education campaigns organized by the Komsomol. These are found through meeting minutes and reports of Komsomol Party leaders stored in the Komsomol division of RGASPI. Additionally, the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) contains the records of Central Committee meetings held during the weeks leading up to the program draft's publication as well as letters and reports submitted to the Party during the period of public discussion. These sources provide a detailed account of the suggestions men, women, and Party members deemed important enough to pass on to the authorities. Research for this thesis is limited to the archives in Moscow. As a result, this analysis does not attempt to cover discussions of gender roles taking place throughout the remainder of the Soviet Union at this time, nor does it claim to apply these conclusions outside of Soviet Russia.

CHAPTER II

THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA AND THE THIRD PARTY PROGRAM

This chapter will examine how the diverse public discussion surrounding the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” was a product of the various dynamics at play in the Thaw period. The Thaw era is commonly characterized as a period of liberal reform. Its policies, however, were often ambiguous in nature, inviting public debate on the intended meanings of the reforms. Reforms, furthermore, proceeded in a zigzagging manner, leaving individuals in Soviet society uneasy and anxious about how the state would react. Among these reforms was the mass amnesty of non-political Gulag prisoners and Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech,” which denounced Stalin’s cult of personality and use of state terror. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union embarked on a new ambitious agricultural program, surpassed the United States in the space race, and began a large urban housing construction project. The utopian hopes following these accomplishments coexisted with concerns surrounding the renewed *openness* with the West, fearing the potential decay of society as a result of foreign influences. Responding to these anxieties, Party leaders drafted a new Party program in the late 1950s, designed to usher in a new Communist era. With suggestions from Party leaders, scientists, and teachers, as well as common industrial and collective farm workers, the Party released the Third Party Program and its morality code. The new program would guide Soviet society in the creation of a new Soviet man – the builder of Communism.

The Thaw

The Third Party Program was part of the larger Thaw era, which featured various policy reforms and increased freedom of expression. It began after Joseph Stalin, who

had been the supreme leader of the Soviet Union for over two decades, suffered a major stroke and died on 3 March 1953. Following his death, three men, Lavrenti Beria, Georgii Malenkov, and Nikita Khrushchev, emerged initially in a form of *collective leadership*. None of these men held complete control over the country – Beria was in charge of the state security and internal affairs, Malenkov led the state apparatus, and Khrushchev served as General Secretary of the Communist Party. Elena Zubkova argues that these men knew they could not replicate Stalin's style of rule. They still firmly believed in the Party dictatorship and authoritarian rule, but none of them possessed the quasi-divine charisma that had existed around Stalin. If Beria, Malenkov, or Khrushchev hoped to emerge as the new sole leader of the Soviet Union, they needed to distinguish themselves from the others and also distance themselves from their Stalinist pasts.¹⁹

Less than one month after Stalin's death, large policy changes were already emerging. On 27 March 1953, Beria announced an amnesty for Gulag prisoners that would go into effect immediately. All prisoners with sentences of five years or less, pregnant women or women with young children, and individuals under the age of eighteen would be freed from the camp system. The following week Beria announced that he was also calling off investigations into the Doctor's Plot, a conspiracy alleging that doctors within the Kremlin were plotting to kill high-level officials.²⁰ In 1954, the Central Committee, under Khrushchev, announced it would also begin reopening cases of political prisoners, individuals who had been arrested for supposedly betraying the Soviet Union or plotting with capitalist nations. Khrushchev and Beria knew that the economic

¹⁹ Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 153-156.

²⁰ Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 202-205.

inefficiencies in the Gulag system could not be overcome.²¹ These announcements signaled a change in the leadership. Stalin had stressed that the presence of *anti-Soviet* elements within society posed a real threat to the Soviet Union, defining such elements as spies, saboteurs, or anyone else plotting against the state. Beria and, after Beria's arrest, Khrushchev continued to stress the need to defend Soviet society against these *anti-Soviet* elements. By defining "anti-Soviet" as hooligans, parasites, religious believers, and others operating outside of Communist morality, however, Khrushchev changed the boundaries between cultured and uncultured and allowed Gulag prisoners, previously believed to threaten the future of the Soviet Union, to return to normal society.

While the Gulag amnesty had political implications for Beria and Khrushchev, its ramifications for Soviet society were much greater. Officials tried to keep the inner workings of the Gulag system secret, but the "Secret Speech" and the condemnation of the Doctor's Plot created a new openness in society.²² As Dobson has argued, however, not everyone was excited to be confronted with the Gulag system. Some Soviet subjects were unhappy to see returning Gulag prisoners, feeling these *anti-Soviet* elements posed a threat to ordered and cultured society.²³ Their concerns were compounded by the growing anxiety surrounding the increasing *openness* of the Soviet Union and the detrimental influence of foreigners and foreign culture on Soviet youth. Dobson also notes, however, that for Khrushchev the Gulag amnesties and attack on Stalin's use of terror were a sign that the Party was again moving in the right direction. By clarifying that Stalin was responsible for the past injustices, Khrushchev believed that he was

²¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

²² *Ibid.*, 206, 248.

²³ Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization," 583.

reviving the Party and returning it to its true Leninist core. The Soviet Union was once again on the road to Communism, a goal that would soon be achieved.²⁴

While Khrushchev had been able to justify the downsizing of the Gulag system due to its chronic economic inefficiency, with agricultural reforms he was opposed to any policy that would move away from collectivization. Stalin had collectivized the countryside by the early 1930s. He ordered the confiscation of peasants' property and forced them to work on state-owned farms. Collectivization also led to the arrest and deportation or execution of supposed *kulaks*, spawning protests in which peasants killed their livestock or destroyed their crops. It dealt Soviet agriculture a blow from which it would never recover. While Khrushchev refused to abandon collectivization, he was not opposed to the idea of ambitious projects. The Soviet Union needed some form of agricultural reform in order to increase crop production and bring an end to the cycle of devastating famines. Khrushchev announced the Virgin Lands Campaign, which would transform the steppe lands of Central Asia, traditionally used for herding livestock, into farmland.²⁵ He believed that cultivating more land in different regions of the Soviet Union would allow for greater agricultural production and also greater security in the case of regional droughts. By diversifying the country's agricultural regions, Khrushchev could promise that the Soviet Union would no longer fall victim to famine. In the case of drought or natural disaster in the black soil regions of the Ukraine or southern Soviet Russia, the crops of the Virgin Lands would continue to feed the Soviet population. In a massive publicity campaign, Khrushchev called on Komsomol members and young

²⁴ Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 239.

²⁵ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era* (New York, NY: Norton, 2003), 261-162.

adults throughout the country to move to Central Asia and develop the Virgin Lands, allowing the Soviet Union to surpass the United States agriculturally and assuring Soviet subjects of the Party's ability to feed them.²⁶

Despite Khrushchev's grand promise, it was clear by the early 1960s that the Virgin Lands Campaign had brought only limited success. The new collective farms could not deliver the long-term high yields the Party had envisioned. By disrupting the natural steppe environment, the campaign turned parts of the Kazakh republic into a dust bowl. The campaign also had negative effects on the Soviet Union's other agricultural areas. By diverting vital resources to the Virgin Lands, other agricultural regions fell even further behind on their quotas.²⁷ In 1960, the Soviet Union's meat production had actually declined.²⁸ Factories produced fewer corn combines in 1960 than they had in 1957.²⁹ Initially, however, the Virgin Lands Campaign had been a great source of excitement. Like the Gulag amnesties, it had demonstrated that change was not only possible, but was actually taking place within the Soviet Union. Soviet society was once again on the path to Communism.

Khrushchev's reform policies extended beyond the realm of agriculture or social policing. They also featured a small measure of freedom of expression in society, especially in the arts. The Gulag amnesties and the decision to reinvestigate the cases of political prisoners sent a signal to writers and artists that they were safe from Stalinist terror and could begin to experiment with their work. Writers such as Ilya Ehrenburg and

²⁶ Thomas P. Whitney, ed. *Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949-1961* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 202-3.

²⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 263.

²⁸ Anatolii Streliański, "Khrushchev and the Countryside," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. by William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason, trans. by David Gehrenbeck, Eileen Kane, and Alla Bashenko (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 117.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

Vladimir Pomerantsev called for greater honesty about life under Stalin and frankness about the negative aspects of life in the Soviet Union.³⁰ It was unclear, however, exactly how far writers and artists could push the conventional boundaries of Soviet culture. Vladimir Dudintsev's 1956 novel, *Not By Bread Alone*, criticized Stalin-era bureaucrats and their hindering of progress. Criticizing corrupt or inept Soviet bureaucrats had been a common trend dating back to Lenin in the early 1920s and, as a result, Party officials agreed to publish the book in the Soviet Union. Readers, however, interpreted the book as a critique of the repressive nature of the Stalin era as a whole. In light of the other changes taking place in post-Stalin Soviet society, these readers viewed the book's publication as a signal of the Party's willingness to call its own past into question.

Boris Pasternak's novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, was written shortly after *Not By Bread Alone*. It presented a critical view of the Soviet Union, portraying the Revolution as misdirected and corrupted as well as criticizing the dogmatic nature of Soviet ideology. As a result, leaders deemed it inappropriate and refused to publish it. After the manuscript was snuck out of the country and published in Milan and Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Party leaders further denounced the work and ordered him to refuse the award.³¹ Their response signaled another unexpected shift in Thaw-era policy. Due to the zigzagging nature of Khrushchev's policies, individuals in Soviet society were unable to predict how policies would be interpreted. They were anxious about how the Party would act next. Even with these attacks, though, Party leaders neither ordered the murder of Pasternak, nor sent him to a labor camp. Despite

³⁰ Whitney, *Khrushchev Speaks*, 152.

³¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 385.

instances of the tightening of state control on the arts, the Thaw era featured an overall greater tolerance of non-conformist artistic styles.

The defining moment of the Thaw was Khrushchev's famous denunciation of Stalin in the "Secret Speech."³² While artists had already begun to speak more freely about everyday life and reform measures had begun to rollback Stalin's Gulag policies, the "Secret Speech" publicly criticized the leader and signaled a new direction for the Party. On 14 February 1956, at the XX Party Congress, Khrushchev assembled the delegates for a special session. He spoke for four hours on the crimes of Stalin, attacking the leader for the blood purges of the Party and the Red Army in the 1930s. Khrushchev also criticized Stalin's cult of personality, chastising the leader who "ignored the norms of Party life and trampled on the Leninist principle of collective Party leadership."³³ Finally, the "Secret Speech" announced the need for a return to socialist legality, or making decisions based on laws and not the whim of the leader. While Khrushchev delivered the speech to a closed session of the congress, he required all Party organizations to read the speech to their own members. He wanted the news of his denunciation of Stalin to spread throughout the Party both inside the Soviet Union and in the satellite nations of Eastern Europe. Despite strictly ordering that the contents of the speech stay within the Party apparatus, Party members shared the news with others, causing shock and disbelief as individuals were confronted with the crimes of Stalin.

It was unclear, however, exactly how far the attack on Stalin and his policies was supposed to extend. Khrushchev had been careful to criticize only certain aspects of

³² For a translated copy of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" see: "De-Stalinization: Speech by N. S. Khrushchev on the Stalin Cult Delivered Feb. 25, 1956, at a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party," in Whitney, *Khrushchev Speaks*, 207-265.

³³ Whitney, *Khrushchev Speaks*, 220.

Stalin's rule. The "Secret Speech" was ambiguous about the many other individuals who fell victim to the Terror or the great unrest and death caused by collectivization. Within the Soviet Union, furthermore, some individuals continued to revere Stalin for his efforts to transform the country into an industrial society and a global superpower. They believed that Khrushchev's denunciation had hurt the strength of the Communist cause, vilifying one of the movement's most influential men.³⁴ The denunciation also led to more fundamental concerns. People were unclear about what they should do with busts or portraits of Stalin. Also, they questioned why Khrushchev was making these remarks in 1956, when he had worked under Stalin for decades and had led the Party for three years following the leader's death. Finally, some people anxiously wondered if the "Secret Speech" meant that they should no longer follow or obey other Stalin-era leaders. If Stalin had been proven guilty of these crimes, then the men he had put in power in the Soviet Union or the countries of Eastern Europe were unfit to rule. While Khrushchev had been clear to criticize only certain aspects of Stalin's rule, his denunciation left society uneasy about what other aspects of Soviet culture needed to be called into question.

The Thaw era is best characterized by its ambiguity. Individuals were unsure how to react to returning Gulag prisoners – while the state had granted amnesty to the prisoners, these *anti-Soviet* elements were also perceived as a serious threat to cultured and civilized society. Khrushchev's agricultural reforms promised higher yields and plentiful food, yet consumer markets still suffered from chronic shortages. Finally, the "Secret Speech" was ambiguous and contradictory in what it chose to denounce and omit.

³⁴ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2009), 245.

It attacked the cult of personality and pledged to return to Leninist norms, while Khrushchev systematically destroyed the collective leadership and took his place as the sole leader of the Soviet Union. All of these contradictions led to a rise in public debate, openly solicited by the Party. Leaders called upon individuals in society to promote their own interpretations of these policies, hoping to guide Soviet society along the path to Communism.

The Promise of a New Era

Amid the ambiguity of the Thaw and de-Stalinization, Soviet subjects were also witnessing groundbreaking scientific progress. These rapid developments led some individuals to dream of the advent of a new era in Soviet or even global history. On 4 October 1957, Soviet scientists launched *Sputnik*, the world's first artificial satellite, into space.³⁵ Space travel was no longer simply a dream of science fiction, but suddenly became a real possibility in the minds of Soviet subjects. On 12 April 1961, the Soviet Union took another leap forward when Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth. After successfully completing his flight, Gagarin was flown to Moscow, where he was paraded in front of huge crowds of adoring fans.³⁶ German Titov repeated Gagarin's success on 8 August 1961.³⁷ The achievements of these men and the Soviet space program signified a great achievement for Soviet society. The once *backwards* state had conquered the cosmos. At the parade welcoming Gagarin back from space, Khrushchev spoke of the importance of Gagarin's flight. He remarked that the Soviet Union, which had been viewed as illiterate and barbaric had now become a superpower and pioneer in

³⁵ James T. Andrews and Asif A. Siddiqi, *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

space. "Let everyone who's sharpening their claws against us know, let them know that Yurka was in space, that he saw and knows everything."³⁸

Gagarin and Titov became symbols of what young people in the Soviet Union could accomplish. Both men were part of the postwar generation the Party was calling upon to build Communism. Due to their accomplishments in space, these men were elevated to a high moral position. They were granted prominent positions at parades and festivals, quoted by journalists, featured in films and newsreels and, above all, held as the example to which all young people should aspire. Journalist M. Sokolov wrote in *Molodaia gvardiia*:

Today's youth are a great power. They will live under Communism. To do this, all Soviet young people need to develop a strong spirit, infinitely loyal to the leader and the Communist Party, such as the national heroes, Yuri Gagarin and German Titov. Let the case of these remarkable young people become an example for all Soviet boys and girls.³⁹

After the publication of the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism," some individuals even believed that the cosmonauts' success meant they must have been raised upon the tenets of the "Moral Code." If mothers wanted their sons and daughters to accomplish feats like those of Gagarin and Titov, then they should teach their children to live by Communist morality.⁴⁰

The two men, however, could not live up to their public personas. Communist morality was based on ideals. It envisioned the perfect subject, willing to subjugate all personal interests to the common good. Just as women were simultaneously supposed to overfulfill their work quotas and devote long hours to raising their children, the image of

³⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 492.

³⁹ M. Sokolov, "Im zhit' pri kommunizme," *Molodaia gvardiia*, no. 10 (October 1961): 67.

⁴⁰ "I razumom i serdtsem," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 10 (October 1961): 3.

an ideal man was also a contradiction. The Party wanted men to devote their lives to the Party and work. Russian culture, however, equated masculinity with drinking. Both Gagarin and Titov had difficulty bridging the two ideals. Gagarin missed the opening of the XXII Party Congress after breaking his jawbone jumping out of a window. Titov was involved in a string of drinking parties and car accidents, culminating in the death of one of his passengers. Both incidents were kept secret.⁴¹ The cosmonauts were tools of the state. Their public personas served as an ideal toward which the common subject could aspire and helped spread the moral tenets that would build the new Soviet man and the future Communist society.

In addition to the scientific advances in the space program, growth in the consumer goods industry allowed for an increase in consumerism. Consumption and living standards gained a more prominent place in Party rhetoric during the 1950s, promoting this accomplishment but also fearing its effects on the idealized austerity of the Communist lifestyle. More and more families were moving into *Khrushchevki*, or standardized, mass-produced, pre-fabricated apartment buildings. While these apartments were hastily constructed and often of poor quality, they granted Soviet subjects the possibility of a single-family apartment. Reid argues that the Party feared that the small increase in the availability of some consumer goods, combined with single-family apartments, would turn women into crazed consumers.⁴² Khrushchev included austere aesthetics in his idea of "Leninist norms," hoping it would encourage people to focus on function and rationality, not irresponsible consumerism.⁴³ Despite his attempts,

⁴¹ Andrews and Siddiqi, *Into the Cosmos*, 96-99.

⁴² Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (2002): 242.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 218.

Soviet subjects continued to take advantage of the opportunity to decorate their homes with lampshades and useless trinkets, embracing the new availability of these items in a traditionally restricted consumer culture.

Some individuals viewed the growth in the supply of consumer goods as progress along the path to building Communism, which involved making products more available to Soviet subjects and improving people's living conditions.⁴⁴ Aspects of the Third Party Program echoed these concerns. Notes from February 1961 suggested "There should be more attention paid to the principle of material and moral incentives as the main method of realizing the Communist principle of distribution."⁴⁵ Khrushchev agreed. At the January 1961 Plenum meeting, he supported raising salaries, so that moral and material incentives would encourage people to work more efficiently. "It is necessary that people see and feel such material incentive. Does this contradict our principles? For Communism to succeed, we must first take care of our people. What concerns people? For a good job, for high quality work, there should be a good salary and material incentives. This should not be forgotten."⁴⁶

All of these advances pointed to the advent of a new era, seemingly distant from the Party's Stalinist past and full of promise. Stalinism had violated the values of socialism, but Khrushchev promised to restore Leninist norms to Soviet society. Unlike previous generations, the postwar generation perceived themselves as uncorrupted by

⁴⁴ "Povysit' rol' obshchestvennykh nauk v stroitel'stve kommunizma," *Kommunist*, no. 10 (July 1961): 39.

⁴⁵ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f. 586, op. 1, d. 197, l. 3.

⁴⁶ V. Raud, "Organizatsiia obshchestvenogo truda i sozдание pridposylok perekhoda ot sotsializma k kommunizmu," *Sotsialisticheskii trud*, no. 8 (August 1961): 28.

Stalinism.⁴⁷ Furthermore, along with the advances in housing and material goods, the spectacular scientific advances in rocketry and space as well as the promise of mass increases in agricultural production due to the Virgin Lands Campaign made it appear that the Soviet Union was rapidly progressing towards the eventual construction of Communism. In 1959, at the XXI Party Congress, Khrushchev publicly declared that the Soviet Union had finally constructed socialism and began drafting a new Party program.⁴⁸ With the guidance of the new Third Party Program, the Party and all of Soviet society could overcome the anxieties towards the increased *openness* with the West and the return of Gulag prisoners and begin to build the new Communist society.

The Third Party Program

The Third Party Program was designed to instruct each sector of Soviet society how to progress toward Communism. The Communist Party used Party programs as a form of Party platform to outline the Party's central values and ideals as well as define goals to guide the Party's actions and decisions in the coming years. Vladimir Lenin issued the first plan in 1903 at the II Party Congress, planning how best to mobilize the working class for revolution. When the Bolsheviks had seized control of the country, Lenin unveiled the second Party program. Presented to the VIII Party Congress in 1919, it set out plans for the building of a socialist society.⁴⁹ The final step for the Soviet Union would be the construction of a Communist society. Party leaders made plans to draft a third Party program in the 1930s but instead adopted the Stalin Constitution in 1936. Efforts were again interrupted in 1939 by the outbreak of World War II.

⁴⁷ Donald J. Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about their Lives* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 4.

⁴⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 509.

⁴⁹ "Kakova rol' programmy partii v zhizni obshchestva?" *Komsomolskaia pravda*, August 16, 1961.

Following the war, a draft of the new program was commissioned under Andrei Zhdanov, one of Stalin's chief subordinates. Completed in December 1947, the draft of the new program called for increases in the standards of living as well as reduced state involvement in subjects' personal lives. These provisions were deemed unacceptable under the Stalinist state. They would have forced the state to divert resources from the armaments industry as well as loosen its control over society. As a result, the new program failed to materialize.⁵⁰

Discussion of a third Party program began again in earnest in 1956. That year, at the XX Party Congress, the Party called for the creation of the new program. Disagreements in the Presidium, however, made it difficult to agree on a new official ideology, especially in the wake of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin. Following the XX Party Congress, Khrushchev secured his power and removed his rivals from the Presidium. His authority allowed him to choose the ideological message of the new Party program and determine how the Soviet Union would build the future Communist society. With sole control over the Party's direction, a new commission finally began work on the Third Party Program.⁵¹

While Khrushchev technically led the drafting committee, the committee was composed of Otto V. Kuusinen, Anastas Mikoian, Mark Mitin, Mikhail Suslov, Petr Pospelov, and Pavel Iudin, and was chaired by Boris Ponomarev. All of these men were members of the Central Committee and five – Kuusinen, Mitin, Suslov, Pospelov, and

⁵⁰ Alexander Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme and the Fate of Khrushchev's Reforms," in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev* ed. by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 8-9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Iudin – had served on the 1947 committee under Zhdanov.⁵² This continuity led to some of the similarities between the two plans, in particular the strong emphasis placed on increasing subjects' living standards and entrusting more power to collective groups in society.⁵³ In addition to these men, at least one-hundred specialists from a variety of fields worked for three years in various groups drafting different parts of the program. The vast majority of the committee's comments on the Party program related to economics. As part of building Communism, the program emphasized agricultural and industrial quotas. Work groups within the committee also discussed the automation of industry and improved supply of products to factories and stores, feeling that without these improvements it would be impossible to build Communism.⁵⁴

Khrushchev took care in instructing the committee on the purpose of the new program. He believed that it should explain the role of society along the path to Communism as well as stress the connections between life and the sciences. Society would be molded into a morally upright and efficient unit. It would be devoted to the Communist cause and would rely on individuals to reform each other into morally correct Communists. Science would play a crucial role in the new society. Building Communism would require increased industrial efficiency and better living standards, both of which relied on advances in science and technology. Finally, he requested that the committee be absolutely clear that Communism would not be anarchy. Instead, Communist society would function because society would monitor itself.⁵⁵ The

⁵² RGANI, f. 1, op. 4 d. 10, l. 3

⁵³ Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme," 10.

⁵⁴ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 197, l. 28.

⁵⁵ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 1, l. 4.

committee would design a program that would remain in effect for twenty years and plan the path to Communism in the industrial, material, and moral spheres.

As part of writing the new Party program, the committee was also responsible for drafting the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism," a list of moral tenets to be included in the program's section on ideology, culture, and education. Already by 1959, the list of tenets had come to resemble its final shape. Members, however, continued debating the exact wording of each tenet. The care with which these individuals chose the wording of the morality code's tenets illustrates its importance in the program and the building of Communism. Each tenet would be responsible for shaping Soviet subjects into better, more collectively minded, and harder-working people.

From 1959 to 1961, the tenets of the "Moral Code" continued to undergo slight revisions. The popular phrase, "All for one, and one for all" was quickly added to the tenet on collectivism, framing the idea of a collective mentality around the popular phrase to make it more comprehensible for Soviet subjects.⁵⁶ Another draft included "arrogance" in the tenet on intolerance toward careerism and parasitism, perceiving this as equally detrimental to the Soviet economy's success.⁵⁷ Other contested phrases included whether or not to remove "humane relations" from the tenet on respect, and if it was better to hate enemies or simply to refuse to tolerate them, being unclear as to the difference between hate and intolerance.⁵⁸ Finally, some members considered including discrimination in the tenet on racism.⁵⁹ While none of these changes altered the fundamental meaning behind the code's tenets, the authors nevertheless exercised great

⁵⁶ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 189, l. 7.

⁵⁷ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 190, l. 8.

⁵⁸ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 190, l. 38; RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 190, l. 60.

⁵⁹ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 189, l. 74.

care in deciding how these ideals would be conveyed to the public. They wanted the "Moral Code" to apply to each Soviet subject and guide them in moral self-reform. Defining Communist morality was not an afterthought lost among industrial quotas, but a fundamental aspect of the Communist Party's plan to build a new society.

As the committee's work ended, Khrushchev began editing the final versions of the program's draft. On 20-21 April and 18 July 1961, Khrushchev dictated more than forty-six pages of comments on the Party program. Most of the leader's comments were merely editorial. Other comments, however, focused on establishing his own brand of ideology and distancing himself from Stalinism. For example, he wanted to stress that the dictatorship of the proletariat would become a people's state. Any discussion of putting in place a dictatorship was sure to harken to Stalin and his cult of personality, a comparison Khrushchev was keen to avoid. Khrushchev also emphasized that social classes would no longer exist, another idea that had been present during the NEP era but faded under Stalin. For Khrushchev, all of these revisions described a society built along Lenin's ideals, not the denounced practices of Stalin.

Following Khrushchev's revisions, the draft of the Party program was presented to the Central Committee on 19 June, which was then prepared for a massive public discussion of the program.⁶⁰ The period of public discussion and commentary on the program had real significance for the Party. They did not intend simply to dictate the program to society but wanted to take the opportunity to hear what individuals thought about the program, while also educating them on its provisions. In the weeks before the program draft's publication, Khrushchev wrote, "What purpose is there in discussing the project of the program? It is most of all in order to familiarize all of the Party, all Soviet

⁶⁰ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 509-511.

people, and the whole world with the project of the Program, to raise their hearts and minds to the great inspirational prospects, which the Party is opening up before our country in the coming twenty years.”⁶¹ It was important that every Soviet subject understood the goals of the program and voiced his or her opinions on the provisions. Without their suggestions, the program would be out of touch with the needs of society, jeopardizing the success of building Communism.

The Central Committee planned the program’s propaganda, and its public debut in particular, in great detail. First, the draft of the program would be published in the journal *Kommunist* and in the main newspapers, such as *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and *Komsomolskaia pravda*, as well as in major regional newspapers. A thirty-minute television broadcast from Moscow on 31 July 1961, would announce the program’s publication and read it in its entirety. Radio broadcasts would read the program in the various national languages. Finally, on 3-4 August, the program would be published outside the USSR in English, French, Arabic, German, and Finnish.⁶² Party leaders hoped to ensure that news of the Third Party Program and its provisions would be known throughout the Soviet Union and abroad, announcing to the world its intent to create a new Communist society.

From 31 July – 15 September 1961, the Party received hundreds of thousands of suggestions from the public on a wide range of the program’s provisions. Some individuals wanted more attention paid to the mechanization of industry, others spoke of the need for more tractor stations, and still others advocated a new anti-religious campaign. After reviewing the suggestions, a final version of the program was compiled

⁶¹ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 201, l. 59.

⁶² RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 17, l. 45.

and approved at the XXII Party Congress. The final version of the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism,” called for:

1. Devotion to the cause of Communism, love of the socialist Motherland and of the socialist countries,
2. Conscientious labor for the good of society: he who does not work, shall not eat,
3. Concern on the part of everyone for the preservation and growth of public property,
4. High sense of public duty; intolerance of actions harmful to the public interest,
5. Collectivism and comradely mutual assistance: one for all and all for one,
6. Humane relations and mutual respect between individuals: man is to man a friend, comrade, and brother,
7. Honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, unpretentiousness and modesty in public and personal life,
8. Mutual respect in the family, concern for the upbringing of children,
9. Irreconcilability towards injustice, parasitism, dishonesty, careerism, and profiteering,
10. Friendship and brotherhood among all peoples of the USSR, intolerance of national and racial hatred,
11. Intolerance towards the enemies of Communism, peace, and freedoms of nations,
12. Fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries, and with all people.⁶³

With the program approved and released, the Party began its efforts to spread the lessons of the “Moral Code” and reform society.

The Role of the Collective in the Building of Communism

Discussions surrounding the “Moral Code” focused on the role of collectives in reforming their own members and those around them. Khrushchev stressed that the solution to moral problems was not through legislation, but through everyone helping each other. “We, comrades, must and will do everything we can in order to educate [*vospityvat*] people properly, to help them get back on their feet. All this will be done, for we must do it wisely. We cannot just kill a man who has gone mad. It would be

⁶³ “Programma kommunisticheskogo partii sovetskogo soiuza,” *Pravda*, November 2, 1961.

foolish. On the other hand, the corrupt, incorrigible people we will punish mercilessly, not only for them, but as a warning to others.”⁶⁴ Leaders of the Komsomol echoed Khrushchev’s assertion that the “Moral Code” would become the new law of life. “The central committee of the Komsomol believes that the most important, honorable task of a young production collective, is the assertion of the ‘Moral Code of the Builder of Communism’ as the law of life of every young person, every boy and girl.”⁶⁵ In the eyes of both Khrushchev and the Komsomol, society, especially the collective, would become the chief agent of reform.

During the Khrushchev era, the collective evolved from small work groups into the chief regulators of morality and ethics. Kharkhordin analyzes how leaders and scientists in the postwar Soviet Union looked to the collectives in planning the making of the new Soviet man. Collectives would police individuals’ social and moral behavior and supervise their development as Communist subjects. Due to the collectives’ pervasive presence, “there is no single Big Brother, but there are many bigger brothers. There is no single apex, where ‘punitive and decision-making power culminate, but a network of surveilling peers, to whose arbitrariness in the enforcement of virtue the individual submits.”⁶⁶ Unlike under Stalin, when the police were responsible for regulating society, Khrushchev’s collectives would strive to police the moral behavior of every Soviet subject. As such, a 1961 law ensured that everyone belonged to a collective. Kharkhordin continued, “Instead of a chaotic and punitive terror of the Stalinist years, he

⁶⁴ RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 541, l. 190.

⁶⁵ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 2, d. 426a, l. 36.

⁶⁶ Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, 122.

[Khrushchev] wanted to see a relentless and rational system of preventative surveillance. We might add that he largely made this dream come true."⁶⁷

Journalists, propagandists, and Party members all stressed the value of the collective in reforming society. N. F. Ivanovich of the Moscow propaganda division spoke to a meeting of city Party committees on the need to promote collectives. He argued that the collectives were much more effective than newspapers or journals in influencing a person's *vospitanie*, or moral upbringing. People needed real life examples of how to be good Communist subjects.⁶⁸ Printed advice literature would only reach people who actively sought it out, but relying on the collectives would ensure that everyone learned the tenets of the new "Moral Code." In order to build Communism, Party leaders envisioned the members of the various collectives acting as agents of reform and *vospitanie* for all of Soviet society.

Educating others, however, first entailed educating oneself. On 12 September 1961, Sergei Pavlov, secretary of the Komsomol, chastised Komsomol members for not observing the norms of Communist morality. It would be impossible to reeducate others if the members refused to serve as models of Communist behavior. Each member needed to work seriously with his or her own education in order to reform society.⁶⁹ V. Kolbanovskii expanded this call to society at large in his suggestion submitted to the Party. He stressed that the Party was relying on a form of "self-upbringing and self-education," believing that each individual should study and understand the code for

⁶⁷ Ibid., 299.

⁶⁸ RGASPI, f. 556, op. 15, d. 82, l. 28.

⁶⁹ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 1, d. 1056, l. 6.

himself in order to serve as a better example for others.⁷⁰ If society was to build Communism, then everyone needed to play a role for the good of others. This meant not only serving as a model for other members of society but also within one's own family. Every individual should teach the "Moral Code" to his or her own family. The family could serve as a micro-collective. Efforts for a happy family were synonymous with efforts for a happy society. By entrusting groups in society with the task of reforming society, Party leaders were confident that the program would be a success and a Communist society would be built.

Despite all of the public input on the program's provisions, the Party's efforts to educate the public on the values of the program and the "Moral Code," and the promise of life under Communism, the Third Party Program failed to achieve its lofty goals. By 1970, the Soviet Union was projected to surpass the United States in industrial production. Agricultural production was also supposed to increase 250% by 1970 and 350% by 1980. In 1980, however, Communist society had not been realized. Distribution of goods failed to increase to the levels predicted in the program. The promise of a new era and the optimism of the 1950s could not transform the Soviet Union into the efficient, altruistic country the leaders had envisioned.

Furthermore, it is unclear how well Soviet subjects actually received the new program. While the program did serve as a new sense of authority for the Party following the denunciations of Stalin, "the legitimization and mobilization factors were linked to specific figures and dates, and a failure to provide them would undermine the

⁷⁰ V. Kolbanovskii, "Moral'nyi kodeks stroitel'ia kommunizma," *Kommunist*, no. 15 (October 1961): 46.

Soviet leadership's legitimacy."⁷¹ Historian Yurii Aksiutin conducted a retrospective poll in 1998 on how the Thaw generation had felt about the Party program following its release. At the time, roughly 52% of the population believed in Communism. Of those individuals, only 37% believed that the plan would be achieved exactly as dictated.⁷² The public discussion surrounding the "Moral Code" demonstrates that whether or not people full-heartedly subscribed to the provisions of the Party program, they were eager to discuss the program's ideals.

Regardless of whether or not Soviet subjects truly believed in Communism or thought that the Third Party Program would be achieved, their comments on the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" provide valuable insights into Khrushchev-era society. Their suggestions were not just about the ideal Communist society that would arrive in twenty years. Each letter, article, or draft revision worked to promote the author's own social ideas for the present. The reforms and changes of the Khrushchev era demonstrated that aspects of Soviet society could change, but for some individuals society needed to move in a different direction. Whether arguing for taking women out of the workplace to devote more time to domestic labor, or promoting greater state intervention in the family at the expense of personal freedoms, some individuals seized the opportunity for public debate surrounding the "Moral Code" to advocate illiberal policies during a period otherwise known for its liberal reforms.

⁷¹ Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme," 20.

⁷² Yurii Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953-1964 gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 335-337.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL SOVIET FAMILY

This chapter addresses the commentary surrounding the ideal Soviet family and proper *vospitanie* of children in the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism." It will first address the morality code's tenet on *vospitanie*, placing the tenet within the context of the Soviet Union's evolving family policies as well as the growing prevalence of divorce and single parenthood. The primary focus of this chapter, though, is the range of suggestions the public submitted for improving the tenet on *vospitanie*. This chapter will argue that the diversity in ideas on *vospitanie* was the result of the Thaw's confusing nature. Leaders in the center called for public participation by organizing a large public campaign and publishing articles on *vospitanie* in various periodicals. The ambiguous policies of the Thaw demanded public participation and interpretation in order to decipher their meaning. Individuals reacted to the state's often-contradictory messages by promoting their own opinions as to who was responsible for matters of *vospitanie*. Some individuals wished to grant more power to social institutions. Others believed that showing concern for *vospitanie* entailed ensuring that parents took an active role in the upbringing of their children. The ambiguous nature of both the moral tenet and *vospitanie* itself forced a public debate on the meaning of the family, illustrating the diverse range of opinions in Soviet society.

Furthermore, these suggestions demonstrate the presence of an illiberal current in Khrushchev-era society. While many of the state's actions appear to have promoted greater state and pedagogical involvement in people's moral education, the rising rate of divorce and delinquency forced individuals to question the moral framework of Soviet

society. Some individuals in society felt that parents possessed an irreplaceable influence over their children and state-sponsored institutions of *vospitanie* had contributed to the moral crisis. They wanted a form of *vospitanie* with less state interference, similar to other aspects of the Thaw that permitted small measures of personal freedom. Other individuals, however, felt that the moral crisis in society demanded more state intervention in the family, arguing that this was the only way to shape the new Soviet man properly and continue on the path to Communism. They valued the state's role in *vospitanie* and used the Party's call for public discussion to advocate less freedom in family life and grant greater authority to the other agents of *vospitanie*: teachers and collectives.

Crisis in the Soviet Family

The Khrushchev period featured a rising divorce rate as well as low attendance at boarding schools and childcare centers. It became apparent to those both inside and outside of the Party that there was a family crisis in the Soviet Union. The state stressed that proper *vospitanie* required a strong family. *Vospitanie* is an untranslatable term that broadly refers to a child's *upbringing* or moral education. Proper *vospitanie* would raise a cultured, polite, knowledgeable, and morally sound individual. During the era of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the state had taken radical measures to weaken parental control of *vospitanie*, seeing the family as a remnant of bourgeois society.⁷³ NEP-era divorce laws spawned the emergence of *postcard divorces*, in which individuals simply needed to notify their partner of the divorce by mail. The rising cost of children's homes,

⁷³ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11.

the increasing presence of homeless children, and falling birthrates, however, caused the state to reevaluate its stance on the issue and grant greater responsibility to the family.⁷⁴

Under Stalin, the state began promoting marriage, motherhood, and a nuclear family – stressing the family’s responsibility for *vospitanie* over that of teachers or the collectives, noting that families could perform this function cheaper and more efficiently than the state. Making families the primary agents of *vospitanie* required a shift in moral education, which had previously stressed an individual’s relation to society and the state. Stalinist morality, as a result, also evolved to stress the role of the family in *vospitanie*, a trend that continued into the post-Stalin period.⁷⁵ Operating within this framework, Soviet subjects used the discussions surrounding the Third Party Program and the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” to share their opinions on the family’s role in *vospitanie*. Incorporating ideas from both the NEP and Stalin eras, these individuals searched for the best way to address the family crisis and strengthen the *vospitanie* of future generations.

One way in which the state strove to create a more productive family unit was promoting the institution of marriage by making divorce a challenging process. Beginning in the 1930s, in order to present a petition, couples first had to pay a fee to the local people’s court. Then, an announcement was put in the local newspaper declaring the couple’s intent to divorce. After this was completed, a judge would hear the case and attempt to reconcile the couple. Finally, if they were unsuccessful, the couple could

⁷⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 337.

appeal to a regional court, where, if granted a divorce, the couple would pay another large fee. Despite this arduous process, however, divorce was on the rise.⁷⁶

Deborah Field finds that between 1955 and 1965, the number of divorces in Moscow city courts grew 270%. In her article, "Irreconcilable Differences," she concludes that the number of divorce suits filed and divorces granted rose throughout the Khrushchev period. In the year the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" was released, 1961, Moscow city court judges granted 22,761 divorces. This is compared to only 8,462 divorces granted in 1953.⁷⁷ An increase of this magnitude in the number of divorces reflected poorly on the state of Communist morality. Propagandists argued that citizens needed to put aside their personal romantic interests in order to maintain strong and stable family units. Field argues that these propagandists viewed divorce as selfish.⁷⁸ According to them, anyone requesting a divorce was forsaking his or her social obligations for a passing emotional whim.

Judges differed from the Party in their views on divorce. Decrees dating from the 1940s had encouraged judges to reconcile couples and grant a divorce only if the case was strong and the continuation of the marriage posed a serious threat to the *vospitanie* of others. In the early 1950s, though, legalists began working on more lax divorce laws. Despite the state's promotion of public goals and Communist morality, individuals filing for divorce felt their cases were valid. Field finds that divorce applications from the late 1950s cited differences in character, loss of feelings, or neglect.⁷⁹ The strong emphasis

⁷⁶ Deborah Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *Russian Review* 57, no. 4 (October 1998): 605.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 607.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 603.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 609.

on emotions and private relationships denied the dominance of public goals over personal interests.

The rising divorce rates show that Soviet families did not match the ideals espoused in Communist morality. Donald Raleigh's oral history of the Soviet baby boomers provides a detailed account of how families operated in the Khrushchev era. Postwar Soviet society encountered an extreme imbalance in the ratio of men to women. Many women were left as single mothers. Those who were married continued to work, hoping to provide a more financially stable household for their families. Raleigh finds that 85% of mothers, single or married, between twenty and fifty-five years of age, worked. Despite the large number of women working outside the home, only 13% of preschool children attended the state-operated nurseries in 1960.⁸⁰ As a result, Raleigh notes the dominant role of grandparents, particularly of the grandmother or *baba*, in raising children. Many of Raleigh's participants were raised by their grandmothers in multi-generational homes or went to live with their grandparents in the countryside for the summer or even multiple years at a time.⁸¹ He finds that these families viewed state-sponsored childcare centers as a last resort due to limited availability and poor quality. According to Raleigh's research and analysis, state institutions during the 1950s and early 1960s did not succeed in replacing the multi-generational home as the primary institution of early childhood education.

The "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" included one provision on the Soviet family. In the draft of the code published in late July 1961, Tenet Eight called for

⁸⁰ Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 36-38.

“mutual respect in the family and concern for the *vospitanie* of children.”⁸² By calling for “concern for the *vospitanie* of children,” the creators of the “Moral Code” demonstrated the crucial importance of *vospitanie* for society. With Khrushchev’s pledge to achieve Communism, society had become responsible for creating the new Soviet man. Raising children according to the “Moral Code” would ensure the Soviet Union’s success in building the future Communist society. Furthermore, the phrase “mutual respect in the family” implied that men and women would take equal responsibility for children and the home. In the Soviet Union, women were responsible for domestic chores as well as raising the children. The continued stress on “mutual respect” in this tenet signaled an attack on male chauvinism and sexist attitudes toward women’s work, calling on men to take more responsibility in the home. Under Communism, according to the “Moral Code,” men and women would respect each other equally, both in the home and in society.

This ambitious reform of family life was perplexingly vague. In other tenets of the code, the authors specified exactly which qualities would or would not be tolerated. For example, another tenet called for “Honesty and truthfulness, simplicity and modesty in social and personal life,” referring to the need to be honest and truthful with others and also value an aesthetic lifestyle in the home.⁸³ In comparison to this specific list of characteristics, the tenet on *vospitanie* does not specify who was to fulfill which roles in the family, who was responsible for raising the children, how much respect children should give to their parents, or how this renewed attention would manifest itself in society.

⁸² “Proekt programmy kommunisticheskoi partii sovetskogo soiuza,” *Kommunist*, 69.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 69.

The tenet on *vospitanie* was ambiguous on family relations and responsibility for *vospitanie* from its earliest drafts. A version of the tenet from November 1959 called for “the purity [*chistota*] of family relationships, love and mutual respect between spouses, parents, and children.”⁸⁴ Less than a month later, however, the tenet was changed to read simply, “pure [*chistye*] family relationships,” omitting who and what constituted these relationships. The use of the word “*chistota*,” or later “*chistye*” was incredibly vague, potentially meaning “proper” or “ordered,” depicting a clean family relationship void of chaos and conducive to good *vospitanie*.⁸⁵ A draft of the moral code from 1960 removed the tenet in its entirety, relying instead on the values enumerated in the remaining tenets and the value placed on humane relations to regulate personal relations.⁸⁶ Subsequent drafts and revisions reinserted the tenet but continued to emphasize a vague definition of the family. The code’s authors intended these tenets to be vague in order to apply broadly to Soviet subjects’ lives and personal situations. Over the course of their revisions, however, their attempts to broaden the scope of the tenets also stripped them of any clear meaning. The lack of clarity in regard to “mutual respect” and “concern for *vospitanie*” allowed individuals to promote their own various interpretations of a single moral tenet.

A Strong, Separate Family

The suggestions submitted to the Party demonstrate how the debate opened by the “Moral Code” gave voice to diverse ideas on family and *vospitanie*. While some individuals saw the answer to the collapsing family in greater state involvement, as had been envisioned during the NEP era, Party authorities knew that they could not destroy

⁸⁴ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 189, l. 7.

⁸⁵ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 189, l. 127.

⁸⁶ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 12, l. 139.

the family, even though they continued to perceive it as a harbinger of old ideas and a source of corruption for the youth. Some individuals interpreted the call for greater concern for *vospitanie* to mean that families could exercise greater autonomy from the state. Parents could be trusted to raise their children properly without the state intervening. For them, the family's role in raising children was irreplaceable and the moral issues plaguing society could be remedied by strengthening the family unit.

Other Soviet subjects' suggestions promoted a strong Soviet family separate from the state. As Raleigh showed, for many people a strong separate family included grandparents. The multi-generational household was the standard for many Soviet subjects. Working women were unable to devote the long hours needed to finding food and goods in the Soviet Union's scarce consumer culture. As a result, grandmothers assumed a respected place in the Soviet household. They were able to tend to the children and stand in store lines while the mother and father were at work. V. E. Vinogradov, A. Vinov, and eleven other individuals wanted to expand the tenet on *vospitanie* to read, "Mutual love and respect in the family, caring for *elderly parents* and raising children."⁸⁷ A group from the Kirov region included the following comment in a list of suggestions forwarded to the Party: "concern for the *vospitanie* of children and elderly parents."⁸⁸ Both suggestions emphasized that grandparents should remain part of the Soviet family. They were attacking the issue of abandonment, in which Soviet subjects refused to care for their parents or children. Grandparents were part of the family unit and, as such, these individuals felt that a call for mutual respect in the family and concern for *vospitanie* served as a signal for all Soviet subjects to incorporate

⁸⁷ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 27, l. 68.

⁸⁸ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 31, l. 108.

grandparents into their own families and care for them. While other individuals attacked the presence of grandparents in Soviet families, in the opinion of these individuals the ideal Soviet man or woman did not cast off elderly parents, who were supposedly *backwards* and corrupting influences, but cared for them and welcomed them into their families.

A major obstacle to this strong, nuclear family, however, was the prevalence of single mothers, challenging the Party's ideal of the two-parent household. In 1961, the existing family law only designated paternity for children born of legally married parents. Dating back to 1944, this law encouraged men and women to marry, while also allowing men to engage in extra-marital affairs without the risk of being forced to provide monetary child support. Women were no longer able to seek monetary support through the court system. Furthermore, even if men wanted to acknowledge and support children born out of wedlock, there was no legally binding route available to them. In an effort to increase birthrates and strengthen the institution of marriage, Soviet authorities had created an opportunity for discrimination against such children.⁸⁹

Suggestions for the "Moral Code" show that some people perceived the family law as morally wrong. Single mothers worked long hours, struggled to support their families, and had little time left to devote to raising their children. Helene Carlback's work on family law in the Khrushchev era demonstrates the widespread concern regarding single mothers and the idea of the promiscuous man. With growing urbanization, high mobility, and a skewed sex ratio, Soviet men were increasingly having multiple families. Women felt that they had been deceived by these men and then

⁸⁹ Helene Carlback, "Lone Mothers and Fatherless Children: Public Discourse on Marriage and Family Law," in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev* ed. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 88.

abandoned, forced to raise the children on their own. It was not only women who suffered as a result of these men. Fatherless children were stigmatized by society. Some pedagogues even worried that these children would be stunted morally.⁹⁰ The commentary on the "Moral Code" shows that individuals felt this phenomenon was having dire consequences for Soviet society.

In regards to this, one man, identified as Bykov, suggested "The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism needs to include the words 'strongly condemns all those who leave the family, refuse to raise children.'"⁹¹ Bykov went beyond simply calling for individuals to be better parents. He wanted to punish anyone who refused to take responsibility for his or her family, especially the promiscuous man. Ideally, state institutions would be able to compensate for the lack of a parent by caring for the children while the mother or father was at work. Bykov, however, felt these children would still be at a disadvantage throughout their lives. Children lacking two parents, according to Bykov, would be deprived of attention, affection, and even monetary support. Parents who neglected family duties went against Communist morality by failing to show "concern for the *vospitanie* of children." Bykov argued that parents had a role in raising their children that the state could not fulfill or replace.

Similarly, K. V. Ivanova of Izhevsk was also morally opposed to individuals refusing to support their families. She hoped to add to the "Moral Code" a sentence stressing that, "a Party member should be morally steadfast in life and serve as a good example of personal Communist relations in the family, strengthening the family unit of Communist society in every possible way, and regarding those who disregard the fate of

⁹⁰ Ibid., 92-93.

⁹¹ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 69, l. 17.

their own children or refuse to pay child support as incompatible [*nesovmestimym*] with the ranks of Party members."⁹² Ivanova's suggestion went beyond Bykov's chastisement of those who left their families. She accused Party members of ignoring the existence of these *child evaders* and, as a result, failing to show the proper concern for the family and *vospitanie*.

Both suggestions show the strong desire to strengthen the Soviet family as a separate, irreplaceable unit, located in a two-parent home. Unlike the Party, these individuals did not want to substitute parental influence with that of the state and social institutions. Instead, people should work to defend the idea of a nuclear family. Fathers should be forced to take responsibility for their families because a two-parent household was ideal for raising children. Similarly, Soviet subjects needed to value grandparents because the multi-generational household created the best environment for obtaining goods, caring for children, and maintaining the home. The individuals promoting these suggestions hoped to create a future society in which *vospitanie* would be liberalized, granting the family small measures of freedom from the state.

Intervening in the Family

While the suggestions above discussed the value of the family in matters of *vospitanie*, other individuals stressed the need for more state control and intervention to ensure the proper upbringing of the future Communist society. In some extreme cases, individuals wanted to deny the family any involvement in a child's *vospitanie*. P. I. Grebenok went so far as to ask that matters of *vospitanie* be entrusted solely to the state.⁹³ Similarly, V. I. Lisen of Makeevka, a coal mining and industrial center near the Black

⁹² RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 69, ll. 111-112.

⁹³ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 239, l. 43.

Sea, called for children to be raised by social institutions, such as boarding schools or nurseries, not by families.⁹⁴ Their suggestions imply a desire to return to the family policies of the 1920s, when leaders believed that children could be best raised in social institutions. These sites of *vospitanie*, such as boarding schools and kindergartens, would save the future generations from the influences of children's *backward* families.

Elena Valina, a journalist, explained just how corrupting the influence of a *backward* mother could be in the absence of any state intervention. The mother in Valina's article preferred reading in the monastery to working on the collective farm or caring for her child. Despite the suggestions of the other collective farm workers, the woman not only refused to send her child to a boarding school, but also took the child with her to the monastery to read the Bible.⁹⁵ The mother was preventing her child from becoming a good, moral Communist. Similar to the actors in Bittner's study of Moscow's Arbat region, Grebenok, Lisen, and Valina interpreted the messages of de-Stalinization as a call to return to NEP-era policies. Stalin had promoted the role of mothers in child-rearing, but this group of individuals believed that by eliminating parental influence on children, society could better shape individuals into the future builders of Communism.

These individuals made their comments in light of Khrushchev's call for the increased construction of boarding schools in 1956. Khrushchev announced the plan in connection with his general education reform, striving to make the educational system more practical and more connected with the means of production. Proponents of boarding schools argued that these full-time institutions would improve society. In their

⁹⁴ RGANI, f. I, op. 4, d. 27, l. 64.

⁹⁵ Elena Valina. "O 'sviatosti' i tuneiadstve." *Rabotnitsa*, no. 7 (July 1961): 28.

opinion, many parents lacked an adequate Communist upbringing and, as a result, could not raise their children properly. Boarding schools would also serve as a leveling device for students coming from families of different educational backgrounds. Finally, advocates stressed the value of state institutions in efforts to instill a collectivist mentality in the youth. Nuclear families typically had few children and, due to chronic shortages and the time-consuming nature of women's domestic responsibilities, these children generally were not close in age. State institutions would train children to work together with their classmates, teaching skills that would be of great use later when operating in their professional collectives.⁹⁶ These concerns became even more pressing in light of the moral panic seizing society. Petty hooliganism and drunkenness appeared to be on the rise. Kelly notes that the Khrushchev period featured a return of the idea that crime was the result of poor *vospitanie*. Boarding schools ensured that children would be taken off the street and given proper Communist *vospitanie*.⁹⁷ These men wanted complete state control over matters of *vospitanie* and felt that limiting the family's influence on *vospitanie* would create better Soviet citizens.

Despite the strong hope that boarding schools would become the state's solution to issues of *vospitanie*, school construction failed to meet state expectations. In 1960, only 600,000 boarding schools had been completed in the Soviet Union. Initially, the plans had called for 1,000,000 boarding schools. Provisions in the boarding schools were scarce. Food was monotonous and students were typically given one set of clothes.

⁹⁶ Urie Brofenbrenner "The Changing Soviet Family," in *The Role and Status of Women in the Soviet Union*, ed. David Brown (New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 1968), 109.

⁹⁷ Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 273.

Children were given one coat every four years and two pairs of tights every three years.⁹⁸ By 1962, only 400,000 pupils had enrolled in boarding schools in Soviet Russia.⁹⁹ Slow construction, limited resources, and higher enrollment fees prevented boarding schools from taking control of children's *vospitanie*.

The Party believed that building more kindergartens and nurseries would allow mothers and fathers more time to work while still ensuring that their children received a proper education. The committee members charged with compiling the draft of the Party program remarked on 8 February 1961, "We need to raise the issue of combining boarding schools with single-shift schools with extended days, and to link this issue with the problem of the public education of the younger generation and the strengthening of the family and its role in children's *vospitanie* in the higher forms of relationships between parents and their children."¹⁰⁰ Their remarks suggest a balanced approach to the family. Under no circumstances did they want to destroy the family or completely remove parents' influence, as Grebenok, Lisen, and Valina had proposed. By combining parental influence with the state's institutions, the committee felt children would gain a better overall upbringing and grow into stronger Communists. Another individual, P. V. Kuznetsov, agreed that the family was part of *vospitanie*, suggesting to the Party that they "strengthen the sentence regarding the responsibility of Communists for the condition of the family."¹⁰¹ His suggestion echoed the committee's goal of granting responsibility for *vospitanie* to state institutions, parents, and Communist society as a whole.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 263-264.

⁹⁹ Mervyn Matthews, *Education in the Soviet Union: Politics and Institutions since Stalin* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 13.

¹⁰⁰ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 197, l. 3.

¹⁰¹ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 239, l. 35.

While many individuals accepted the role of parents in children's *vospitanie*, some were not pleased with the continued presence of grandparents in the Soviet household. Chmukov, a man from the Tambov Party committee, was horrified that the future builders of Communism were being raised by supposedly *backwards*, or uneducated and uncultured, grandmothers. He felt more state intervention would save these children and give working mothers an alternative to the *baba*. Chmukov wrote in response to the limited supply of public nurseries and kindergartens, "In the absence of these conditions, our working mothers are forced to give their children to random grandmothers, who to our misfortune, disagree with us on the issue of raising children. And occasionally, these children, who were placed in the care of grandmothers, grow up with different manners and desires."¹⁰² Despite Chmukov's disapproval, the limited number of childcare centers and the need of families to have a grandmother, an individual capable of standing in lines throughout the day searching for goods and watching the child, ensured that grandmothers would continue to function as an essential part of the Soviet family.

Childcare centers may have been limited, but day schools guaranteed that children would come into contact with educated, cultured, and Communist agents of *vospitanie*, especially due to their connection with the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations. Both organizations were closely allied with the aims of the Party. Following the publication of the program draft, authorities called on the leaders of both organizations to spread the tenets of Communist morality. At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Komsomol organization, Secretary Sergei Pavlov called for better training of Komsomol members still in the school system, saying, "The main objective of the Komsomol school groups is

¹⁰² RGASPI, f. 586, op. 15, d. 82, l. 93.

to struggle for a profound knowledge, for the education of students in the spirit of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism.”¹⁰³ These suggestions demonstrate the close connections between Party and social organizations. Membership in the Komsomol was not just an after-school or summer activity. Both organizations actively sought to shape their members into good, strong Communists. As the tenet decreed, everyone should show concern for the *vospitanie* of others. The dominant role of the Party and the Komsomol in society meant that members were not only to give lectures on proper morality, but also to serve as role models and intervene to better others’ *vospitanie*.¹⁰⁴

While the Komsomol organization felt it should play an active role in children’s *vospitanie*, some individuals also believed that a parent’s influence on his or her child was irreplaceable. At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, Pavlov argued against *vospitanie* in boarding schools. He felt that by eliminating family and social influences, children were not learning as much about the world around them or how they should behave.¹⁰⁵ The Party merely supplied one element of a proper *vospitanie*. In order to show a proper concern for others’ *vospitanie*, Pavlov suggested combining the efforts of the Party and Komsomol organization with those of teachers, parents, and neighbors. He felt that without the influences of these groups, children in boarding schools would feel isolated from the world and, later in life, would be unable to relate to their fellow Communists. Both Pavlov and the proponents of boarding schools wanted to provide the best *vospitanie* possible for the future generation. However, Pavlov’s strong belief in the role of society and the family in an individual’s *vospitanie*

¹⁰³ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 2, d. 422, l. 51.

¹⁰⁴ Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev’s Russia*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 2, d. 422, l. 55.

led him to argue against the invasive and extreme approach of boarding schools in favor of a more balanced approach.

A published story about a schoolboy named Tolya serves as another example of the benefits of a balanced approach to *vospitanie*. While a parent's influence was needed, groups such as the parents' committee existed to ensure that parents provided the best *vospitanie* possible. Tolya's account examines the merits of the collective mentality in the parents' committees. Tolya was performing poorly in school, arriving in a messy uniform, and consistently failing his lessons. His teacher discovered that all of these issues were due to the boy's new stepmother. The author of the article stressed that the stepmother was decidedly against Tolya for some reason. She succeeded in convincing the father to distance himself from his son, resulting in the family's failure to care for the boy and raise him properly. Throughout the article, the author repeatedly placed the blame on the stepmother for failing to care for Tolya properly, while no discussion took place as to why the father willingly agreed to forsake his own son. In the teacher's opinion, women were the agents of *vospitanie*, not men. Her attitude toward the stepmother illustrates the strong gender divisions in matters of *vospitanie*. Tolya's teacher felt she needed to intervene to address Tolya's basic needs and took the issue directly to the parent's committee.¹⁰⁶

After a lengthy meeting, another family volunteered to take the boy in and care for him. The article does not indicate whether or not the state compensated this family in any way for their charity, which resembled a form of foster care. Kelly's analysis of childhood in Soviet Russia indicates that increases in living standards during the

¹⁰⁶ "Roditel'skaia obshchestvennost' – bol'shaia tvorcheskaia sila," *Sem'ia i shkola*, no. 8 (August 1961): 4-5.

Khrushchev period allowed more families to take in foster children. Kelly is clear to note, though, that fosterers took in children out of philanthropic interests, not as a source of extra income. It was only by the 1980s that the state gave fosterers financial support comparable to the amount spent on children in state institutions.¹⁰⁷ It is unclear, then, why families in the Khrushchev era began to foster children. The film *Sud'ba cheloveka* implies that it is connected with the horrors of World War II.¹⁰⁸ Based on a popular novel by Mikhail Sholokov, the film features a soldier whose life has been devastated by the war. In the final scene, as the soldier is reflecting on the devastation he has witnessed, he finds a young war orphan on the side of the road. The two then bond over their mutual feelings of loss, and the soldier adopts the boy. His story became symbolic of many people in post-war Soviet Russia. The war devastated families, orphaning children while others saw their children die from starvation or bombardment. Adopting or fostering a child allowed individuals to heal after the war and also help children who had lost everything. Whatever this particular family's personal motivations for fostering Tolya, the fact that they took responsibility for the boy in light of the chronic shortages in food and clothing in Soviet Russia demonstrates their personal dedication to collective *vospitanie*.

Once in his new home, Tolya began to do well in school. He came to class every day clean and well dressed. Furthermore, he was attentive in classes and quickly caught up with his fellow classmates. The author of the article called these committees a new form of family, one that was best prepared to intervene in families' lives and better raise

¹⁰⁷ Kelly, *Children's World*, 269.

¹⁰⁸ *Sud'ba cheloveka*, DVD. Directed by Sergei Bondarchuk (1959; Moscow, Ruscico, 2000).

the “new man of Communist society.”¹⁰⁹ A bad family could hold an individual back from reaching his true potential, a concern shared by advocates of the increased construction and utilization of boarding schools. By granting power to this collective, however, the parents’ committee was able to show their concern for the greatest good for society and placed Tolya in a proper home.

The goal of this teacher to provide her students with good influences both at home and in school was shared by others in the educational system. V. Grechishkina, one of *Sem’ia i shkola*’s journalists, stressed the need for parents to be good examples for their children. Schools could not hope to work against poor influences at home, especially if parents continued to lie, drink, or otherwise jeopardize the success of Communist morality.¹¹⁰ *Sem’ia i shkola* also published a letter written by a teacher asking parents to become more active in the school system. She hoped that her efforts would help her students’ parents become better role models. In her letter, she invited the parents to plan trips to local museums, organize tours of their workplaces, teach the girls to bake or prepare a meal, or teach the boys about simple electrical work. The teacher informed *Sem’ia i shkola* that roughly 40% of these parents offered to help her class, most donating their Sundays for excursions or discussions of their personal wartime participation. After a number of weeks, the children remarked to the teacher how thankful they were that their parents had volunteered their time. The children were happy that each week brought something new and exciting, but the teacher was more pleased knowing that her

¹⁰⁹ “Roditel’skaia obshchestvennost’ – bol’shaia tvorcheskaja sila,” *Sem’ia i shkola*, 5.

¹¹⁰ V. Grechishkina, “Byt’ chestnym i pravdivym,” *Sem’ia i shkola*, no. 7 (July 1961): 15.

actions had helped to bring parents closer to their children, bettering the level of *vospitanie* in the home.¹¹¹

Despite the strong presence of Pioneer and Komsomol groups in the schools, the teacher discussed above felt that bettering the moral development of her students required improving their relationships with their parents. By asking parents to volunteer, she ensured that her students would spend a day with their parents, providing a good role model, who would teach them about their Communist past, the collectives at the various factories in their town, and also general life skills. Similar to the story of the boy Tolya, this teacher promoted an interventionist interpretation of *vospitanie*. While the state and parents could not properly raise children without each other, this teacher's role as an educator and agent of *vospitanie* granted her the authority to intervene in family relations. The accounts of both teachers underline the entangled nature of public and private life in the Soviet Union. Public debate on *vospitanie* opened the family up to criticism and intrusion. The task of raising the builders of Communism was so vital that educators and pedagogues needed to assist parents on properly raising their children.

The parents' committee, which played a prominent role in Tolya's story, was designed to be an open space, where people could help each other raise better families. *Sem'ia i shkola* believed that people needed to utilize this resource better. Some parents, however, were afraid to discuss their family's faults. One mother, in particular, was too ashamed to ask for help in stopping her son's chronic drunkenness.¹¹² Drunkenness was a widespread problem. An individual from the Kaluga Party organization, named Laskina, cited the example of Kupriianov, a twenty-three year old man. Kupriianov's

¹¹¹ O. Tret'iakova, "My – odna družnaia sem'ia," *Sem'ia i shkola*, no. 8 (August 1961): 34-35.

¹¹² "Stroitel'stvo kommunizma i sem'ia," *Sem'ia i shkola*, no. 6 (June 1961): 7.

family had allowed him to associate with *stilyagi* and drink too much. Had the family asked for help, Laskina argued that it might have been possible to correct the young man's behavior. Since they preferred to keep their problems to themselves, however, Kupriianov slowly began to arrive late to work and eventually stopped showing up entirely.¹¹³ Both accounts served as cautionary tales against raising children without the help of the parents' committee.

These groups worked according to the principle of the collective. Parents met to discuss issues they were having in their own families and also spread material on proper parenting techniques. These suggestions stemmed from the emphasis the authors of the "Moral Code" placed on the collective's role in the building of Communism. Members of a parents' committee in the Moscow region wanted the code to dictate that parents should become active in their children's school.¹¹⁴ Participation in these organizations was voluntary. Regardless, the members of the Moscow organization felt so strongly that these groups played a crucial role in improving the *vospitanie* of children that they wanted participation included in the new moral code. In their opinion, a moral Communist and active participant in the building of Communism would value the collective and work to apply the principles of the collective to all aspects of life.

Conclusion

These suggestions have shown that ideas varied immensely on exactly how to show concern for *vospitanie*. Reacting to the ambiguous messages from the state and seizing the opportunity to voice their opinions, individuals in society seized the Party's invitation for public participation and submitted a broad range of suggestions for

¹¹³ RGASPI, f. 556, op. 15, d. 82, l. 66.

¹¹⁴ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 31, l. 28.

remedying the Soviet family. In their suggestions, though, was also a discussion of what constituted the Soviet family. For men such as Grebenok, the family was outdated and needed to be replaced by state institutions such as boarding schools and kindergartens. Other individuals, such as Bykov and Ivanova, wanted to strengthen the nuclear family by promoting two-parent households. All of these diverse and at times contradictory suggestions drew upon the same ambiguous tenet from the "Moral Code" to show "concern for the *vospitanie* of children" and on the renewed urgency in building a Communist society.

The commentary surrounding the "Moral Code" further supports the illiberal interpretation of this period. Some segments of society used the opportunity for public participation to argue against the reforms of the Thaw era. In an otherwise authoritarian state, the discussion of the "Moral Code" allowed people to voice their frustration with the state of Soviet society and the current direction of the state. Individuals, such as those mentioned above, were shocked by the changes taking place in parenting and marriages. It appeared that the family was collapsing. People wanted to address this crisis, but their personal ideas of the family shaped their varying solutions and prevented any unanimous agreement. The notion of "family" meant different things to different people, whether arguing for more or less state involvement in the *vospitanie* of children. While most suggestions argued for a balanced approach to *vospitanie*, appreciating the benefits of both parental influence and state intervention, other suggestions valued eliminating parental influence entirely for complete state control of *vospitanie*. Instead of a period of ambitious, liberalizing reforms, the commentary surrounding the tenet on *vospitanie* illustrates a period in which a large segment of society called for an increase in control of

family life. The period of public commentary and discussion allowed individuals from all levels of Soviet society to bring domestic and family matters into the public discourse, granting each of them the authority to intervene in the personal lives of others.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN'S WORK

This chapter addresses the public commentary surrounding women's role in the workplace. It will first discuss three tenets of the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" that dealt with an individual's relation to work. Understanding the conditions plaguing Soviet industry will demonstrate the pressing concerns for improving relations between workers, as well as the need to increase the efficiency of Soviet industry. The bulk of the chapter will discuss suggestions from Party members and ordinary Soviet individuals. Similar to the discussions of *vospitanie*, the variety of opinions surrounding the "Moral Code" also extended into views on women's work. Many individuals proposed suggestions for increasing women's involvement in society, improving women's work training, and monitoring men's behavior toward their female comrades. This chapter will show that the ambiguous and participatory nature of the Thaw initiated a public discussion of women's role in the workforce, allowing some individuals to argue that women should have a smaller public presence and to promote more repressive policies than normally associated with the Thaw. These individuals believed women had important, valuable work to do in the home and if the state refused to support women's domestic work financially, it should at least grant them time to fulfill their role in the household.

The State of Soviet Industry

Chronic shortages plagued Soviet industry. Supplies consistently arrived late to factories, leading to a recurring cycle of low production at the beginning of the month and frantic overtime at the end of the month in an attempt to fulfill the state's quota.

Furthermore, machines often broke down due to their poor construction, inexperienced operators, and overwork. The rushed nature of Soviet industry also resulted in the spotty standardization of replacement parts. Factory machinists spent a considerable amount of their work day refashioning parts from other factories in order to keep their own machines running, leading to even more wasted time. All of this led to resentment on the part of the workers. They could not control their work environment, use collective action to increase their wages, or stop the chronic end-of-the-month storming. As a result, as Donald Filtzer argues, many workers purposely arrived late to work, limited their productivity, and left early for breaks.¹¹⁵ Workers' frustrations continued to weaken the Soviet Union's industrial output, making attempts to forge more harmonious work relationships even more crucial.

In addition to the general unease about working conditions, women in particular were becoming increasingly frustrated at their lack of free time. In 1959, as the code's authors were compiling early versions of the Party program, the average Soviet subject worked five to six eight-hour shifts per week. In addition to their time spent at work, however, Soviet women also devoted a large amount of their day to domestic work. The ideal mother took care of the shopping, preparing meals, cleaning the home, and tending to the children. The average Soviet working woman spent anywhere from three and a half to five and a half hours each day doing domestic work, as the domestic burden fell almost exclusively on women.¹¹⁶ Despite state promotion of public services aimed at

¹¹⁵ Donald A. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations, 1953-1964* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 141.

¹¹⁶ Filtzer notes that the working women of these time studies were not only industrial workers, but also clerical workers, shop girls, and workers in other forms of urban employment. Also, the studies focused on middle-aged women. They did not include elderly women, who

lessening women's work in the home, the strongly patriarchal nature of Russian culture emphasized a woman's role as domestic caretaker and mother. Men relaxed or drank with friends in their free time, leaving women with few other options to ease their burden. Women continued to work their shifts at the factory only to return home and spend hours tending to the household.

Filtzer argues that Soviet women's work was a burden that encompassed all aspects of their life. Men saw women's subordinate status in the home and transferred it to the workplace.¹¹⁷ Historians have long noted that Soviet women were kept in low-skill, low-paying jobs.¹¹⁸ As a result, women dominated the textiles industry, production of consumer goods, and monotonous work, such as brick making. Most women began their careers in these areas. However, women's responsibilities at home often prevented them from obtaining any extra training. Evening and correspondence courses took time that these women needed to spend shopping, cleaning, and caring for their children. Lynne Atwood studies accounts of Soviet women who entered traditionally male-dominated fields, such as welders, engineers, pilots, and crane operators. Such positions required a certain degree of skill and were also perceived as dangerous. Despite depicting women in male-dominated occupations, these published accounts still stressed

would spend on average more time than working women on domestic chores because they were on pension, nor does it include young girls, busy with studies or incapable of helping with some household tasks. The studies were intended to focus on the dynamics between men and women in a shared household. (Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 194-206)

¹¹⁷ Donald Filtzer, "Women Workers in the Khrushchev Era" in *Women in the Khrushchev Era* ed. by M. Ilic, S. E. Reid, L. Attwood (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 29.

¹¹⁸ For more information on women in Soviet industry see: Wendy Goldman, *Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Melanie Ilic, "Biding Their Time: Women Workers and the Regulation of Hours of Employment in the 1920s," in *Gender in Russian History and Culture, 1880-1990* ed. L. Edmondson (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 139-157; Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

the gender-divided nature of Soviet industry. The accounts mentioned the women's frail bodies, small stature, fear of machines, and reliance on male co-workers for success.¹¹⁹ These accounts were attempting to naturalize gender discrimination by showing women as biologically weaker than men. If women were in fact weaker, then men needed to protect and shield them from dangerous jobs, situations, or environments. This form of logic served only to further entrench patriarchal and paternal attitudes in Soviet and Russian society. Atwood's argument supports previous interpretations of women's restricted role in Soviet industry, but she also demonstrates the affect of gender roles on women's efforts to advance in their careers.

The state's rationale for differentiating between men and women in certain industries was not simply a matter of gender ideals but originated with the belief that some jobs were hazardous to a woman's health. Industrial occupations could be dangerous for all workers due to the repetitive strain of heavy lifting, smoke, chemicals, and risk of accidents. Officials and common individuals alike, however, expressed concern only for women's health. Due to their supposedly weak and frail nature, women needed to be protected and sheltered from these hazards. Regardless, some women opted for these more dangerous positions because they resulted in early retirement and an added pension.¹²⁰ The state also took steps to limit the work strain on pregnant women in particular. Expectant mothers could not be forced to work a night shift or on holidays. They were also guaranteed three months of pay during their four-month maternity leave,

¹¹⁹ Lynne Atwood, "Celebrating the 'Frail-Figured Welder': Gender Confusion in Women's Magazines of the Khrushchev Era," *Slavonica* 8, no. 2 (November 2002): 162-163.

¹²⁰ Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 191.

during which their position would be held for them.¹²¹ The workforce was gendered and, whether for valid health concerns or gendered stereotypes, women's presence in the workplace became a hotly debated issue in the discussion surrounding the "Moral Code."

Commentary on Women's Labor

Three tenets of the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" addressed an individual's work and relations with others. One tenet praised "collectivism and comradely mutual assistance: one for all and all for one." The code also valued "humane relations and mutual respect between people: man to man – friend, comrade, and brother."¹²² By focusing on men, brothers, and the masculine form of friend [*drug*], the authors of this tenet were operating within the strong patriarchal nature of Russian culture. Besides the word "comrade," which can apply to either gender, the other words of this tenet specifically excluded women. The gendered structure of the Russian language led the authors of the "Moral Code" to reinforce patriarchal and paternal attitudes subconsciously, while also forcing women to structure their suggestions for greater work equality in this patriarchal framework. Finally, the code called for "Conscientious work for the good of society: he who does not work, does not eat" [*kto ne rabotaet, tot ne est*].¹²³ These tenets contained politically charged language. The phrase, "he who does not work, does not eat," in particular, was popular worldwide. As one of the most popular Soviet propaganda slogans, it was featured on many posters as well as a collection of porcelain plates in the early 1920s. Lenin focused on the phrase in an article

¹²¹ Z. Barbarash, "Trudovye l'goty zhenshchinam-pabotnitsam i sluzhashchim," *Sotsialisticheskii trud*, no. 11 (November 1961): 139-142.

¹²² "Proekt programmy kommunisticheskoi partii sovetskogo soiuza," *Kommunist*, 69.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

on famines, calling it a basic principle of socialism.¹²⁴ The phrase continued to serve as a motto for Soviet life through the late Soviet period. All of these tenets functioned as ideals or grand aims toward which Soviet subjects should aspire – creating a more harmonious, efficient, and productive Soviet society and workforce.

The “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism,” as part of the Soviet Union’s self identity as a worker’s society, placed such a high value on people’s relation to work that another tenet specifically vilified anyone found guilty of the crime of parasitism. As the tenets above indicate, individuals were not supposed to work simply for their own benefit, but rather for the good of society and the improvement of the work experience of those around them. *Parasitism* had been a source of concern under Lenin and Stalin; but, in the early 1950s, officials unleashed a new anti-parasite campaign. They defined a parasite as someone who either only held a job for appearances while living off the income from a different profession – such as the poet Joseph Brodsky – or a person who carried out no form of meaningful work and begged for money.¹²⁵ The growing number of students refusing to find jobs after graduation also perplexed individuals in society.¹²⁶ These young adults were supposed to be the builders of Communism, yet they refused to provide any form of productive labor. Reacting to these concerns, the tenets of the “Moral Code” stressed the virtues of hard work and work for the good of society, without which Soviet society could not hope to achieve Communism.

Throughout the Party’s month-long call for suggestions on the “Moral Code” and the new Party program, individuals across Soviet Russia submitted their opinions on how

¹²⁴ V.I. Lenin, “O golode: pis’mo k rabochim Petrograda” *Pravda*, May 24, 1918.

¹²⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Social Parasites: How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1/2 (January-June 2006): 382.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

best to forge more harmonious relations at work. Similar to the discussions of *vospitanie*, the vague wording of these tenets allowed them to apply to a greater portion of society but also created a window through which people could argue for their own ideas.

Focusing on the relations between men and women in the workplace, some individuals used the period of public participation to argue for different safety regulations, changes in the work schedule, or even different work roles for men and women. Their comments were part of a much larger effort to improve Soviet society. As this thesis will continue to demonstrate, however, not everyone believed that improving society meant continuing the same policies of increasing women's role in the workplace.

The commentary surrounding the code's tenets on work, collectivism, and mutual respect questioned the extent to which women should be involved in the workforce.

Messages from the Party promoted the full involvement of women in society and the workforce, while also praising motherhood and celebrating women with large families.

As a result, the public's suggestions mirrored both official messages. Some individuals argued for women to have greater access to jobs, receive vocational education, and be treated with respect during work. Others wanted to return to a more pro-natalist stance.

They argued that mothers should not have to work as long as men. Domestic chores and childrearing, in their opinions, were necessary to fulfill the program's goals, as the

builders of Communism needed to be raised in good households by caring parents. Just because some women worked fewer hours at the factory did not mean that they were

doing any less work for the Communist cause. As shown with the commentary on

vospitanie, these suggestions promoted intervening in women's lives and keeping women in the home, demonstrating the presence of illiberal currents operating alongside the

Thaw in Soviet Russia. Amid the chaotic changes of de-Stalinization, some individuals in society abandoned the goal of women's liberation and placed a greater value on women's work in the home.

Efforts to promote women's domesticity were a reaction to the unobtainable ideals to which Soviet women were held. The ideal woman was simultaneously a worker, mother, and cultured woman. There were simply not enough hours in a day to accomplish all of those tasks, especially with the large amount of time women would need to devote to scavenging for goods to prepare meals for their families while attending lectures or concerts in the evenings. Few women could match this ideal. Nina Khrushcheva, Khrushchev's wife, for example, did not work. While she had been employed at a Moscow electric lamp factory in the early 1930s, she quit her job following the birth of her son, Sergei, in 1935. After teaching an occasional course on Party history or English for a few years, Khrushcheva quit working entirely.¹²⁷ Even for the wife of the General Secretary, similar to many other Party wives, any attempt to become the ideal Soviet woman was filled with contradiction and ambiguity.

These contradictory messages are visible in the Party's commentary on the "Moral Code." Nikita Khrushchev wrote in April 1961 that every individual should work in order to be a part of society, and also teach others how to relate to work in a better way.¹²⁸ Active participation in Soviet society was inextricably linked with labor. However, during the early months of 1961, authors of the moral code began including the idea of working according to one's abilities. One draft called for "Hard work for the

¹²⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 112-113.

¹²⁸ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 201, l. 30.

benefit of society from each according to his contribution.”¹²⁹ It was shortly thereafter changed to “Conscientious labor for the good of society: from each according to his abilities.”¹³⁰ These ideas continued to stress the strong relationship between society and labor but also admitted that not everyone was capable of performing the same work. Elderly men and women could not be expected to perform the same tasks as a twenty year old man. Similarly, a handicapped individual would be unable to complete certain assignments. Stipulating that each person should work according to his own ability created a socially acceptable space for individuals who could not work but were still supported by the state. However, it also opened an area of contradiction that would be used to promote ideas supporting mothers.

While promoting work, the program’s authors also debated the duty of the state to mothers of large families. In a version of the draft from 1958, the authors commented “We need to establish conditions under which mothers of large families will be able to focus all of their attention on their children’s upbringing. For women with one to two children, set a shorter working day without a reduction in pay.”¹³¹ A year later, the same authors amended the provision to specify that allowing mothers of large families to focus so much attention on their children was “an important public matter.”¹³² These individuals did not differentiate between a mother of one child and a mother of four children. In both cases, they argued that mothers should be given time off from work without any reduction in pay, creating a form of compensation for the expense of raising children.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 189, l. 7.

¹³¹ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 187, l. 38.

¹³² RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 187, l. 74.

Promoting Equal Treatment

The opinions discussed above demonstrate that even within the Party, there was no cohesive opinion on the proper role of women in the workforce. Similarly, throughout the month-long public discussion of the Party program and the "Moral Code," no singular opinion emerged from the public suggestions. Like the authors of the program and the morality code, individuals based their opinions of women's role in the workplace on the ideas of "all for one, one for all," "work for the good of society," and "mutual respect between comrades." These tenets allowed people to discuss women's liberation from the household, the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace, and the need to balance women's responsibilities at home and at work.

S. G. Berezovskaia and O. Khvalebnova, both of Moscow, submitted their suggestions in favor of full social involvement of women. They believed that the code "should completely eliminate the underestimation of women's competencies and abilities [...] Women should be involved in all areas of the economy, culture, and science with the exception of those that are harmful to a mother's health."¹³³ Their opinion was similar to that expressed by the program's authors. Women should be incorporated into the workforce. However, as the moral tenet stated, each woman would work according to her physical abilities and only in areas that would not be dangerous to her health. Berezovskaia and Khvalebnova were echoing the excuses of women's frailty and need for patriarchal control. While pushing for greater social equality between men and women, they continued to operate within the patriarchal structures of Russian society.

The suggestions of Berezovskaia and Khvalebnova stem from the early Bolshevik idea of liberating women from domestic *slavery*. Some of the articles published in thick

¹³³ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 235, l. 25.

journals on the draft of the Party program took a much stronger stance on women's liberation. They praised women's roles in the revolution, commenting, "Without women there would not have been a revolution."¹³⁴ The journalist, Elena Kononenka, continued by praising the code's authors for devoting attention to women's liberation, reaffirming ideas of utopianism from the NEP era. "It is no coincidence that the draft of our Party's program so strongly orders the elimination of the remnants of women's unequal status in the home for increasingly active and creative participation in social work and activities."¹³⁵ Kononenka was clear that women should be freed of their added responsibilities in the home and with child rearing. In her opinion, having a child should not force a woman to give up her career. She was relieved to see that the program's authors had addressed this in their goals for the future Communist society. Another article from *Rabotnitsa* commended the program for its attention to women's issues, specifically the commitment to promoting and improving public services to relieve women's responsibility for domestic chores. "The path is clear: society should take these tasks from women."¹³⁶ Both articles stressed the liberation of women with the help of the Party and public services, hoping that the successful building of Communism would finally bring the full involvement of women in society.

Despite the emphasis these women placed on public services, the level of success for these services in the Khrushchev era is highly debatable. Donald Filtzer's study of how women workers spent their time finds that the use of public services occupied only 5% of the total time spent on household chores.¹³⁷ Regardless, the Soviet press

¹³⁴ Elena Kononenka "Kommunism – eto schast'e!" *Rabotnitsa*, no. 8 (August 1961): 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁶ "I razumom i serdtsem," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 10 (October 1961): 2.

¹³⁷ Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 201.

applauded the state's efforts to improve public services. Members of the program committee argued that creating various types of children's homes, summer camps, and cafeterias would improve relations between men and women by freeing women from the home.¹³⁸ Any attempts to free women from domestic work hinged upon the availability of alternative methods of cleaning and food preparation.

An article in *Agitator* described the ways that Communist society would make, and in some cases already had made, women's lives easier: better and cheaper cafeterias, cheaper household appliances, shops for mending clothes and shoes, summer camps for children, care centers for children, boarding schools, free school uniforms, and free school lunches.¹³⁹ The state made efforts to provide these services for women but chronic resource shortages and the continued emphasis on heavy industry and the arms race frequently resulted in the failure of these public services. L. Karpinskii, a Komsomol secretary, supported the efforts to free women from housework. He suggested more cafeterias closer to work sites, which would save women from waking early to prepare breakfast. Providing women with more cleaning machines would also speed up household chores.¹⁴⁰ All of these individuals believed that the building of Communism would create a new life for women, in which "her life is meaningful and comprehensive, not limited to the confines of family interest."¹⁴¹

Unlike the commentary above, largely found in the officially sponsored thick journals, the public suggestions solicited by the Party focused more on relations between men and women at work to achieve equal treatment of the sexes. A group from the Altai

¹³⁸ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 197, l. 18.

¹³⁹ "Dlia blaga sem'i," *Agitator*, no. 9 (September 1961): 21.

¹⁴⁰ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 22, l. 20.

¹⁴¹ "Dlia blaga sem'i," *Agitator*, 20.

region wanted the program to include a provision for the “promotion and social elevation of women, intolerance to manifestations of uncomradely relations and attempts to detract from her dignity and role as an active builder of Communism.”¹⁴² Another individual, named Shirinov, proposed that the Party “add to the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism such items as: a) intolerance for violators of the rules of socialist relations and b) the struggle against manifestations of bourgeois ideology and subservience.”¹⁴³ Both ideas were echoed in a suggestion from T. Iu. Tikhonchuk, also speaking for the social elevation of women, intolerance of improper behavior towards women, and the “intolerance of any attempts to detract from her [a woman’s] dignity and role as an active builder of Communism.”¹⁴⁴ The recurrence of these ideas illustrates their pervasiveness in society and the hopes of these individuals that “comradely mutual assistance” and “humane relations and mutual respect between people” discussed in the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” would improve relations between men and women at work.

A major component of uncomradely relations at work was the common use of the term “*baba*” against women workers. While the term most commonly refers to a grandmother, it is also a derogatory term for women, accusing them of being old, unattractive, lacking any style or culture, and generally being uneducated. Elizabeth A. Wood studies ideas of the *baba* in revolutionary Russia. She argues that *baba* applied to illiterate, *backward* women, who were seen as the opposite of the comrade.¹⁴⁵ An article in *Pravda* from August 1961 criticized the current work relations between men and women. Specifically, it condemned the continuing sexism at work as some men

¹⁴² RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 30, l. 67.

¹⁴³ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 69, l. 16.

¹⁴⁴ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 30, l. 20.

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1.

continued to use the term “*baba*” when referring to their female coworkers and refused to ask them any questions, especially in cases when women were in positions of authority.¹⁴⁶ Including a provision on “uncomradely relations” in the moral code would provide a foundation from which to attack the use of the word “*baba*” against women, allowing women to participate more in the workforce.

Involving women in the workforce, and society in general, required providing women with more education and training. In Soviet Russia, however, training was closely allied with industry and work. A journalist, I. Spiridonov, commented, “the most important means of Communist education is to educate through work.”¹⁴⁷ The Party used the collective to shape individuals into better workers. Similar to the idea of a parents’ collective, a workers’ collective served as a place for workers to share ideas, discuss matters of workers’ ideology, and help new workers become a part of the factory. Journalist O. Morozova extolled the efforts of one collective in reeducating a woman by the name of Liuba V., a supposedly amoral and unfocused mechanic. Thanks to the collective’s efforts, Liuba not only became a better worker, but she also became a devoted mother and daughter.¹⁴⁸ In addition to providing a more hospitable environment for women to work, these individuals argued that supporting women in the collectives would further help them become active builders of Communism.

Elevating the Domestic Sphere

The opinions discussed above have all pushed for greater equality between men and women in the workforce – emphasizing women’s abilities and education as well as

¹⁴⁶ “Zhenshchiny – aktivnye stroiteli kommunisma,” *Pravda*, August 7, 1961.

¹⁴⁷ I. Spiridonov, “Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie trudiashchikhsia – vazhneishaia zadacha partiinoi raboty,” *Pravda*, January 26, 1959.

¹⁴⁸ O. Morozova “Proizvoditel’nost’ truda i vospitanie novogo cheloveka” *Sotsialisticheskii trud*, no. 11 (November 1961): 86.

their right to be active builders of Communism. In contrast to these suggestions, other individuals used the period of public discussion to place more emphasis on women's work in the home. They valued the work that women performed in the home and refused to turn domestic responsibility over to public services. Though varying in their suggested methods, all of the recommendations below valued rolling back some of the established measures aimed at increasing women's public presence in order to return to a more separate domestic sphere.

Much of the commentary argued for partially removing women from the workforce. These individuals wanted to limit the number of hours worked by women. One-hundred-and-forty-seven residents of Gor'kii signed a petition requesting a reduction in women's working days from eight hours to four or six hours. Additionally, they wanted to grant women a one-month break each year, two days off per week, an end to night shifts, and younger retirement ages.¹⁴⁹ Another individual, V. S. Kozlov of Moscow, went as far as to call for a four-hour workday and a 50% reduction in salary.¹⁵⁰ A woman wrote to *Pravda* relating how excited she was to see that the Party program addressed women. Specifically, she was glad to see that women would be spared some time at work in order to spend more time raising their children. Hopefully, she thought, this would ease women's burden.¹⁵¹ These individuals felt that women had valuable duties outside of work that were beneficial to society. As a result, women should be granted time to complete their domestic role and not be required to work shifts as long as men.

¹⁴⁹ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 239, l. 64.

¹⁵⁰ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 235, l. 21.

¹⁵¹ "Kak my vrosli!...", *Pravda*, August 1, 1961.

Another suggestion for showing greater appreciation for women's work involved financially compensating mothers for the time spent raising their children. V. I. Shunkov wanted more discussion of the condition of families under Communism included in the code. He suggested adding a provision on state aid to mothers with multiple children.¹⁵² Similarly, a letter from the Stalingrad region suggested subsidizing the time and resources mothers devoted to raising children until their child reached the age of sixteen. Each mother would receive ten rubles for one child, fifteen rubles for two children, and twenty-five rubles for three or more children.¹⁵³ An unidentified individual from the Cheliabinsk region wanted mothers to be given five rubles per month per child, no matter what the mother's salary or marital status.¹⁵⁴ In both cases, providing benefits to mothers to offset the cost of raising a child acknowledged motherhood as a valuable form of work. Women, as mothers, were providing work for the good of society according to their own abilities. These individuals argued that this labor deserved some form of compensation from the state, whether in terms of a shorter workday or monetary benefits.

The illiberal elements of the Khrushchev era also emerge in public suggestions promoting women's valuable role in the domestic sphere. In her discussion of the Khrushchev kitchen, Reid notes the state's efforts to decrease women's domestic burden through more household cooking and cleaning appliances and the introduction of a more scientific design for the kitchen.¹⁵⁵ As L. Karpinskii suggested above, it was hoped that developments such as cafeterias, laundry centers, and household appliances would lessen the amount of time women needed to spend in the home, allowing them to take a more

¹⁵² RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 239, l. 33.

¹⁵³ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 30, l. 38.

¹⁵⁴ RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 30, l. 50.

¹⁵⁵ Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen," 289-316.

active role in society and the workplace. According to these policies, easing a woman's domestic burden would increase her public presence. Others, however, felt that society needed to return these chores, along with women, to the home.

The following suggestions highlight efforts to lessen the burden of women's domestic chores while also allowing women to retain their presence in the home. While the Soviet Union denied people the right to refuse work, it was possible for individuals to use the call for public participation to petition the state for a reduction in working hours. The Third Party Program promised that under Communism, everyone's work hours would be reduced. Increased efficiency and mechanization would allow factories to complete their quotas in less time. The suggestions submitted during the period of public commentary, however, specifically targeted reducing women's work hours in order to allow women more time to fulfill their domestic duties. By modifying domestic gender roles or introducing more efficient methods for cleaning or preparing meals, individuals hoped to preserve the domestic realm and women's place in it.

Gender roles placed the vast majority of housework on women. Filtzer's analysis of how men and women spent their time in the Khrushchev era demonstrates the strong feminine nature of housework. Adult working women spent over twice as much time on domestic work as men. The women of this study spent on average fifty-seven minutes shopping each day, compared to twenty-two minutes from their male counterparts. Similarly, while men spent only thirteen minutes a day preparing food, for women it was one hour and thirty-eight minutes. When looking at tending to the home and the mending of clothing, the gender dynamics become even more pronounced.¹⁵⁶ The extra time women devoted to the household prevented women from taking advantage of educational

¹⁵⁶ Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization*, 200.

opportunities, attending meetings, or socializing with friends – all of which were activities easily accessible to men. Without assistance from their husbands in preparing the occasional meal or entertaining the children for an afternoon, women were also less likely to achieve higher positions at work or take part in social or Party organizations.

Atwood finds some examples of women forging equal relations with their husbands, typically featuring men helping with domestic work if their wife was busy with work or an exam. She argues, however, that this was often the result of women specifically asking for assistance, while other women passively accepted the full burden of the household. Most articles advocating increased male participation in the home in these thick journals promoted masculine chores, such as taking out the trash or even chopping wood if necessary, not fixing dinner or washing the dishes.¹⁵⁷ Through a more equal division of the domestic chores, women could continue to fulfill their roles as workers but also know that their family was well fed and provided with clean clothing. In light of poorly-supplied public cafeterias and laundry services as well as the challenges of altering gender roles in the domestic sphere, women were left searching for a way to balance their public and familial obligations.

Atwood's argument that some women requested assistance from their husbands is supported by a suggestion from N. Pazaeva and V. Belova. They wrote to the Party and suggested that the Party should "include in the moral code an order on the equal work of the husband and wife in the family."¹⁵⁸ These women did not want to entrust their domestic chores to public services. Instead, they felt that husbands should help in the household and share the burden. Like industrial labor, they believed that housework was

¹⁵⁷ Lynne Atwood, "Celebrating the 'Frail-Figured Welder,'" 167-169.

¹⁵⁸ RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 239, l. 46.

also for the good of society. As a result, in the eyes of Pazaeva and Belova, men and women should share an equal responsibility for maintaining the home. The ideas these two women were proposing called for deeply interventionist policies. They hoped to control the relations between husbands and wives in their own homes. While their goal was to alleviate women's domestic burden, it also further entangled the public and private spheres.

Some women simply refused to give up their domestic role. They took pride in their domestic skills and wanted to continue cooking meals for their families. Cooking served as a form of work that was good for society. K. Efimova, an engineer from Moscow, wrote to *Pravda* that she enjoyed cooking a hot breakfast and lunch for her family, as well as preparing the occasional large meal to entertain guests. She enjoyed her position in the home. Not only would she refuse to stop preparing these meals, but she also wanted support from the Party. Specifically, she requested a greater selection of frozen foods so that she and other women could still cook but do so more efficiently. This would allow women to fulfill their duties at work and also be able to provide warm meals for their families.¹⁵⁹

Efimova was not alone in her interest in frozen foods. Two years earlier, in 1959, the American government had showcased its technological advances in consumer products to the Soviet public. At the American exhibition in Moscow's Sokolniki Park, Soviet subjects saw automobiles, tasted American soft drinks, and toured an American home, complete with futuristic household appliances.¹⁶⁰ Visitors learned about powdered

¹⁵⁹ K. Efimova, "Eto vazhno dlia vsekh," *Pravda*, October 1, 1961.

¹⁶⁰ Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 267.

mixes capable of making a cake in minutes.¹⁶¹ They also witnessed the expanding market of frozen foods.¹⁶² Clarence Bridseye had pioneered the American frozen foods industry in the late 1920s, and by the late 1950s the industry had expanded to packaged meat, juice, vegetables, and individual dinners.¹⁶³ In 1959, Americans spent \$2.7 billion on frozen foods, 2700% more than they had a decade earlier. Companies marketed frozen foods as the way to liberate the housewife from her drudgery.¹⁶⁴ The American exhibition drew massive crowds in Moscow and news spread of the exhibition's displays. Unlike the Americans, though, who pursued foods to free women from the home, Efimova called for increased supplies of frozen foods to allow women to maintain their place in the home while also working.

Similarly, an article in *Pravda* from August 1961 discussed the increasing number of women working on the collective farm. The article stressed that these women wanted to be able to prepare nice meals for their families more than just once a week. Like Efimova, the author of the *Pravda* article believed that women wanted to prepare warm meals for their families in order to be good mothers – a role which would in turn better society. The article suggested that the state should give women time off from work so that they could cook for their families.¹⁶⁵ Instead of promoting the expansion of public services, the author of this article wanted the state to devote energy and resources to allowing women to work and still perform their own domestic labor.

¹⁶¹ Christina Carbone, "Staging the Kitchen Debate: How Splitnik Got Normalized in the United States," in *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, ed. by Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachman (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 70.

¹⁶² Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 245.

¹⁶³ Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993) 107.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁶⁵ "Zhenshchiny – aktivnye stroiteli kommunisma" *Pravda*, August 7, 1961.

These women wanted the state to support them in their longing to fulfill their roles both in the workforce and with their families at home. They felt that there was some value in a family eating a warm breakfast and lunch together in their own home and that other women would surely also want to provide this for their families. Like the suggestions above, these women felt that their performance of domestic chores served a valuable social purpose. Efimova and the collective-farm workers felt the state should support their domestic role in society – providing support for them but not intruding. Dinners should remain a time shared by members of a household, not an area for the state. Work for the good of society, for these women, meant allowing them to continue fulfilling their domestic responsibilities and maintaining a strong presence in their homes.

Conclusion

Reacting to the confusing messages from the state during the Khrushchev era and the state's invitation for public participation, Soviet subjects expressed a variety of attitudes on women's proper relation to work. Some individuals agreed with the state's policies for increasing women's public role – advocating for more public services and a crackdown on sexism in the workplace. Others instead placed a greater value on the work that women completed in the home. They requested that women be granted more time off from work or be compensated for time spent raising their children. Despite the diversity of opinions, all of the suggestions were based on the tenets in the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" and the ideas of good relations between comrades and good-natured work for the good of society.

As seen in the commentary on *vospitanie* in the previous chapter, people's strong desire to limit women's opportunities and structure their lives solely around the family

reaffirms the existence of repressive elements operating parallel to the Thaw. Women left the factory after working a full eight-hour shift to perform hours of chores at home. Attempting to satisfy both roles left women unable to fully dedicate themselves to either. Despite the long-held Bolshevik goal of granting women greater involvement in society, individuals within Soviet Russia argued not only for the appreciation of women's domestic labor, but also stressed the need to decrease women's work shifts and provide them with monetary support so that they could continue providing their much-needed services for the Soviet family.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” opened a small window for public discussion in an otherwise authoritarian Soviet society. Individuals debated different notions of the ideal Soviet woman as well as a woman’s proper role in the workplace and in *vospitanie*. Their discussions emerged in response to the ambiguous nature of the morality code’s tenets. The code called on Soviet subjects to be cultured, hard-working, industrious, and devoted to the motherland, all while also helping each other, demonstrating concern for the *vospitanie* of others, and showing love and mutual respect in the family. These provisions created an impossible ideal – a woman who should be simultaneously a worker, mother, and cultured subject. This thesis has argued that the period of public discussion and call for suggestions created an opportunity for individuals from both the top and bottom of Soviet society to debate current gender ideals and propose possible solutions to the moral crisis plaguing society. Through their suggestions, these individuals demonstrate the participatory nature of the Thaw, as each promoted his or her own version of the ideal Soviet woman.

The suggestions discussed in this thesis have also challenged the interpretation of the Thaw as a period of liberalizing reform. Historians of this liberal Thaw have focused primarily on the small measure of increased expression during the Khrushchev era. Artists and writers experienced more freedom from the censors, allowing abstractionist exhibits and the publication of books that strove to portray Soviet life realistically. Furthermore, historians have stressed the role of Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” as a defining moment in the Thaw. He criticized Stalin’s cult of personality, the attack on the

Red Army during the terror, and the leader's seemingly arbitrary style of rule. Under Khrushchev, the Soviet Union would operate under the principle of socialist legality, using law and procedure to ensure proper rule. Scholars of the Thaw have argued that these reforms ushered in a relaxed era of greater expression, limited state intrusion, and less policing of social norms. The suggestions examined in this thesis, however, have shown that this was not always so. Some individuals were opposed to the liberal reforms of the Thaw and wanted greater state intrusion into personal areas and more power for the collectives as institutions of invasive public policing.

The need to exert greater control over society was in response to a perceived moral crisis in Soviet society. Divorce rates were rising dramatically, increasing almost 270% in the course of a decade.¹⁶⁶ The mass Gulag amnesties had brought *anti-Soviet* elements back into contact with the morally-upright and cultured Soviet society. Hooliganism and parasitism appeared to be an increasingly common phenomenon. Campaigns were unveiled to combat both hooliganism and parasitism, but the prevalence only served to emphasize the corrupt moral character of Soviet youth. Individuals were also concerned about the negative effect of foreign influences on Soviet society. Khrushchev's efforts to attract foreign allies by opening up the Soviet Union had also brought society into contact with Western culture, undermining Communist morals and ideals.¹⁶⁷ Party leaders, collectives, and individuals in society all agreed that cultured Soviet society needed to be preserved. The ambiguity emanating from the center, however, created confusion and disagreement on how best to proceed.

¹⁶⁶ Field, "Irreconcilable Differences," 607.

¹⁶⁷ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 174.

Individuals promoting more intervention as a solution called on the state to enact more intrusive and repressive policies. Schoolteachers, Party members, Komsomol leaders, and members of the collectives would all serve as agents of reform, aiming to provide good role models throughout people's lives. The Khrushchev era featured a renewed reliance on the collective. A special force from above was no longer responsible for policing social control. Instead, the state called on everyone to police and reform each other. Relying on the collectives, the Party hoped that no one would be able to escape the reforms. Intervening in individuals' lives would ensure that people were transformed into proper Communists.

This thesis has emphasized the ambiguous and participatory nature of the Thaw as a way of extracting the different discourses present in Soviet society. Individuals were unsure about the meaning behind de-Stalinization and the other ambiguous reform campaigns. Specifically, they disagreed if these reforms indicated a return to the ideas of the NEP era or a continuation of existing policies. Ambiguous policies demanded public participation throughout the Khrushchev era. The Party openly solicited public discussion of the tenets of the "Moral Code," creating opportunities for individuals to promote their own views on Soviet society.

The ambiguity of the Thaw is evident in the tenets of the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism." For example, the code called for greater concern for *vospitanie*, but it was unclear from whom exactly this concern should come. It could be charged to teachers, collectives, families, neighbors, or even grandparents. Each variant, however, would have a different effect on the type of *vospitanie* people received. The code also called on every Soviet subject to work, while stipulating that each should work

according to his or her own abilities. The tenet did not clarify if work was defined as employment or simply socially-beneficial labor. If it was the later, then it could be argued that women's work in the home qualified as work, granting them either financial benefits or reduced hours at their place of employment. In an attempt to make the "Moral Code" apply to as many people as possible, its authors had made it difficult for individuals to comprehend the meaning behind its tenets.

As a result of this ambiguity, Soviet subjects needed to debate the true intent of the "Moral Code." Party leaders designated a period of public discussion primarily in order to educate the public. The campaign, however, also allowed individuals to forward their own opinions on the code. While the suggestions rarely succeeded in changing specific tenets of the code, the campaign did serve an important purpose for Party officials. It allowed them to discover what Soviet subjects thought about Communist morality as well as preserve the tradition of soliciting public input, which dated back to the Stalin Constitution of 1936. Through the commentary, people were able to debate the true intent of the vague tenets and suggest any additional tenets they believed needed to be included. In the end, only two tenets were added to the final version of the code and the vast majority of the suggestions were not applied to the code. The ideas individuals promoted, however, illustrated their interpretations of the path to Communism, the message of de-Stalinization, and the needs of society.

Studying the commentary surrounding the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" provides a better understanding of the values held by Soviet subjects under the Khrushchev era. While the Party program described a future society, individuals used it as a means of discussing issues present in their own lives. Individuals called for greater

attention to atheism. They proposed a tenet in the "Moral Code" suggesting a renewed campaign for atheism in the Soviet Union, showing their support for the atheist campaign that had been in effect since 1959.¹⁶⁸ Others were grateful that the code had promoted intolerance toward parasitism, hoping to end the phenomenon of young people, in particular, refusing to work while taking resources from the state. In addition to atheism and parasitism, others also wanted to encourage people to exercise greater devotion to the state, whether through allegiance to the Party, support for other socialist countries, or the promise to defend the motherland. Individuals' desire to see these matters addressed in the "Moral Code" demonstrate their concern for these issues and the potential threat for future generations.

This thesis has focused specifically on the debates surrounding *vospitanie* and women's work. Both areas center around discourses on proper gender ideals and the definition of the family. The suggestions illustrate how men and women viewed each other's roles within Soviet society. They show which traits, characteristics, and gender roles individuals felt should be elevated above others. Each individual was able to forward his or her own opinion on which aspects of the impossible feminine ideal would be promoted. Prioritizing a woman's role as a worker, mother, or cultured and socially-active woman not only highlights the individual's views on women, but also one's understanding of the Thaw.

The debate surrounding *vospitanie* was largely a response to the moral crisis in Soviet society. Rising divorce rates and the increasing phenomenon of promiscuous men had a poor influence on children. In order to respond to the crisis and show the proper

¹⁶⁸ For examples of suggestions promoting atheist campaigns see: RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 27, l. 38; RGANI, f. 1, op. 4, d. 69, l. 48.

concern for others' *vospitanie*, however, people first needed to agree on how to define "the family." For some individuals, the family was a nuclear group, featuring a mother, father, and their respective children. The family could also include grandparents, as they were useful in maintaining the home and gathering goods. Families could also be defined more broadly, including social elements, such as teachers' and parents' committees, in the raising of children. Defining the family allowed individuals to promote their own suggestions for remedying the moral crisis and improving others' *vospitanie*, whether that involved advocating for more or less state intervention.

Proponents of a stronger family unit suggested less state intervention in the family, seeing the solution to the moral crisis in promoting good relations within the family. They called on Soviet subjects to take responsibility for their own families. The family unit was a necessary part of a proper *vospitanie*. Promoting households with two parents, both of whom loved and cared for their children, would ensure that children were raised with good morals, a dedication to work, and proper social skills. To accomplish this, these individuals suggested lowering the divorce rate as well as refusing to tolerate child evaders or men with multiple families. As an added bonus, such proposals would also lessen the prevalence of single mothers. Advocates of these theories believed that parents and grandparents would provide loving homes and raise their children properly. They viewed the "Moral Code" and its call for both "concern for *vospitanie*" and "mutual love and respect in the family," as a validation of their suggestions.

The ambiguity of the "Moral Code" also allowed people to argue for greater intervention into the family and more control over people's *vospitanie*. Such individuals believed that families needed guidance from the collectives in order to raise children

properly. *Vospitanie* was too important to allow potentially *backwards* or uneducated parents to jeopardize future generations. Parents' committees, teachers, and collectives would serve as the primary agents of *vospitanie*. They would intervene in family life to shape and control others' *vospitanie*, either by removing children from poor influences, as in the case of Tolya, or encouraging parents to serve as active role models, as the teacher writing to her students' parents hoped to do. Teachers and members of parents' committees would instruct parents on how best to raise the future builders of Communism. For these individuals, showing concern for *vospitanie* meant policing and correcting the *vospitanie* of those around them.

Debating gender ideals in the family also required agreeing on women's proper role in society and the workforce. Tenets of the "Moral Code" stressed equal relations between workers and the need for all Soviet subjects to work according to their own abilities. The ambiguous nature of these tenets, however, only served to raise more questions, primarily the meaning of equality. Individuals were concerned about the continuing sexism in the workplace, especially the use of the derogatory term, "*baba*" toward women. It was also unclear if work was defined simply as any labor completed at a workplace or if it also included forms of labor for the good of society. Women's work in the home was time-consuming, adding hours of labor after a full day of work. The Party had looked to public services to solve women's double burden, but comments on the code noted the failure of these services to free women from their domestic service.

Some suggestions stressed the need to continue promoting women's role in the workforce, focusing on their right to be active builders of Communism, equal to men. These individuals noted the fact that women had played a key role in the revolutions of

1917. Capitalist society had forced women to stay in the home, but under socialism the Party had promised to liberate these women. Party leaders needed to continue their efforts to promote women's public involvement, not only by allowing them to work, but also ensuring that women had time to attend the theater, participate in lectures or discussion groups, and be a well-cultured Soviet subject. Increasing services, such as cafeterias, laundromats, and daycare centers, would ease women's domestic burden while also allowing them to work for the betterment of society.

Not everyone agreed that society and the state needed to force women out of the home. In their opinion, domestic work was not necessarily a burden, but rather work that benefited the family and, in turn, society. Women could give their families good, home-cooked meals, instead of relying on the poorly-supplied cafeterias. They were also capable of cleaning their own homes and took pride in maintaining a nice home for their families. Finally, the time women devoted to raising their children, according to these suggestions, was just as valuable for Soviet society as time spent in a factory. As a result, they used the opportunity for public participation to propose providing benefits for mothers with multiple children to compensate them for both the time and expense that raising a child required. At the least, these individuals wanted the state to lower mothers' work hours, easing the double burden. Others proposed time-saving measures, such as frozen foods, to allow women to fulfill both their social and domestic roles, but to do so in a more efficient manner. For these individuals, the road to improving society was not through promoting women's place in society or at work, but by securing her connection to the home.

It was not just Party leaders dictating their ideas on proper Communist morality. In the discussions surrounding *vospitanie* and women's roles, suggestions came from the top and bottom of Soviet society. Well-known public figures, such as Panova, promoted their own social ideals, but the commentary also included ideas from workers' collectives, teachers, factory workers, and general discussion groups organized following the program's debut. Likewise, both Party officials and common Soviet subjects would strive to enforce the new norms of the "Moral Code." Society would operate along the principles of the collective. Everyone would be responsible for learning not only the values of the "Moral Code" for themselves, but also instructing, policing, and reforming those around them. Social reform, like the commentary on the "Moral Code," would be pervasive.

The invasive and repressive elements of some of these suggestions challenge previous interpretations of the Thaw and the Khrushchev era. In a period traditionally associated with liberal reform and greater freedom of expression, these suggestions demonstrate the presence of illiberal currents in Soviet society. Not everyone was excited at the idea of less state control and greater freedom. Some individuals felt that the state and society needed to intervene in people's lives more in order to ensure that subjects behaved as morally-proper Communists. The rapid changes of de-Stalinization, the returning Gulag prisoners, rising divorce rates, and the chronic issue of parasitism caused some individuals to fear for the future of cultured Soviet society. They believed society was out of control. The Thaw had gone too far, and they hoped that their suggestions would reign in these socially-destructive elements.

The fact that these individuals were able to voice their concerns, promoting in some instances a retraction of Thaw-era policies, also challenges interpretations of the Soviet Union's authoritarian nature. Due to the ambiguous nature of the tenets of the "Moral Code," Party leaders called on the public to discuss the morality code and forward their own suggestions. The Party was not silencing public discussion but overtly encouraging it. Due to the uneasy tensions surrounding de-Stalinization, though, some individuals in Soviet society used the Party-endorsed period of public commentary to challenge the Thaw, calling for a more intrusive, repressive, and controlling version of society in the process.

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