

IMAGES FAR FROM REALITY?

Gendered national identity in (post) Soviet Russia



Master thesis History of Society
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Supervisor: Professor dr. Maria Grever
Erasmus University Rotterdam
09-08-2015

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Acknowledgments

When I was five years old my father went on a study trip to the Soviet Union. I do not remember much of that age but I do remember the fairytale feeling it gave me that my father was in a far away land. The presents he brought home, contributed to this image. The book he gave me was originally meant to be a photo album. It had a golden furry cover with a silver plate with the buildings of the Red Square on it. My father had a fascination for the Soviet Union, its architecture and history. When I was older he gave me the Lenin pins and other Soviet memorabilia that he collected and also a fascination for this country. So that is one part of my thesis subject explained. My mother is partly responsible for the other part: her interest and study of how people behave in a society and her history of fighting to establish a better position for women. My conclusion was that these interests, among many others, of my parents led to my choice for the incredibly interesting subject of this master thesis. Thank you Bart and thank you Marquita for being such interesting people.

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For Dima,

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Chapter 1

Introduction

According to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) the Russian identity was based on a ‘conglomerate of contradictions’. Berdyaev wrote this in his book *The Russian idea* which was published in 1947. This is still one of the most famous Russian philosophical books in Russia. About forty years after he wrote this, things would really become complex. After more than seventy years of communism, the Soviet Union fell. The national identity had to be redefined, resulting in a complex identity mixing the old with the new, tradition and design. In many layers of the Russian identity this resulted in an identity crisis. The gendered identity in Russia both changed under the influence of the Russian democracy and a capitalist market and kept many characteristics of the discourse of the Soviet Union. In my master thesis I will analyse this process and its outcome.

Post-Soviet Russia had a complex relation with the West. After the fall of the Soviet Union western norms were incorporated in Russian culture. In this period the ‘westernizers’, supporters of this tendency, gained influence. However in recent years it seems that Russia on a cultural and social level is prioritizing Russian traditions and norms – both pre-communist and communist - over those from the West. In 2013, the Russian president Vladimir Putin signed two controversial laws: a blasphemy law, under which ‘public activities expressing clear disrespect to society and carried out with the aim of insulting the religious feelings of believers’ can lead to imprisonment; and a law against ‘the propaganda of homosexuality among minors’.¹ Shortly after, members of the feminist punk protest group Pussy Riot were arrested after singing a protest song against Putin ‘Mother of God, drive Putin away’ in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.² The new laws, the detainment of the members of Pussy Riot and other incidents like the arrest of members of Green Peace caused severe criticism in the West. The winter Olympics of February 2014 in Sochi was a tool to improve the position of Russia in international relations and to spread a positive image of Russian politics and society. The rest of the

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/10113834/Russia-introduces-jail-terms-for-religious-offenders.html> 22-01-2014.

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCasuaAczKY> 23-01-2014.

world watched the developments in Russia closely.

How to deal with these developments and the winter Olympics in Sochi has been the subject of discussions in the West. Some stated that people should not go to the Olympics, others said to go but dress in rainbow coloured outfits, the symbol of the homosexual community. When the outfits of the Russian volunteers were presented, it turned out they had an unexpected pattern: a rainbow coloured pattern.³ In a press conference Putin was asked a question about the rainbow coloured outfits. He stated that ‘Russia was a traditional country, and refused to accept European values on sexual orientation’, and stated that nobody would be harassed in Russia during the Olympics as long as they ‘leave the children alone’.⁴ In Putin’s Russia traditional, anti-western norms are gaining popularity. The anti-gay propaganda law is more or less a result of this sentiment. This sentiment is expressed by an increasing degree of violence against the homosexual community. After the law became effective, the negative attitude towards members of the LGBT community became stronger. This is an example of how a top down approach can change norms in society. Different processes in Russian history have had an influence on the ideas and actual positions of men and women in Russian society: the traditional division of tasks ascribed to men and women in tsarist Russia, the equality in communism, the reforms or *perestroika* under Mikhail Gorbachev, the westernization in early post-Soviet years under Yeltsin and now a return to a more traditional system under the influence of Putin. Russian norms have often been controlled by the state. The role president Putin ascribes to himself is a very masculine and paternalistic one. The norms now distributed within Russian society are of traditional family life and conservative gendered relations. The transition from communism to a capitalist market economy, the opposite goals of westernizers and slavophiles and the influence of traditionalism and conservatism on the one hand and of progression and protest on the other, all have had a distinct influence on the national identity and subordinate groups. In this thesis the representation of gender in images in the Soviet Union and after the fall of the Soviet Union is subject of research,

In this chapter I will first present the research question of my master thesis, its related sub-questions and the approach of my research. Next, I will outline the main concepts of the master thesis and provide an overview of the literature on this subject discussed in a paragraph on historiography. Finally the primary sources, methods and innovative aspects are presented.

³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/10413899/Sochi-Winter-Olympics-2014-Organisers-reveal-colourful-volunteer-uniform-with-100-days-to-go.html> 23-01-2014.

⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/17/vladimir-putin-gay-winter-olympics-children>. 19-01-2014.

1.1 Research question

To be able to investigate the topic of my research I have formulated the following main research question: *In what ways is gender involved in the process of redefining national identity in (post) Soviet Russia in the second half of the twentieth century?*

The involvement of gender will be examined by analysing changes and continuities in the various representations of gender in texts, images and debates. Hence, I have divided the main question into four sub-questions, which will be answered in the chapters of my master thesis:

1. What is the meaning of gender and national identity, and how are these concepts linked?
2. What are major social-political, economic and cultural changes in (post)Soviet Russia, circa 1950-2000?
3. How and - to what extent - are gender specific symbols used in the construction of national identity of (post) Soviet Union in visual sources since ca. 1950?
4. In what ways are formal ideology and informal ideas involved in the presentation of the gendered national identity in these visual sources, and to what extent do they relate to major social-political and cultural changes in (post) Soviet Union?

1.2 Main theoretical concepts

This thesis will be a search for national identity, for the representation of that identity and the influence of changing ideas about masculine and feminine behaviour. The main theoretical concepts of this thesis will be: identity and national identity; gender and identity and representation.

1.2.1 Identity and national identity

A critical analysis of what identity is, will be of great importance to take the first steps in this research. Identity is a construction dependent on a certain discourse and the time and place of the agent. According to Stuart Hall it is formed through an antagonistic process. Identities are fragmented and multiple, constructed across different, intersecting antagonistic discourses. Hall states that identities are constructed within a certain discourse and that is why we have to understand them 'as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific

enunciative strategies'.⁵ Aside from these insights, Hall writes that identities are constructed through difference. An identity is construed in relation to the other and what it is not. Identity is basically a term without meaning, not natural but naturalized and used as an act of power. The unities of the binary oppositions are constructed within power discourses and identity politics.⁶ Identity then is the point of suturing these discourses to subject positions.⁷

In order to find a place in the social surrounding, the identity is often seen as fixed by us. In that way we construct identity, which, as a result, is only seemingly fixed and unified. In this process a person always acts from within a certain discourse, even when negating it. This is a dynamic process.⁸ Tine Davids too defines identity as being formed by an agent. However agency is partly influenced by both great structures and the resistance to them. Furthermore, not only the large structures can form an identity, also micro dynamics in a society can influence the position of an agent towards the dominant discourse.⁹

The dynamic process of forming an identity is an ongoing interaction between identity frames and self-image. Identity frames are social frames that can provide an identification for the people that are part of it. Self-image is formed by the behaviour, perception and communication of individual people and groups. Identity frames and self-image are constantly interacting and form the dynamic process of the formulation of identity. Identity and identification are also closely related terms. By identifying to a group, someone can become part of that group and its identity. Not just by becoming part of it, also in negating certain groups, an identity can be formed. As people position themselves in or outside a group, they create a self-image and identity. Identity forming is a contextual and situational act that is constituted from within a specific culture, shaped by the past and a view on the future. Identities are changeable and unchangeable at the same time. The dynamic nature of the concept implies identity is not an essentialist notion of being, but much more a way of seeing.¹⁰

⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Who needs identity?', in Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (eds.) *Identity Reader* (London 2005) 17.

⁶ Hall, 'Who needs identity?', 17-18.

⁷ Hall, 'Who needs identity?', 19.

⁸ Karin Willemse, Ruth Morgan and John Meletse, 'Deaf, gay, HIV positive and proud: Narrating an alternative identity in post apartheid South Africa', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (2009) 90.

⁹ Tine Davids, 'The micro dynamics of agency: Repetition and subversion in a Mexican right-wing female politician's life story', *European Journal of Women's Studies* (2011) 155.

¹⁰ Maria Grever and Kees Ribbens, *Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden* (Amsterdam 2007) 22-23.

Important for this research is the operationalization of the concept of identity for historical research given by the historian Willem Frijhoff. He names three basic actions that constitute the sense of identity: imagining, appointing and recognising. These actions work on two different levels, first a person follows the steps when appropriating an identity. Moreover, when researching the composition of identity, these steps need to be recognised and analysed. In his article he discusses the relation between identity and the sense of identity. He asks the question if identity is just the imagining of that identity or if there is a connection to reality. The connection of identity and reality can be seen as an actual direct correspondence between the concepts or as an analytical communication between the individual and reality.¹¹

National identity is the result of a collective identification with the nation state. It is a historical and temporal image based on certain shared characteristics like language, culture, symbols, behaviour and norms. Nationalism and the concept of the nation, which are prior to the forming of a national identity, are invented by the state and subsequently distributed to the people, however national identity can only be understood by incorporating the perception of the inhabitants of the nation. The nation state can only survive and a national identity can only be formed through an interaction between the state and the people. In (post)Soviet Russia national rhetoric is often characterised by gendered patterns and binary oppositions. In this national gendered rhetoric men are active, political, providing and protecting, women are passive, loving and symbols of bearers of the nation.¹² This view applies to (post)Soviet Russia on different social levels, in the home, the community, church and the nation.

Identities are historical and dynamic. A distinction has to be made in this context between the identity as experience and identity as politics.¹³ Memory is said to influence or even constitute identity. The question is, in the context of Russian gender and identity forming, to what extent this is an ‘invented’ memory and an identity influenced by identity politics of the state. Being influenced by the state or not, the feeling of belonging to an identity is closely linked to the belonging to a community.¹⁴ The anthropologist Benedict Anderson in this context developed the notion of an imagined community.

¹¹ Willem Frijhoff, ‘Identiteit en identiteitsbesef. De historicus en de spanning tussen verbeelding, benoeming en herkenning’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 107 (1992) 614-615.

¹² Grever and Ribbens, *Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden*, 24-26.

¹³ Norah Karrouche, *Memories from the rif. Moroccan-Berber activists between history and myth* (Erasmus University Rotterdam 2013) 17.

¹⁴ Karrouche, *Memories from the rif*, 18-19.

Communities like nations are imaged, he states, as people that belong to it, will never actually know or see each other. However in their minds the community is alive. The nation is imagined as community, a horizontal comradeship. This is the case even when in reality there is inequality or injustice to some of its members.¹⁵

The sociologist Ernest Gellner stated that 'having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such.'¹⁶ The nation state is not a natural state, it is cultivated and needs willing people to make it work. For different people to acknowledge being in the same nation it requires a common culture, understandings and dispositions and the recognition of shared rights and duties to each other and a shared membership. A nation does not exist prior to the creation of it by nationalist feelings, nationalism creates the nation. In order to have a nation, there has to be a cultural and voluntary aspect.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm uses the definition of nationalism of Gellner, the political and national unit should be congruent. Nations are not static unchangeable entities but modern constructions. Hobsbawm states that 'the 'national question' as the old Marxists call it, is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation.'¹⁷ Nations and associated phenomena should be analysed from different perspectives of political, administrative, economic and other premises. Hobsbawm further stresses that not only a view from above must be analysed, but every nation is strongly influenced by bottom up views like hopes, needs and assumptions which need to be included. This constitutes the nation, not how it is seen by the government, but constructed by ordinary people. Three facts are evident, he states. First, official ideologies of states and movements should not be seen as exact guides to the minds of the people. Second, in all the identities of a certain person that constitute a social being, national identity might not be the superior one. Finally, national identity changes, even in a short amount of time.

These considerations are important for the research of this master thesis. The Soviet ideology was overly present in life in the Soviet Union and in the representation in visual sources. However it is important to keep in mind the discrepancy between formal ideology and reality of Soviet life.

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London 1991) 6-7.

¹⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca 1983) 6.

¹⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Program, myth, reality* (Cambridge 1990) 10.

1.2.2 Collective memory, identity and gender

The government and the communist rhetoric were of great importance to the forming of a collective memory and a collective identity in the USSR. Collective memory however is not just created by one person or a group, it is produced and received on different levels in society. This is a process of interaction which forms the complex structure of any collective identity. Collective identities are built in various frames of which the most important is the nation.¹⁸ In the Soviet Union the nation was viewed from a specific communist ideology. The propaganda posters and images that I have analysed are the results of communist rhetoric and constructions of national identity but they also play a part in constructing collective memory. They embody, generate and transform memory simultaneously. There is an interrelation between production and consumption of the collective memory.¹⁹ Discourses and identity are shaped by connections: by linking different 'identity acts' a collective identity is created. In this respect political and social changes are no less important. For instance, the impact of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Second World War, the communist ideology about the equality of all humans in the Soviet Union, and the Soviet government policy, contributed to the social discourse and specific identity formations of Soviet men and women.

In this thesis, information about representation and image forming will be filtered by looking at gendered relations. First I will formulate a working definition of gender. The *Handbook of gender and women's studies* provides a useful definition: 'Gendered is the division of people in two separate groups, 'men' and 'women', and the organization of the major aspects of society along those binaries.'²⁰ Or as the (self-)perception of someone being male or female and the images of masculinity and femininity that go with those perceptions. These (self-)images are constituted by the way the sexual identity is perceived of oneself and others. The questions gender is concerned with are: 'What does it mean to be, or behave like, a man or a woman; what does it have to do with masculinity, femininity, sexuality; and how are these aspects of our identity not only organized through images, discourses, social institutions, but also interiorized through education, cultural consumption, and bodily

¹⁸ Jamers V. Wertsch, *Voices of collective remembering* (Cambridge 2002) 69-70.

¹⁹ Susan Hogervorst, 'Female resistance fighters. National memory cultures and the international Ravensbrück committee', Ene Koresaar e.a. (eds.) *The burden of remembering. Recollections and representations of the 20th century* (Finnish literature society, Helsinki 2009) 77-79.

²⁰ Kathy Davis, Mary Evans and Judith Lorber, *Handbook of gender and women's studies* (London 2006) 2.

behaviour'²¹ The differences that are being analysed are differences that go beyond the individual, that are about the larger structures of social constructs. They create and form power relations and a hierarchical system, these are kept into being by both the dominant group and the subordinate group by identifying oneself to a group and conforming to a certain behaviour. The fact that gender focuses on both femininity and masculinity is a concern to some that think the oppression of women and the challenging the dominant patriarchal society in this context is neglected. A different critique to gender studies is that it is too narrow, this view states that there are many other binary opposition in society that influence women's and men's identities. A concern in gender studies is the fact that in the way the differences are analysed, the masculine paradigm is taken for granted as the hegemonic a dominant perspective. These naturalized views need to be challenged according to these scholars.²² Every perception of national identity is gendered, although sometimes more explicitly than in other situations. Hence, national identity is multilayered and composed of different identifications.

Gender is inherently political and can serve as a guide to a dynamic process of imagination, regulation and transgression in society and culture. The notion of gender should not be simplified too much, but seen as a guide to examine social structures and visions. Not only the difference and opposition of men and women but the social influence and consequences of those oppositions should be part of a critical gender analysis. The relation and distinction between men and women, but more importantly the social practices around this relation of resistance, acceptance, adaptation or challengers need to be investigated to gain insight to the complex structures of society, history and politics.²³

It gets interesting when the organization of those binaries is challenged. The artist Konstantin Altunin mixed the two groups of people, men and women to defy existing identities. Putin has a masculine image and is a supporter of what he calls traditional values. To challenge this fixed role and the associated images, the artist painted President Vladimir Putin and the Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. Both men have women's bodies and are wearing women's lingerie, Putin combs the hair of Medvedev who is sitting in front of him. The body under Putin is wearing a dress, the body under Medvedev women's underwear. The title of the painting is 'Travesty'. In August 2013 the police seized the painting from the small art gallery, saying it was of 'a distinct pornographic character'. The painter

²¹ Ginette Verstraete, 'Gender', in Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey* (New York 2007) 329.

²² Davis, Evans and Lorber, *Handbook of gender and women's studies*, 4-5.

²³ Joan Scott, 'The uses and abuses of gender', *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies* 16 (2013) nr. 1, 74-75.

fled to Paris in fear of being arrested. The binary positions and fixed gender representations of men and women and masculinity and femininity were perceived as violated.

Another current example where these binary oppositions and fixed gender roles are challenged is the girl that wanted to be a metro driver. Article 253 of the Russian Labour Code states that female workers should not perform “hard physical jobs and jobs with harmful or dangerous labour conditions, or work underground except in non-physical jobs or sanitary and consumer services.” The list of forbidden professions for women counts 456 jobs, including fire-fighter, paratrooper and metro driver. The ban for women on the profession of metro driver is instated in 2000. In 2009 a 22 year old girl tried to apply for a job driving the Saint Petersburg metro, she was denied and went to court where she lost the case. The spokes woman for the St. Petersburg metro stated that above ground, services could come to a woman’s assistance if something went wrong, underground a driver needs to be able to have ‘instant, innate reactions to non-standard situations. In the event of those situations, they would need to take the right decision, and quickly’. Not only the St. Petersburg metro and the court support this view, also a retired female metro driver stated she ‘wouldn’t wish this profession on other women’ and that it is very difficult for women. A profession that was not gendered, in less than ten years became just that. The difference here became a social construct and is kept in place by both the dominant group of policy makers and subordinate groups, in this case the women that support this perception of women.²⁴

1.2.3 Representation and imagology

Image studies or imagology are concerned with representation. The aims of imagology are to analyse the representation of a certain discourse in a subjective source. In these representations there are images of the other (e.g. hetero-images or gay images) and images of the self (i.e. self-image or auto-image).²⁵ In this master thesis I will look for the use of icons and tropes in visual sources. Icons are symbols that refer to what it actually portrays. Tropes symbolise more abstract ideas like the nation or peace. Symbols used in propaganda posters are often tropes. In the images men, women, masculinity and femininity become tropes by symbolising concepts like ‘the workforce’, equality, unity or peace. In the Soviet Union, tropes and icons were used more than in Russia and in propaganda more than in the visual sources from the magazine *Ogoniok*. For the forming of a collective identity icons are important,

²⁴ <http://www.sptimesrussia.com/story/28446?page=1#top> 20-01-2014.

²⁵ Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical study* (New York 2007) 17.

tropes were useful for the forming of an ideology for they are more impersonal. The collective memories portrayed in the visual sources, were both product and producer of gender.²⁶

Joep Leerssen argues that the first task is to establish the intertext of a given national representation as a trope. The questions that need to be asked in this context are: ‘What is the tradition of the trope? What traditions of appreciation or depreciation, and how do these two relate historically? To which extent is that background tradition passively or actively echoed or reinforced, varied upon, negated, mocked or ignored by the individual instance in question?’²⁷ Social and political changes on a national or international level as a result change the interaction and relations between groups within those constructions. Sub-group identities are loosened and simultaneously actively emphasized and defined. Concepts like identity get an explanatory function instead of just being descriptions. Because of these processes the representation of identities gets a more signifying role, in understanding the interaction of human affairs.²⁸

Representation and discourse are closely related, representation constitutes the link between text (as discourse) and reality or the experience of that reality. Images are not the reality itself but representations of that reality, or simply images. Images in that way give meaning to reality, not the other way around; they do not just reflect the world that exists but are means of constructing a view on that world. When analysing national discourses and identities, representations can shed light on the strategies that lie prior to the images and uncover certain patterns.²⁹ For more information see the paragraph on sources and methods.

1.3 Historiography of gender in Russia

In an essay written in 1994, Anastasia Posadskaya gives an account of the state of women and women’s studies in Russia. An image of women as mothers, caretakers and on the other hand capitalist consumers or consumer goods themselves is the trend most common in the social fields analysed. To change such a view and image of women in Russia, she states, there must be a change in education on

²⁶ Maria Grever, ‘Visualisering en collectieve herinneringen. ‘Volendams meisje’ als icoon van de nationale identiteit’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* (2004) 210-213.

²⁷ Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, 18.

²⁸ Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, 17-32.

²⁹ Ann Rigney, ‘Representation’, in Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey* (New York 2007) 415-417.

all levels.³⁰

National policy making has a large influence on acceptance or rejection of subcultures and subversive identities. The Russian state has had a vast control over the dominant sexual discourse in Russia. In 1993 the ban on homosexuality (initiated by Stalin) was lifted. However after 2000, the start of the era of Putin, nationalists in Russia tried to call a halt to the sexual revolution. The main reason was that the sexual revolution and sexualized marketplace originated with the rise of capitalism and internet was seen as a threat to the nation. Demographic numbers fell and nationalists advocated measures for national regeneration. Putin started a campaign to boost traditional values of the family and marriage and to stigmatize divorce.³¹ In the article of historian Dan Healey in 2010 he states that ‘Russia has apparently accepted the decriminalization of homosexuality, obliquely confirmed during Duma debates in 2002; even conservatives now reluctantly agree that gays and lesbians are an undeniable if unpalatable fact of national life’.³² However this trend now ended as Putin signed an ‘anti gay propaganda’ law and homosexuality is stigmatized once again.³³ This law as a result meant a turn to traditional values, and a socially accepted anti-gay sentiment among Russians.³⁴

The emancipation of Russian women and the re-evaluation of gender relations have a history strongly linked to the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* of Mikail Gorbachev and the fall of the Soviet Union. According to the historian Irina Korovushkina, in an essay written in 1999, the emancipation of women in Russia was doomed to fail because the basic premises of the patriarchal structure in Russian society were not challenged, this created a paradox of gender. The representations of patriarchal stereotypes are not only accepted but even encouraged by both men and women. The transition to a market economy in the 1990’s caused an identity crisis in Russia. Gender played an important part in this identity crisis, traditional roles were challenged, femininity and masculinity were redefined. Women were encouraged to take the role of caretaker and mother and men to work and provide. However in this period because of several economic crises, men were not able to live up to this task.

³⁰ Anastasia Posadskaya, ‘Women’s studies in Russia: Prospects for a feminist agenda’, *Women’s Studies Quarterly* (1994) 168.

³¹ Dan Healey, ‘Active, Passive, and Russian: The national idea in gay men’s pornography’, *The Russian Review* (2010) 210-211.

³² Healey, ‘Active, Passive, and Russian: The national idea in gay men’s pornography’, 211.

³³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/10151790/Vladimir-Putin-signs-anti-gay-propaganda-bill.html> 19-01-2014.

³⁴ <http://www.nrc.nl/next/van/2013/augustus/02/een-gebogen-duim-ik-haat-homos-1275785> 20-01-2014.

This resulted in an uncertainty of new masculine expectations and identities.³⁵

In the periods before and after the fall of the Soviet Union there is a shift in female identities but a continuity as well. The shift is linked to the fundamental political, historical and specifically socio-economic changes in post-Soviet Russia. Continuity lies in the patriarchal nature of both the pre-Soviet and post-Soviet discourse, reinforced by the masculine character of the liberalized market economy. The changes in Russian society, related to the fall of the Soviet Union and the construction of a new discourse, led to an objectification of women forcing them in a position of a 'purely womanly mission'. The new discourse was accompanied by a new identity.³⁶ Sometimes the change in the representation of gender is instigated by politics, sometimes it is the outcome of larger structure like socio-economic processes in yet other cases it is from within a community that an image changes.

In the new millennium the stereotype gender identity was still part of the dominant discourse in Russia. Men were supposed to be primary or sole breadwinners, women needed to take care of the household. Women are allowed to work, as long as they are able to combine these two tasks. Because of these static definitions of the male and female tasks in the family and in society the economic crisis also resulted in an identity crisis. The economic crisis hit men harder in a moral sense, when the expected role of breadwinner couldn't be lived up to. The expectations of men and women, had been naturalized; it is perceived to be in the nature of men to do heavy work and provide and in the nature of women to care for the household and to care for the family at home. The pressure to 'do gender' in the accepted way is an important part of social life and recognition in post-Soviet Russia.³⁷

In 2013, the *Journal of women in culture and society: Signs* gave an overview of articles about women in contemporary Russia and the legacy of the Soviet Union. Beth Holmgren started with an article about the changing political and economic context. The image of women in the Soviet Union was one of equality, of strong independent and working women. After the fall of the Soviet Union this image changed, women were encouraged to present themselves and act subservient. This is also the image of Russian women in countries in the West, for a great part reinforced by the concept of 'mail-

³⁵ Irina Korovushkina, 'Paradoxes of gender: Writing history in Post-Communist Russia 1987-1998', *Gender & History* (1999) 570-571.

³⁶ Aneta Pavlenko, 'Socioeconomic conditions and discursive construction of women's identities in Post-Soviet countries', in ed. Kelemen, Mihaela and Kostera, Monika, *Critical management research in Eastern Europe: managing the transition* (2002) 109-110.

³⁷ Sarah Ashwin and Tatyana Lytkina, 'Men in crisis in Russia: The role of domestic marginalization', *Gender and Society* (2004) 189-191.

order-brides'. The strong position of women in the Soviet Union was not altogether made up, in difficult times women were able to get an education, work and equal wages. However, even in the Soviet times there was a strong paternalistic tendency and women were expected to be caretakers in the family and were excluded from political positions and influential jobs. With this process women found themselves positioned in a double role of caretakers and partakers of the labour force.

In the *perestroika* years and under the guidance of Mikhail Gorbachev, women were encouraged to 'return to their natural domain of the home'. As Holmgren states, the patriarchal state in these years was uncovered from under the socialist veneer of the Soviet Union.³⁸ In this cluster of articles on women in contemporary Russia a few different angles are taken to give an account of the position of women and the process of gendered relations in Russia.

Women have an increasingly important status in the Russian Orthodox Church. The formal structure is dominated by men but in the social function women have an important place. The Orthodox Church gained influence after the demise of the Soviet Union. A reason for the growing role of women in religious life and the religious view on the social relationships is raised by Nadieszda Kizenko, as an alternative or corrective for the capitalist, secular and sexual dominant discourses.³⁹ Johnson and Saarinen analyse the changes in women's crisis centre movements and the decreasing presence of feminism in those movements and in a wider social context. They ascertain a tendency that circumscribes feminist movements, a tendency they describe as a consolidation of a neo-masculinist semi-authoritarian regime. Only in recent years the protest to the established powers has taken a genderized turn, from the side of the protesters and the reaction of president Putin.⁴⁰

Rivkin-Fish addresses the dangers of labelling a western liberal notion of feminism on Russian social relations and women's movements. The motives of both feminists and anti-feminists in Russia are different in essence than those in the West. As an example she discusses the difficulties of abortion rights in Russia. Instead of focusing on the individual rights and autonomy of women, the focus of activists in Russia is shifted more towards the multiple interests of women.⁴¹ Another case which illustrated the different place of women in the Russian society is the case Andrea Mazzarino discusses.

³⁸ Beth Holmgren, 'Toward and understanding of gendered agency in contemporary Russia', *Signs* (2013) 535-537.

³⁹ Nadieszda Kizenko, 'Feminized patriarchy? Orthodoxy and gender in Post-Soviet Russia', *Signs* (2013) 615-616.

⁴⁰ Janet Elise Johnson, and Aino Saarinen, 'Twenty-first-century feminism under repression: Gender regime change and crisis centre movement in Russia', *Signs* (2013) 561-562.

⁴¹ Michele Rivkin-Fish, 'Conceptualizing feminist strategies for Russian reproductive politics: Abortion, surrogate motherhood and family support after socialism', *Signs* (2013) 589.

There is a young group of women in Russia that find their way into higher positions in business life. These positions however are regarded as male domain and as a result professional women have difficulties in maintaining their social lives.⁴² The Pussy Riot affair is the most famous example of gendered political opposition and struggle in the West, however this discussion is not widespread in Russia. It is famous and notorious but the focus in Russia is not on gender and even less on the political factors. It is connected to the gender discussion in that it silences the gendered motives of the group. Pussy Riot is depicted as a group of religious and immature hooligans but not of political protesters. Most people share the opinion that it was wrong that they were held captive because they have children and they should be able to be a mother to them. It is not perceived as being wrong because they should be able to express their political discontent or because gender differences should be challenged, this is often the focus of this discussion in the West.⁴³

1.4 Sources and methods

The aim of this research is to find and analyse different forms of gendered representations regarding Russian national identity. The period of research is the second half of the Twentieth Century, from 1953 (the death of Joseph Stalin) to 2008 (the end of the first term of Vladimir Putin). This thesis is divided into chapters connected to the terms of the different presidents. Chapter 2 covers the rule of Khrushchev, chapter 3 of Brezhnev and chapter 4 of Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin. I have chosen this division because the leaders of the Soviet Union and Russia had a substantial influence on the discourse of the country. They controlled politics and ideology which effected social life and frames of identification. Changes in national identity and gendered relations were linked to these different periods of leadership.

The main sources of this master thesis are *visual* sources. First, propaganda posters from the Soviet era from 1953 and advertisement posters in the post-Soviet era. Second, photographs and some cartoons from the magazine *Ogoniok* from 1953 to 2008. *Ogoniok* is one of the longest running magazines in the former Soviet Union and Russia. It is a weekly very well illustrated news and lifestyle magazine addressed to both men and women.

The propaganda posters belong to different collections and archives. Posters from 1953 to 1960

⁴² Andrea Mazzarino, 'Entrepreneurial women and business of self-development in global Russia', *Signs* (2013) 623.

⁴³ Anya Bernstein, 'An inadvertent sacrifice: Body politics an sovereign power in the Pussy Riot affair', *Critical Inquiry* (2013) 235-236.

are from a variety of online archives, the posters of the period 1960 to 1975 are from a private collection of Koos van Weringh, located in Germany (Collogne). This private collection consists of over 800 propaganda posters from the Soviet Union. For this research I have photographed this entire collection. Later I have made a selection paying attention to the depiction of men and women and different activities. After analysing these posters I made another selection, trying to include posters that are a good representation of the different kinds of posters. The advertisement posters that I used, are from online advertisement archives and online displays of Russian advertisement agencies. Underlying or latent structures of masculinity and femininity are subject of research. Regarding posters from the period before 1960 and after 1975, I have searched in different archives, one of them the collection of the International Institute for Social History. However this collection was not relevant for this study as the posters did not give an account of the social and economic lives of the people in the Soviet Union. Online archives, some of universities in the United States and of a library in Omsk, had collections of propaganda posters which were suitable for this research.

Earlier in this chapter the concept of imagology was introduced. In this paragraph I will discuss this in a more detailed way, related to my method. Imagology is a deconstructive critical analysis. The starting point of my research is the notion that national identity is formed by cultural constructs. The approach with the help of imagology analyses the representation of national identity and national stereotypes. It aims to understand the discourse of representation, not the reality that it represents. The characteristics that are addressed are not testable or statements of fact and the sources used are strictly subjective. The represented nationality is silhouetted in the context of a discourse. Imagology is interested in the dynamics between the images which characterize the 'other' and those which characterize the self, or hetero-images and self-images.

A national representation needs to be recognized as a trope and must then be placed in the context of its occurrence and time. A representation has, aside from a context, often an (intended) audience. This purpose of the image which I studied, is important for the analysis and rhetoric of the representation. Another aspect that needs to be taken into account is the wider relevance of a certain image, of the longer duration of the tradition of which it is part of and the spread to different discourses.⁴⁴ The nature of this research will be qualitative, for it will analyse the representation of gendered national identity in post-Soviet Russia.

⁴⁴ Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, 27-29.

Based on the above mentioned theoretical notions I have designed a scheme of analysis which I used to study the various sources on the gendered aspects of the changing national identity in (post-) Soviet Russia (see appendix I).

1.5 Innovative aspects

In this research the forming of a national identity since the 1950's of the Russian, seemingly inertly contradictory, society is analysed, particularly the representation of gendered national identity. I have divided this time frame into three periods. The representation and images of gendered national identity will be analysed in propaganda posters and images, mostly photographs, from the popular illustrated magazine *Ogoniok*. Not only the process of demise of communism, the role of women in the Soviet Union and the growing importance of the Orthodox Church, but also the visual depiction and representation of gendered characteristics and alterations to these constructions will be analysed. Also masculinity will be taken into account, related to the changing Russian identity. I focus on the complex interaction and collision between femininity and masculinity in the context of the redefinition of national identity of Russia. The involvement of gender will be examined by analysing changes and continuities in the various representations of gender in mainly visual sources. What makes this thesis innovative is the extended period which is subject to research. In this long duration the (post) Soviet society went through many changes. Another innovative aspect is the diversity of the different visual sources, the relation between formal and informal structures will become visible as a result of the use of propaganda posters and images from a popular magazine. The use of the very large collection of over 800 propaganda posters gave me the opportunity to make a selection which gives an adequate representation of the medium.

Chapter 2

The building and rebuilding of the Soviet Union, 1953-1964

The notorious Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) was also known as 'Father Stalin'. He often posed for photographs with children and presented himself as father of the country. To this day Stalin is praised for being the one that won the Second World War. The Second World War was of great influence on the Soviet society, many people died but the battle of Stalingrad became a decisive moment in the war. The collective memory of the war and the commemorating of the victory are still very important in the manifestation of Russian national identity. The Soviet Union was at that time a very patriotic nation, honouring soldiers and the fatherly leader. The Second World War has a different and in this context more suitable name in Russia: The Great Patriotic War. The use of the word 'patriot' is a gendered term which focuses on the male origins and influence during that period. However, during and after the war women were of great importance for the nation. In this period the communist ideology of equality together with the great losses of the war caused women to be equal to men. This was the situation at the end of the first half of the twentieth century. In the second half of this century many things would change, starting with the period called 'the thaw' under Nikita Khrushchev.

In this chapter I will discuss how men and women in this period were imagined in communist rhetoric, ideology and the reflection of real life in the images. I will focus on the forming of a gendered identity and the creation of ideological moral guidelines. Furthermore, attention will be given to the depiction of mothers and soldiers and the Soviet achievement of presenting the first female cosmonaut.

2.1 The rebuilding of the Soviet Union after Stalin

In an item of *Ogoniok* of 1953 the death of Stalin is commemorated, various photographs show people who honour Stalin. The pictures are of people in different layers in society, people in the streets, factories, schools. What binds all of them, is that they are Soviet people. There is no real visual difference between these people, there is a clear collective Soviet identity in the scenes. In the item there are pictures of people hearing the sad news, of his wife and drawings of Stalin, in most cases depicted alongside Lenin. The item of *Ogoniok* aims to illustrate the unity of the Soviet people and the connection they had with the Soviet leader. These two phenomena would remain important pillars of

the Soviet society; unity and strong leadership.

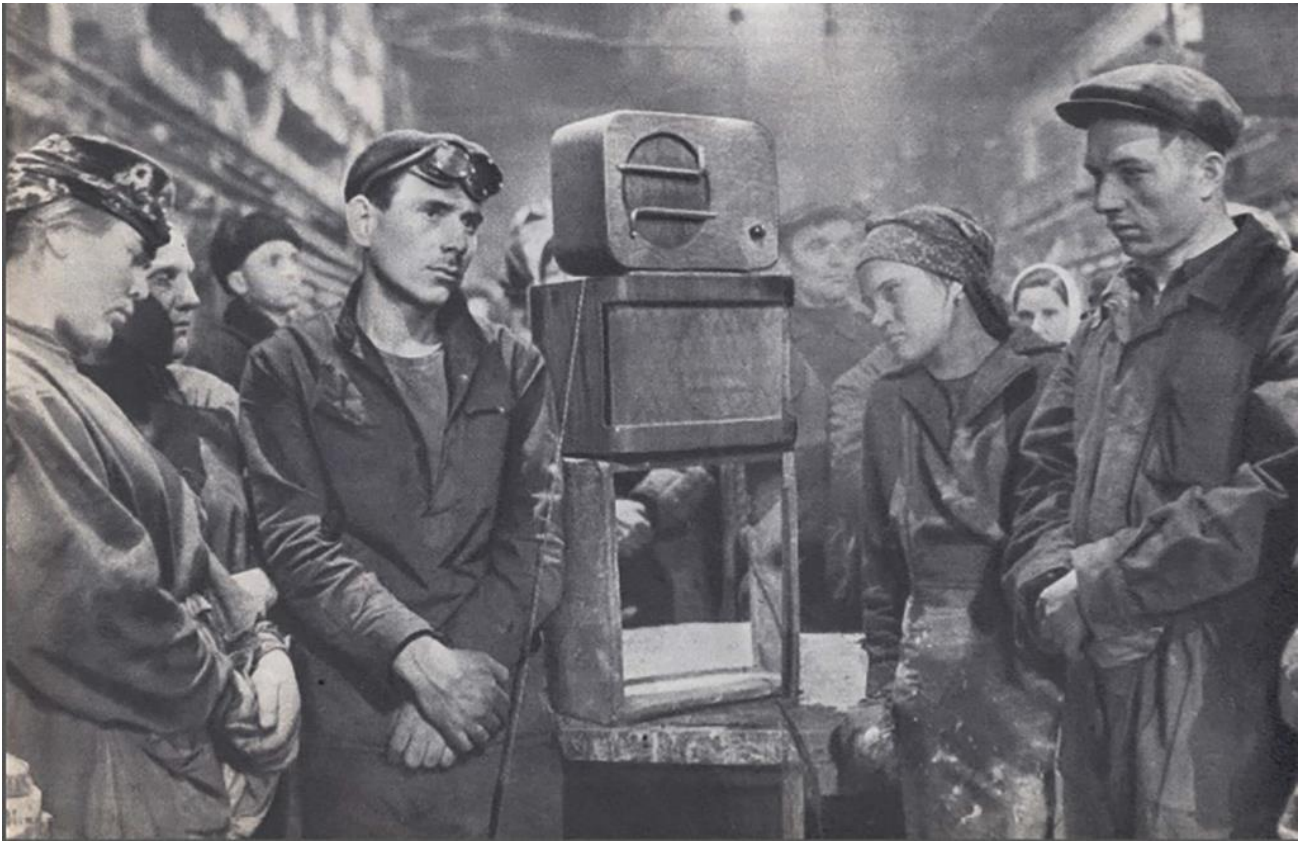


Figure 2.1 Photograph of people commemorating Stalin 1953⁴⁵

After the death of Stalin there was a battle for power within the top of the Communist Party. In 1953 Nikita Khrushchev won this battle and succeeded Stalin as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was born in 1894, which meant that his grown-up life was marked by the revolution and the building of the Soviet Union. In other words, he was educated to have a Soviet mind and goal. Nevertheless, in what was called the Secret speech of February 25th 1956, Khrushchev distanced himself from the policy of Stalin and wanted to return to the ideology of Marxism Leninism.⁴⁶ In the future the focus should not be on individuality and the glorification of one leader but on the collective and the entire nation, he stated. In this speech

⁴⁵ *Ogoniok* no. 10 (1953) 5.

⁴⁶ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>

Khrushchev criticized the terror and the purges under the rule of Stalin. He told the audience about individual cases where Soviet politicians and civilians were persecuted and about the number of times this occurred. Furthermore he proposed to keep this information quiet from the press, and not to hang out their dirty laundry for the world to see. However the speech was released very soon after this date to reach people inside and outside the Soviet Union.

An important task was to 'condemn and to eradicate the cult of the individual as alien to Marxism-Leninism'. Furthermore Khrushchev argued that 'In this connection we will be forced to do much work in order to examine critically from the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint and to correct the widely spread erroneous views connected with the cult of the individual in the sphere of history, philosophy, economy, and of other sciences, as well as in the literature and the fine arts. It is especially necessary that in the immediate future we compile a serious textbook of the history of our party which will be edited in accordance with scientific Marxist objectivism, a textbook of the history of Soviet society, a book pertaining to the events of the civil war and the great patriotic war.'⁴⁷ So a different history had to be written, the collective memory had to be renewed and re-found. An identity struggle between individuality and collectivity would mark a large part of the period to come in which a balance between the two had to be found. The national frames were changing, partly because of the rewriting of an 'objectivist' Marxist history and state ideology and partly because of a modern era that was about to begin with all the temptations of a modern lifestyle.

The Khrushchev period is also known as the period of thaw. The terror and purges of Joseph Stalin were over and Khrushchev openly condemned the rule of Stalin. There was room for new influences. Ideology, however, remained important and kept a strong footprint on gendered identity.

2.2 Creating a gendered identity in the Soviet ideology

Four propaganda posters from the beginning of the period of Khrushchev as Secretary General demonstrate the way men and women were portrayed in propaganda in that time. In two posters both sexes are represented, in the two other posters there is either a man or a woman depicted. These images give a notion of the way Soviet men and women were portrayed. In this next part the four posters will be discussed, paying attention to the roles of men and women and their relationships.

⁴⁷ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html> 10-07-15.



Figure 2.2 Propaganda poster mother and soldier 1954⁴⁸

In this poster a mother says goodbye to her son and says to him: 'I will be proud of you!' In the background there is an agricultural scene with a tractor and tents. In the poster two very typical roles of men and women are visible, the role of mother and the role of soldier. The agricultural land represents the motherland, the mother is wearing red and together with the background, she represents the proud nation. The son smiles at his mother and placed his hand on her wrist. The symbolism ascribed to men and women in the posters is linked to certain gendered dispositions: the heroic figure is masculine and the caring figure is feminine.

⁴⁸ http://www.omsklogo.ru/logotypes/01_09_12_blog/posters-sh/plakat-selskoye-hozaystvo_16.jpg 17-07-15.



Figure 2.3 Propaganda poster workers on tractors 1954⁴⁹

‘The party calls!’ is written on the second poster. Four people look at the sunrise, as the light of the upcoming sun shines on their bodies. They stand on machines to work the land, the machines are decorated with red flags. The people are dressed differently and represent different layers of the Soviet society and identity. The man in the foreground is wearing an overall and a farmers hat, the second person is a man wearing a suit with tie and represents the labour force. The third person is a woman, she is wearing a white scarf around her head. The fourth person is a man in a hat, whose clothes are not visible. What is being said in this poster is that all Soviet people work for the party. This was an important message of the government, the equality of all members of the Soviet Union.

⁴⁹ http://www.omsklogo.ru/logotypes/01_09_12_blog/posters-sh/plakat-selskoye-hozaystvo_15.jpg 17-07-15.



Figure 2.4 Propaganda poster woman with bandanna and grain 1954⁵⁰



Figure 2.5 Propaganda poster man engineer 1954⁵¹

⁵⁰ http://www.omsklogo.ru/logotypes/01_09_12_blog/posters-sh/plakat-selskoye-hozaystvo_19.jpg 17-07-15.

In the next two posters included here, a trend is visible that occurs in more posters. The first poster is of a woman, a scarf around her head, her sleeves rolled up, she looks healthy and strong. She holds a bag of grain and holds her other hand in a large trough of golden grain in front of her. In the back there are more women loading the harvest of the day, they look strong, active and productive. In the second poster there is a man in working clothes, the background is white and on the right there are two drawings of agricultural machines and one of motor parts. At the bottom of the poster the word: 'mastered' is written. The man looks at the viewer and holds his hands in a position as if he is explaining something. The message is one of knowledge and skills, the man mastered the art of engineering. With these posters a distinction was made between men and women. Women did mostly manual work and were of importance to the Soviet Union. Women portrayed in the posters often worked the land and were depicted as farmers with a rich harvest. As the previous poster shows, men were depicted in more distinguished positions of architects and builders of the country. In this period there was a friction between the status of men and women and the different expectations that existed about their roles in society.

In one of the posters discussed above, a soldier and his mother are depicted. These are two very important figures in the creation of the Soviet identity and narrative. Soldiers were the heroes of the Soviet Union, mothers were the care takers of all the people in the Soviet Union. In almost all cases, soldiers depicted in the posters are male. Often these men are depicted with children and serve as an example for these children. Women, and especially mothers, are depicted as care takers. Beside the differences in the tasks in the Soviet work force, a distinction between the nature of men and women as strong role models and soft and safe care takers is made.

⁵¹ http://www.omsklogo.ru/logotypes/01_09_12_blog/posters-sh/plakat-selskoye-hozaystvo_11.jpg 17-07-15.



Figure 2.6 Photograph boy in marine uniform 1954⁵²

A large photograph on the back of the magazine *Ogoniok* of June 1954 shows a little boy of about eight years old wearing a replica of a uniform of the USSR navy, behind him you can see the flag of the navy of the Soviet Union. In many posters and photographs men were presented as role models for young boys. In this case the boy is wearing a replica of a grown man's uniform and enacts the part he is supposed to play when he will be older. He enacts an identity or the gender role of a grown man is projected on him.

In another photograph from the magazine *Ogoniok*, in 1956, there is a father and mother with their two sons. The oldest son is wearing a uniform from the All-Union Pioneers. The father is wearing his military uniform with his decorations pinned on. Both children are looking at their father in great awe. The woman stands beside the man, her left hand is on his uniform. The man is in the centre of the picture, and the centre of this scene. He is depicted as the head of the family, honourably in his uniform and surrounded and supported by his wife and children. The relations within the family in this picture are based on gendered notions, with a man as head of the family, two boys who look up to him and the woman in a supportive role.

⁵² *Ogoniok* no.25 (1954) cover.



Figure 2.7 Photograph family and military man 1956⁵³

The woman in this picture stands beside her husband and he is the head of the family. Other photographs from *Ogoniok* show that this was not the only role of women in the Soviet Union, though throughout the entire period of the Soviet Union it remained an important one. In the photographs in the item of *Ogoniok* 1954 about the training of pilots, there are mostly men depicted. However in some of the pictures there is a female parachutist depicted as well. She was not the only one, the first female cosmonaut, in 1963, was a parachutist as well. Later in this chapter more will be written about this historical event. Another photograph in an issue of *Ogoniok*, also from 1954, confirms the image that women were not only supportive housewives in the USSR. In the photograph there are two women in a scientific laboratory, the women are wearing white coats and are working with different substances and

⁵³ *Ogoniok* no. 18 (1956) 1.

glass bottles. In this issue there is a variety of women and their professions, showing what was accepted and expected of women in a communist society.



Figure 2.8 Photograph pilot men around table 1954⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Ogoniok* no 25 (1954) 1.



Figure 2.9 Photograph female parachutist 1954⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *Ogoniok* no 25 (1954) 6.



Figure 2.10 Photograph women scientists 1954⁵⁶

Aside from the depiction of women as parachutists and scientists, women were also given a voice in this period. In a poster from 1962 three women are portrayed: one Russian woman, one Asian woman and an African woman. On the poster the text “Women of the world – will defend peace” is written. All three women are holding microphones, and the word ‘peace’ is written in English and Chinese. This poster aims to demonstrate the unity and equality of all women in the world and of women as strong human beings. The microphones symbolise a voice the women have in the Soviet Union and other communist countries in Asia and Africa. In many images women are connected to propagating peace. Posters like this might influence the self image of women in the Soviet Union. Its message was that women are (allowed to be) powerful and that they are able to use that power to defend peace, a value considered very important in the communist doctrine. Women are connected to peace, men to war. Men are often depicted as soldiers and the war is called patriotic. This is one important binary opposition which appears from under the layer of communist ideology.

⁵⁶ *Ogoniok* no 9 (1954) 3.



Figure 2.11 Propaganda poster women demonstration for peace 1962⁵⁷

The posters and photographs shown, illustrate that there are two main narratives that existed next to each other in the Soviet Union which would lead to difficult paradoxes at times. Some of the examples above might already unveil a problem that proved to be one of the most difficult ones to overcome in the fields of national identity and gender. The women in the images were parachutists, scientists, or train operators, however this did not mean they were no longer expected to take care of the children and the household. This friction between the ideological expectancies and opportunities and obligations at home and in society became more evident in this period. Two problems arose: women faced a double burden having to take care of the household and besides that, being a part of the workforce. The second problem was that the principle of equality in the Soviet Doctrine, left little room for the differences between men and women. In the next paragraphs I will elaborate on these issues.

⁵⁷ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-997, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1962.

2.3 Women and the problem of consumerism. Refrigerator communism?

In a part of a conversation in 1959 between Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon, Vice President of the United States at that time, opposite trends between the US and the Soviet Union, or capitalism and communism, became manifest. At the American National Exhibition, held in the summer of 1959 in Moscow and sponsored by the American government, the Americans showed new technologies and design in several pavilions.⁵⁸ In the kitchen showroom Khrushchev and Nixon held a conversation, known as the kitchen debate:

'Nixon: I want to show you this kitchen. It is like those of our houses in California. [Nixon points to dishwasher.]

Khrushchev: We have such things.

Nixon: This is our newest model. This is the kind which is built in thousands of units for direct installations in the houses. In America, we like to make life easier for women...

Khrushchev: Your capitalistic attitude toward women does not occur under Communism.

Nixon: I think that this attitude towards women is universal. What we want to do, is make life more easy for our housewives.....'⁵⁹

The conversation did not proceed well at all and Khrushchev seemed insulted by everything Nixon said. Nixon's last comment in the conversation cited above, might also have been true for the Soviet Union at that time. It was however not the image Khrushchev wanted the world to have of the Soviet Union and perhaps not even the image he had himself. In this conversation Nixon used the words 'women' and 'housewives' as synonyms. Khrushchev made a point to go against Nixon's statement that women and housewives are the same thing. This view was in line with the Soviet communist ideology, however in reality women in the Soviet Union were indeed expected to fulfil this task.

Compared to the previous period, consumption became more desired in the Khrushchev period. However, the shortages of consumer goods remained. In an attempt to conceal this fact and adhere to the communist ideology, the Soviet government kept the priority of production higher than that of

⁵⁸ In 1958 the USA and the Soviet Union signed a US-USSR cultural exchange agreement. This exposition and a Soviet exposition that took place at the same time in the States, were meant to implement the cultural exchange between the nations. As this took place in the Cold War, there was a fair deal of cultural competition involved. For more information see e.g., Marilyn S.Kusher, 'Exhibiting art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959. Domestic politics and cultural diplomacy', *Journal of Cold War studies* (2002).

⁵⁹ Transcript kitchen debate, July 24th 1959 (www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf)

consumption.⁶⁰ With respect to consumption, the Khrushchevist discourse had a very paternalistic approach. Social and moral behaviour were subject of government control. The state wanted to control how people dressed, their housekeeping, taste and other aspects of consumption. Via a moral code and advice literature the minds and acts of the Soviet people were manipulated. The fact that there was pressure on the people from the government was not new, the goal of the government was. Khrushchev wanted a modern state, with modern ideas and a well oiled Soviet industry. The fact that the Soviet Union was essentially not a consumerist state did cause some ideological puzzles. At a conference, organized to determine the boundaries of advertisement and consumerism, the socialist leaders agreed to promote rational consumption, the culture of trade and to educate consumers and not - like the capitalist countries - to generate inauthentic and insatiable consumer demand.⁶¹ Individual desires that were not in the best interest of the collective, were by definition irrational in the Soviet Union.

In the kitchen debate Khrushchev states there was no 'capitalist attitude towards women' in the Soviet Union. This was a reaction to the words of Nixon, when he stated that the modern kitchens with new technologies were to make the lives of women easier. Though Khrushchev may not have thought this comment through, it is still a remarkable comment. Women in the Soviet Union were responsible for the household and the work in the kitchen, this was something he apparently did not want to admit or maybe he did not want it to be true. He places the capitalist attitude towards women in contrast with the communist attitude towards women. Women in capitalist countries are only good for being housewives, in communism women are more important than that. This comment of Khrushchev was true on an ideological level, informally, however, the situation was more complicated. It was the woman's task to cook dinner, clean the house, but another task was just as important: being part of the workforce. Again the double role of women is proven to be a struggle. Khrushchev showed no interest in the American technologies or to work together and share ideas. However Soviet women did start to show interest in the consumer goods and household technology originated in Europe and the United States. These developments did not go unnoticed by the Soviet government, they worked hard to improve the standard of living in the Soviet Union. The American National exhibition had caused some worries in the USSR and this was preempted in the 1958-65 economic plan. In this plan the goal was formulated to improve living standards to catch up with the United States. Khrushchev himself

⁶⁰ Susan Reid, 'Cold war in the kitchen: gender and the de-Stalinization of consumer taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev', *Slavic Review* (2002) 215-216.

⁶¹ Reid, 'Cold war in the kitchen', 218.

however did not plan to do this through an increase in consumer goods but the development of public services, education, daycare centres, new flats, healthcare and the right to work.⁶² An example of the improved public services were the communal dining facilities like the one a family in a cartoon from the magazine *Ogoniok* visits.

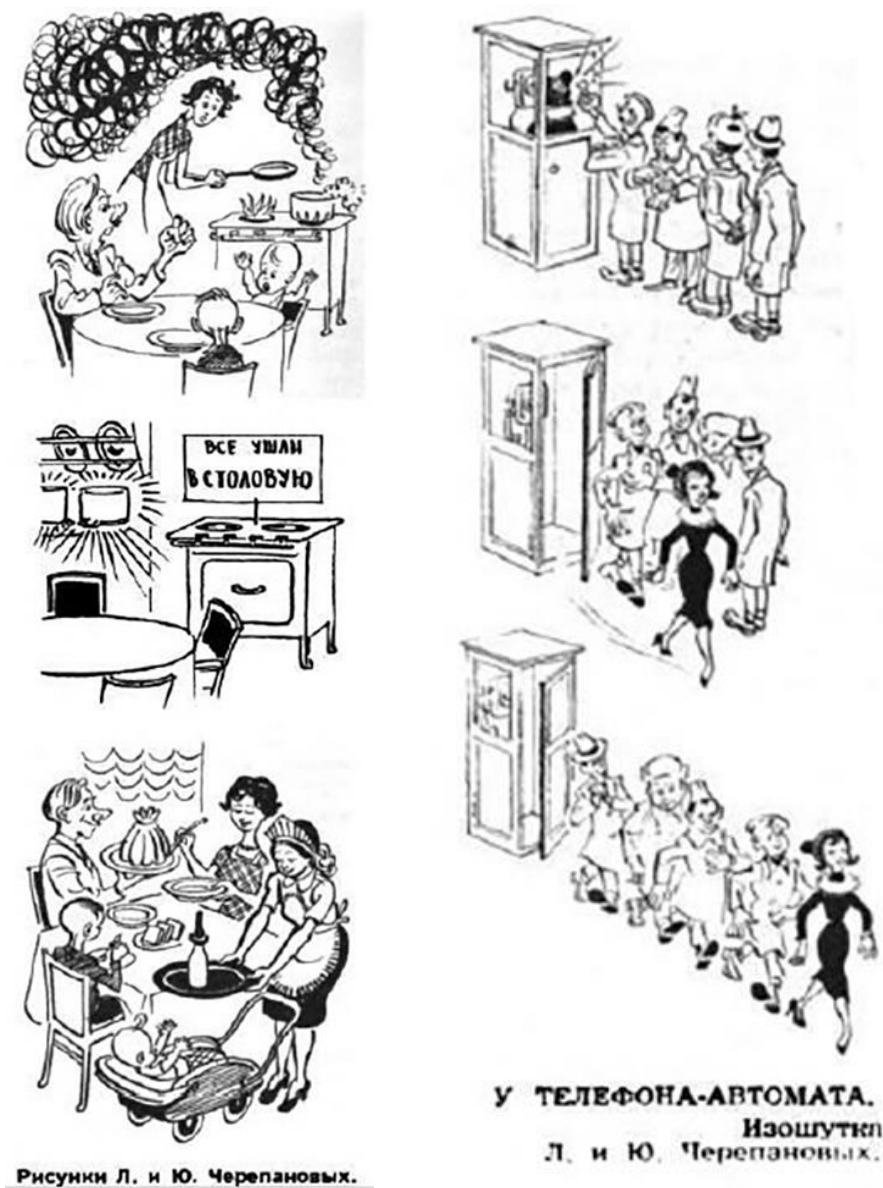


Figure 2.12 and 2.13 cartoons kitchen canteen 1959 and sexy woman in phone booth 1959⁶³

⁶² *Idem*, 225.

⁶³ *Ogoniok* March 8 (1959) 4 and 32.

The two cartoons are from the same item of the magazine from the 8th of March 1959, an item dedicated to international women's day. In the magazine many women are presented in a wide range of professions: baker, perfume saleswoman, midwife, nurse, farmer, train operator, ballet dancer and many more. On the one hand luxury items and fashion were of greater importance and the Soviet Union was embarrassed about the reputation of Soviet women, being forced to do manual labour. On the other hand the wide range of professions, also women doing manual labour, showed the role of Soviet women with pride in the special edition of *Ogoniok*.

The cartoon on the left shows a family in their kitchen. The woman is behind the stove, there is something burning as there is black smoke coming from one of the pans. The man and two children are at the dinner table waiting for the food, the man is agitated, he is yelling and raises his fist and the baby is crying. The next picture shows an empty kitchen, there is a clean stove, clean pots and pans and an empty table. On the stove there is a note: 'We all went to the canteen'. This is illustrated in the third and final picture. The family is dining at a table, the baby is now in a carriage and a waitress is bringing him his bottle of milk. This cartoon shows that being a housewife was not the most important task of a woman. In this cartoon the whole family is taken care of, the woman is not primarily a care taker or mother but is allowed to put these tasks and traditional role aside. The cartoon on the right shows a phone booth. There is someone inside making a call and outside there is a line of men waiting to use the booth. The four men are impatient, knocking on the door and looking at their watches. In the second picture the door is opened and a woman in a tight black dress and high heels walks out of the phone booth, past the men. They all turn around to look at her. In the last picture the woman walks on but at this time the men all follow her in a straight line, all forgotten they wanted to use the phone booth in the first place. Like the previous cartoon, the traditional view of the woman as care taker or mother is abandoned. The role she takes on instead is however a different one. As the next paragraph will show, in many posters men and women were depicted as equal and show no extreme differences in physical characteristics. The cartoons show that this was not always the case in real life where differences between men and women, socially and physically, existed. However the Soviet leaders wanted to emphasise the unity and uniformity of the Soviet people. This is demonstrated in propaganda posters presented in the next paragraph.

2.4 Model citizens



Figure 2.14 Propaganda poster men and women alike 1962⁶⁴

In this poster from 1962 men and women are not only equal, the sexes are close to identical. There is a flag saying: 'for communist labour!' and it displays a hammer and sickle. At the bottom it states: Collectivism and mutual assistance: one for all, all for one. This poster strongly emphasizes the collective identity and common goals of the Soviet Union. The bodies of the people depicted are close to identical, strong necks and shoulders, both women and men. Gender, it tells the viewer, is irrelevant, individualism is irrational.

In the Soviet Union the question about one's identity and what people were expected to be, was

⁶⁴ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-876, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1962.

more pressing than in other countries because of the relative novelty of the Soviet Union and the communist system. People could not ask older generations for advice. At the twenty second party congress in 1961 Nikita Khrushchev formulated 12 moral rules that everyone in the Soviet Union was supposed to follow, or which character traits they had to possess. However, official ideologies of states are not guides to what is in the minds of the people⁶⁵. The moral codes were created by the state based on the state ideology, and thus do not necessarily mirror the characteristics of the Soviet people. However, this list of codes is not just a top down approach; it is also a reflection of the Soviet society and might influence the hopes and dispositions of the people. The moral code of the builders of communism was as follows. People in the Soviet Union had to strive for:

1. Devotion to the cause of Communism, love for the Socialist Motherland, and for the Socialist countries in general.
2. A commitment to conscientious *labour on behalf of society*. Whoever does not work does not eat.
3. A concern on the part of everyone for the preservation and proliferation of public property.
4. An elevated consciousness of social duty, an intolerance of any disruption of the interests of society as a whole.
5. Collectivism and mutual aid. *All for one, one for all*.
6. A humane relationship and mutual respect between people. Man is the friend, comrade and *brother of his fellow man*.
7. Honesty and fairness, moral purity, simplicity and modesty in one's social and personal life.
8. *Mutual respect within the family*, concern for the proper upbringing of children.
9. An intolerance of injustice, parasitism, dishonesty, careerism.
10. Friendship and *brotherhood* of all the peoples in the USSR, an intolerance of nationalism and racial hatred.
11. An intolerance of the enemies of Communism, of peace, and of the freedom of nations.
12. *Brotherly* solidarity with the peoples of all countries, and with all nations.⁶⁶

These codes had to be the basis for an individual and collective identity, for in the Soviet Union the communist ideology the one did not exist without the other. Moral codes could ensure a collective behaviour and dispositions, a common goal and mind. These codes do not propagate a national identity, nationalism was seen as intolerant and wrong. The objective was a collective identity based on collectivism and brotherhood. As this word shows, there are a few gendered notions in this list of codes, some of them are italicized by me. In several cases terms that are used, are gendered. An example of this is rule 12 where the word 'brotherly' (Братская) is used. This shows the difficulty of equality between the sexes, women should behave as men instead of creating a different, female,

⁶⁵ Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism, 11.

⁶⁶ <http://soviethistory.macalester.edu/index.php?page=subject&SubjectID=1961field&Year=1961&navi=byYear>
Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, *Russian cultural studies. An introduction* (Oxford 1998) 314-315.

identity. In cultural characteristics gender differences are integrated and not easily changed.

In the list of moral codes there are notable gendered dispositions, but the position of women in society is not specifically mentioned. The different roles of women in the Soviet society are portrayed in a poster from 1964 for the celebration of woman's day.



Figure 2.15 Propaganda poster women in different roles 1964⁶⁷

The woman in the front is dressed in red, her sleeves are rolled up and she has a red scarf around her head. She smiles and holds her hands in the sky, in her right hand she is holding red flowers. The composition of the women implies a different symbolic role for the woman in front. She embodies the

⁶⁷ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-549, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1964.

Soviet Union itself it seems. She is wearing red clothes and three other women are depicted behind her, the viewer can see them in between her arms. The three women behind her represent more concrete positions of women in society. There is a woman with a child, a mother. She wears a traditional hat. There is a cosmonaut, this is Valentina Tereshkova, with the spacecraft *Vostok 6* which took her to space in 1963, the first woman to do so. In the back is an industrial worker with a welding hood, behind her there is a construction site with cranes. The poster shows different professions and roles of women in the Soviet Union. There are two forms of motherhood depicted, there is the woman with a baby who is clearly a mother and the woman in red in the front, who represents the motherland and embodies a protective and caring image. In the next part I will elaborate on the first woman to go into space and orbit the earth, a practical implementation of the communist ideological notion of equality.

2.4.1 The first woman' in space'

In 1963 the Soviets launched the Vostok 6 in an orbit around the globe. The person inside the Vostok 6 was the third person to enter space and a woman, her name was Valentina Tereshkova. In the time of the Cold War this was a clear statement to prove that they put their money where their mouth was and realize the words of Khrushchev cited earlier in this chapter 'Your capitalistic attitude toward women does not occur under Communism'.⁶⁸ The Soviet Union did not want to be beaten in the space race by the United States of America. They wanted to show that the Soviet Union was able to send a woman into space and prove what they were worth on a practical and ideological level. The Soviets were in a hurry in the 1960's. In 1962 the recruiting began (for single women between the ages of 18 and 30), eventually five women passed the initial tests and proceeded to cosmonaut training. Two women from flying clubs, two parachutists and a rocket propulsion engineer. The training was demanding, making sure the chosen woman could handle the stress of space flight. On the 16th of June in 1963, Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman to orbit the earth.⁶⁹ It later turned out that after the success of this mission, the urge to send women into space was gone, the point was proven. It took nineteen years for the next woman, also from the Soviet Union, to make a space flight. The first woman the United States sent to space would be even later, in 1983, this shows it was not a priority in the USA. Statistics from the 1980's onwards show a different trend. Of the 535 people travelling to space, 58 were women. Of

⁶⁸ Transcript kitchen debate, July 24th 1959 (www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf)

⁶⁹ Karen Gibson, *Women in space. 23 stories of first flights, scientific missions, and gravity breaking adventures* (Chicago 2014) 49-50.

these women only four were from the Soviet Union or later the Russian Federation and no less than 44 were from the USA. However this would all take place in later times and the accomplishment of sending a woman into space in 1963 was still an important event, a marker for modernity in the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

The space-race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union was an important part of the Cold War and the Soviet Union had the lead. The Soviet Union excelled in space travel and they chose this field to make a statement about the equality between men and women. In this case the space flight of the Vostok 6 triggered a discussion about gender, instead of science, prestige or military power.⁷¹ With this event the formal ideology of the Soviet Union and communism, was given a practical implementation. The reactions were diverse but everywhere in the world there was a great interest about the way Valentina Tereshkova looked, her hair, make-up, dresses and shoes. Another point of attention were the physical capabilities of the cosmonaut. Questions were raised about her physical abilities and if she could still have children after going into space. Soviet scientists stated it was the completed process of achieving full equality between men and women in the Soviet Union that could explain why a woman was capable of the heavy physical efforts. The attention for the looks of Valentina was combined with the image of her as an example of female emancipation. The party leadership dined with her and many times the fact was stressed that the young textile worker, a daughter of a tractor driver who died in combat in the Second World War, was the proof of the successful emancipation as a pillar of socialism.⁷²

Equality and emancipation as defining for an identity could mean different things in different times and places. The international situation of the Cold War defined the choices of the Soviet Union to a great extent. Sending a woman into space was not so much a result of emancipation as it was the result of proving women of the Soviet Union were emancipated, this is an important distinction to be made. The formal goal in the Soviet Union was equality of all people, however behind the equality between men and women in the communist ideology, lies inequality. Women were allowed, and even expected, to participate in the labour market, but consequences like the 'double burden' were not

⁷⁰ Idem, 73-75.

⁷¹ Jolande Withuis, *De jurk van de kosmonaute. Over politiek, cultuur en psyche* (Amsterdam 1995) 99.

⁷² Withuis, *De jurk van de kosmonaute*, 100-102.

recognised.⁷³

In the West the society was orientated on money, prestige and individual success. In the Soviet Union the aim was to work for the community and to be part of a common goal. It was important to be extraordinary in contributing to the collective. The West and the East were different in wanting what you can get versus what you can give. In the Soviet Union, giving your life for the common good was the highest achievement, therefore soldiers were the most honoured. These dispositions based on gender differences and the equality of the sexes were incorporated in the education of children. Already at a young age young boys and girls were confronted with propaganda posters of their opportunities for the future. In these posters boys and girls were equals. In some cases the posters focused on girls especially and the wide range of possibilities they could fulfil in society. In the next part examples of these kind of posters will be discussed.

2.4.2 Dreams of the future

Education about the communist doctrine and the expectations of men and women in society started at a young age. To create model citizens, children had to be educated the right way. In the communist doctrine, all humans are equal. In practice this was not always the case, men and women were subject to different expectations of their role in society in politics, the workforce and the domestic position. To create a collective identity and the perspective of equal lives, propaganda was used to form the expectations of the Soviet youth.

In propaganda posters the future was portrayed as being full of chances for little boys and little girls. Schooling was seen as important for all children and the first day of school is celebrated as a holiday. In many posters and also in pictures in the magazine *Ogoniok* children go to school, again both girls and boys. Propaganda posters give the reason for the need to go to school. Children could become anything they wanted in the future. On a poster to celebrate the new year in 1964, two children, a boy and a girl are wearing space suits and a rocket. On the helmets CCCP is written. Both the suits and the rocket are red, on the rocket the text 'east' is written. The girl is in front and has red ribbons in her hair, she is waving a red flag. In the background there is a Christmas tree. Underneath it says: Happy new year, children. A strong reference to the space race is made and the future of the children. The boy and the girl are equal, the girl is even in front and waving the red flag. The poster is meant to show the

⁷³ Marjan Schwegman, 'Lagen der werkelijkheid. Italiaanse en Nederlandse vrouwen tijdens het interbellum', *JVV* (1981) 123.

dreams of the children for the future, the focus on space technology in the Soviet Union and the equality of boys and girls in these aspirations.



Figure 2.16 Propaganda poster children in rocket suit 1964⁷⁴

In a poster from 1964 a little girl with pigtails and ribbons is holding a first learning book for school.⁷⁵ In her eyes there is an excited and curious look. Around her are simple children's drawings with white lines and different colours in the background. They are her fantasies or opportunities of the future. In one of the pictures she is a cosmonaut in a rocket, in the second she is an architect, in the next she is sailing a boat, in another she is a nurse and in the last picture she is watering plants. This poster is an example of the way little girls could see their future in the Soviet Union, doing any job they wanted. Young girls were educated to be part of the workforce and aim for what they dreamed of doing. In this way women were shaped to participate in the workforce.

⁷⁴ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-767, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1964.

⁷⁵ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-392, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1964.



Figure 2.17 Propaganda poster girl with future dreams 1964⁷⁶

The children that would have seen these posters, grew to be adults in the Breznev era. In the chapter 3 it will be explored if these promises of equality in the future would come true.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter started with the death of Stalin. The Soviet Union was a strong country and Stalin a strong leader, a father figure. The great Patriot War was still in the minds of the people. Unity and equality in the Soviet society were partly a consequence of this war, enforced by the communist ideology. Khrushchev, however, openly condemned the purges that took place under the rule of Stalin. The period during the leadership of Khrushchev was relatively quiet and prosperous.

⁷⁶ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-392, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1964.

Gendered identity in the Soviet Union was strongly influenced by ideology. Communist ideology prescribed equality and unity of all people. All Soviets worked together for a better nation, men and women alike. However, there are gender differences in the images I analysed. Women are mostly linked to the harvest and fertile lands, they do manual work and are often depicted as mothers. Men are portrayed as soldiers, engineers and leaders. Soldiers were honoured and from an early age boys were given a chance to identify themselves with this role. Men were depicted as the head of the family. Nevertheless, women were 'allowed' to occupy these positions as well. In many images, women are presented as strong and educated workers, fit for many different professions. The profession of soldier was however reserved for men. In the Soviet discourse, women were connected to peace and men to war. This division is most evident in the posters, in which men are depicted as soldiers and women propagate peace. What the Soviet Union wanted to proliferate about gender and what was prescribed in the communist ideology was not always a reflection of the conditions in society. Women were not considered to be only housewives but in reality it was expected of women to take care of the household and the children. Women had to be housewives and were expected to work as well, this led to a double burden for women. To make life easier and keep people happy, there were day-care centres and canteens. This way people would not be tempted by consumer goods and be satisfied with their lives.

In some images the focus shifts, there is no collective gender but femininity ('feminine' behaviour) peeks around the corner. In this area there is a clear difference between the two source collections: the propaganda posters and the images in the magazine. The propaganda has a focus on equality, similarity and uniformity. The magazine is closer to situations in real life and shows the differences between the different sexes.

Soviet leaders wanted to create opportunities for Soviet women, and equal rights for men and women. However the question is for whom did they want to create that situation? It is likely that part of this policy was not so much for the women as for the reputation of the Soviet Union. They wanted to create a positive image of the country within the Soviet Union and outside. Moscow wanted to prove to the world that men and women were equals in the Soviet Union. In this way women were also used for international political goals. Another motive was ideological. The emancipation of women was a means to an end, to implement ideological and political goals. Equalising the sexes did not always work as planned, sometimes in trying to prove the point of equal genders, the difference between the notion of the two sexes was confirmed instead of erased. This was the case with the first female cosmonaut,

despite the goal to prove equality, much attention was given to her feminine characteristics. Sending a woman to space served as proof to the rest of the world that women were emancipated. It was not for the sake of gender equality or emancipation of women, it was believed this was already established under communism, they wanted to display this for the rest of the world. Another trend was that when a woman was presented as a hero, often masculine qualities were emphasized. Instead of eliminating the differences between the sexes, gendered characteristics were allocated differently. These qualities remained feminine or masculine and were confirmed in these images.

There were two essential problems in this period: the double burden for women and the fact that equality left no room for differences. As we shall see these problems would remain in the period to come.

Chapter 3

Consolidation and stagnation, 1964 - 1982

In the Brezhnev years, the ideological course of the Soviet Union stayed more or less the same. Propaganda posters of this time still idealised the workers and the goal of a global socialist society. The themes of peace, labour and equality remained important. However times did change and this had its effect on the gender roles and expectations. To what extent this is visible in the visual sources of that time, will be explored in this chapter.

3.1 The Brezhnev era and legacy

In a famous joke about Brezhnev, he is riding a train with Stalin and Khrushchev: 'When the train grinds to a halt, Stalin declares "I'll fix this", and promptly has the entire crew shot and replaced. The train moves along for a bit, but then stops again. Khrushchev promises to get it going, and immediately reorganizes the entire management. The train starts up, rolls along the tracks for a while, but soon stops yet again. "I know what to do", says Brezhnev. He pulls down the blinds in the car and suggests to the others, "Let's just pretend we're moving."⁷⁷

Brezhnev was not seen as the most proactive leader, as the joke shows. The period of Brezhnev became known as the 'era of stagnation' and the 'stability of cadres', however the real picture was more complex.⁷⁸ This period slowly changed into one of elderly men holding on to old ideals. The West was going through transformation and economic growth. The people of the Soviet Union became more eager for consumption goods but these wishes were not met. The period was marked by political conservatism and economic stagnation, although there was also a rise in living standards. Moreover, the Soviet Union was acknowledged as a global superpower in a more or less stable political situation: the Cold War did not escalate into a nuclear war. As Brezhnev grew older, his grip on the economy and politics faded away. His rule lasted for 18 years, until his death in 1982. Brezhnev was not the only one growing older, the Soviet leadership consisted of men with an average age of 70 years old.⁷⁹

This image of the Brezhnev era would seem likely to have a negative effect on the popularity of

⁷⁷ Charles E. Ziegler, *The history of Russia* (Santa Barbara 2009) 121-122.

⁷⁸ Edwin Bacon, *Brezhnev reconsidered* (New York 2002) 11.

⁷⁹ Idem, 22.

Brezhnev. The truth is however, that this president was never really unpopular in the Soviet Union. Polls in the 1990's indicate that the people of the Soviet Union thought of the Brezhnev era as a positive one⁸⁰ The stagnation hypothesis was constructed by Gorbachev. Of course there was an economic stagnation, but Gorbachev linked it all specifically to Brezhnev.



Figure 3.1 Photograph Brezhnev with male colleagues and medals 1973⁸¹

Brezhnev was very fond of his medals, he 'loved power and honours' as a former Politbureau colleague said about him. On his 60th birthday in 1966 he was awarded the medal 'Hero of the Soviet Union', in the years that followed he would be awarded another three Hero of the Soviet Union medals, the Order of Lenin with Gold Star for bravery during the Great Patriotic War, the Lenin Prize for Literature and over 200 other medals from Soviet states and organisations. In 1976 he had himself named Marshall of the Soviet Union, this was the highest military rank in the Soviet Union.⁸² Brezhnev profiled himself as a strong masculine leader and a hero at the top.

⁸⁰ Idem, 5.

⁸¹ *Ogoniok* no 10 (1973) 1.

⁸² Bacon, *Brezhnev reconsidered*, 8-9.

3.2 Established Soviet icons

The identity constructions in the Soviet Union were ideologically based on collectivity instead of individuality. All the work was done for the good of the state and the common good of its people. However, in real life there was room for the individual and personal development. As a result, people in the Soviet Union grew into an identity with different layers. There was the formal identity which was created top down and there were the informal structures like family life and consumerism that formed the identity of the Soviet people. As consumerism grew in the sixties, so did the tension between the old and the new identity structures and expectations.

In the previous chapter special attention was given to the roles of mothers and soldiers in the Soviet Union. The presence of these iconic figures in this period will be discussed in the next part. In the Brezhnev period the formal ideology did not go through major changes, the 'moral code' of the Soviets remained the same. Identities adapted to social and economic changes and Soviet identities became more dynamic. As a counter reaction some of the established Soviet identities became even more fused with their symbolic meaning. In the USSR certain identities grew into icons, obtaining a symbolic meaning to the collective identity. Mothers are one example of an iconic identity in the Soviet Union.

3.2.1. Mothers and fertile lands

Women were often depicted as mothers and caretakers, as symbols for the fertile lands, as advocates of peace or strong workers. Several posters show no clear distinction between men and women, in those images they were depicted as equals. In some cases women are depicted in men's clothing, doing physical work, to show the equality in the work place. However, as the posters show, equality was not prevalent in all of society. Certain positions were reserved for either men or women. Men were the fighters in the army, women sometimes play a part in these posters, but this is for the most part one of caring for the soldiers. In contrast, the land and the fruits the land has to give, were always feminine. Similar to the previous period, the propaganda and depiction of masculinity and femininity in posters were linked to the formal ideology of the Soviet Union and as a result hardly changed.



Figure 3.2 Propaganda poster 3 medals women 1971⁸³

In this poster from 1971 with the caption, 'courage of the heroic soviet women!', three women embody three important roles of women in the Soviet Union. On the left there is a woman in a white dress with long sleeves and heavy brown boots holding red flowers. In the back there are six pictures of women performing heroic acts. There is a female cosmonaut, female pilots, women in the resistance with explosions in the background and a woman helping the wounded. In the right top corner of this image there is a medal: the medal for hero of the Soviet Union, the highest medal achievable. On the right of the poster there is another woman. She is also wearing a white dress, however this dress has short sleeves and she is wearing flat shoes. She is also holding red flowers and an iconic bandanna for the working Soviet woman. In the background there are seven pictures of women working, women in factories, women working on the land and doing industrial work. There is a picture of a woman working as a nurse and in a science laboratory. In the top right corner there is a picture of the medal: hero of socialist labour. The third woman, in the middle of the poster, is depicted with a baby. The baby is in front of her and the woman looks at the child with a smile and holds her hands out to the baby. In the right corner there is a picture of the medal 'mother heroine', awarded to women who gave birth to

⁸³ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-544, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1971.

their tenth child. The white dresses represent serenity and peace, two qualities traditionally associated with femininity. There are three categories represented in the poster: The workers, heroes and the mother. These were all feminine identities emanated from traditional Soviet ideals. All of the women are linked to medals. The medals serve as confirmations of individual actions and at the same time confirm a collective identity.

Medals are an indicator that the rewarded actions were done for the better of the country. A decoration for heroic acts in a war is a tradition that is honoured in many countries. Since all actions in the Soviet Union were for the good of the community and for the state, orders and medals were awarded for a wide range of actions. There were special medals for mothers, teachers, mine workers, blood donors, inventors, doctors, architects, artists and painters, friendship, courage, saving someone from drowning, saving someone from fire, for cultivating land and of course for soldiers of different ranks, battalions, for different actions, battles and for jubilees. Women could receive these medals as could men. Only the mother heroine medal was created especially for women. This love for medals and the relevance of medals to the collective spirit of the Soviet ideology was a legacy that existed before and after the period discussed in this chapter.

Medals for mothers was one way of honouring them, another was a special day in the year to honour women and mothers. The 8th of March, international women's day, has been celebrated to a great extent in the Soviet Union and this tradition continued in post-Soviet Russia. There is a variety of posters celebrating women's day. On one poster, from 1965, several symbols are used to create an image of what the Soviet Union stands for. On this poster there are multiple women, one woman is in the middle and in front and sixteen other women are in the back. The women in the back are holding signs, on these signs are messages. On four of the signs the Russian words: peace, friendship, freedom and happiness are written, on the other four signs the same words are written but in different languages. The words on one of the signs: 8 March, is written in Russian. The women are all from different parts of the world, from different cultures and are wearing traditional clothing. The poster advocates the equality of the people of the Soviet Union, particularly women in this case and the strength of women in the international communist society to stand up and to realize the communist ideals of unity and equality.



Figure 3.3 Propaganda poster 8 march with peace signs 1965⁸⁴



Figure 3.4 Photograph woman with bandanna and paint 1966⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-161, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik.

A symbol often used in posters is the bandanna, the woman wearing it represents the working woman. This image of the Soviet woman that is visible in many posters also exists outside the medium of propaganda posters. In a photograph in the magazine *Ogoniok* of 1966 the working Soviet woman with a flower bandanna and working clothes is painting a fence. The story of the women in the posters seems to be the same as the story of the woman painting the fence. This is a real Soviet woman, a photograph, not a figment of someone's ideological imagination but an actual woman, wearing the bandanna and doing manual labour. In this case the ideological image and the informal image coincide. Even if the photograph is staged, the fact that it is not a drawing adds to the credibility of the image.

Women were often depicted as mothers. This was executed in two different ways, first as mothers in a literal way, holding and nursing babies and children. The second way is as mother of the nation as figurative mothers, going as far as the image of 'mother Russia'. However, as the posters often have a symbolic dimension, the two often blend together in the same poster. An example of an image of a mother in a literal sense is the cover of the magazine *Ogoniok* of the 8th of March 1973.



Figure 3.5 Photograph cover *Ogoniok* 8 March mother child 1973⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Ogoniok* no 23 (1966) 17.

⁸⁶ *Ogoniok* no. 10 (1973) cover.

This issue of the magazine is dedicated to mother's day. The cover chosen for this occasion is a woman with her child. This is an exceptional choice the magazine made for this special issue. The choice didn't go to celebrating the strong working Soviet woman, but the first impression is of the woman as mother. The cover of the magazine celebrating woman's day in 1966 had a woman working in a factory on the front. In this period gradually more attention was given to the role of women as mothers and care takers. The depiction of women as strong women did not disappear, the mother image was added to the narrative.



Figure 3.6 Propaganda poster mother MIR! 1965

An example of a more figurative depiction of a mother is a poster from 1965.⁸⁷ In this poster there is a close up of a woman holding a baby. On the bottom of the poster the word *mir* (peace) is written in

⁸⁷ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-721, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1965.

grey, large bold letters with an exclamation mark. Everything in the poster is strong and strict, the woman is masculine and looks directly to the viewer and holds the baby firm to her body. Only the baby is dressed in white and looks calm. The baby holds her head up, against the woman's face. In many other posters which are about peace the people look happy, as if they celebrate peace. This poster is different, not only the bold letters and the exclamation mark make it feel like an imperative, also the posture and firm gaze of the woman makes it feel like a command. It is as if the mother is representative of all mothers and the baby is symbol for all youth that needs the protection and peace for the future of the nation. This makes the mother not only a mother in a literal sense but also in a symbolic way of the motherland.

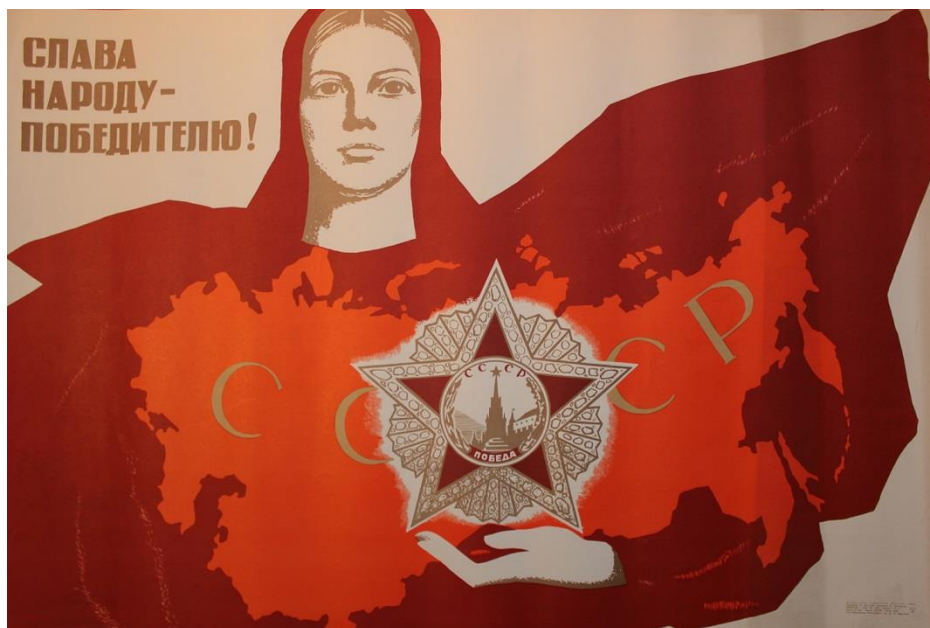


Figure 3.7 Propaganda poster mother Russia 1969⁸⁸

The poster of 1969 displays one of the most figurative forms of the Soviet mother. The woman in the picture symbolizes the Soviet Union, she serves as a metaphor for mother Russia. In the left corner it states: 'Glory to the victorious people!'. The woman looks strong and brave but does not have a real expression on her face. The fertile lands were feminine, as will be demonstrated in the next poster, the land as a whole was feminine as well: the figurative mother of all people living in it. Motherhood is part of a woman's identity, a social and natural role of women in the Soviet Union. Being able to bear

⁸⁸ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-805, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1969.

children is something that makes women distinct from men. The literal and figurative connections and symbolism in the context of the propaganda posters provide for an identity, or multiple layers of that identity. Women were praised as mothers and feminine qualities of the land were highlighted.

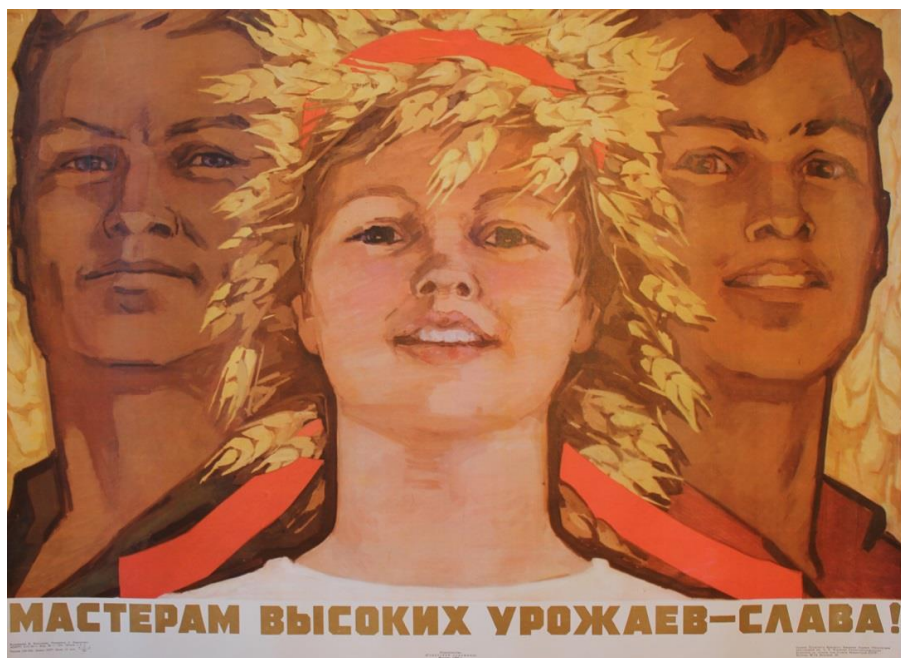


Figure 3.8 Propaganda poster women with grain and ribbon 1968⁸⁹

The fertile lands and the fruits of that land are often feminised in the posters. One example of this is a poster from 1968, in this poster a woman is standing in front, she is wearing a crown of grain held together with a red ribbon. To her left and right there are two men, standing just behind her. In the background more grain is visible. The woman embodies the richness of the land, the men look strong and healthy and symbolise the work force. Underneath the text ‘Masters of the great profit and glory’ is written. Aside from the natural connection between women and peace in the propaganda, there a stronger connection between women and the fertile land and even stronger between women and motherhood. These connections are very literal and in real life this link is obvious, women can get pregnant and become mothers. However in these posters and in the communist rhetoric, the connections become figurative. The link between the fertile land and women is often present in posters and other images. Sometimes the land represents the mother of all Soviets, all people become equal brothers and sisters as a result of this iconification. This is linked to the formal Soviet ideology and is

⁸⁹ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-591, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1968.

visible in the period discussed in the previous chapter as well.

3.2.2 Soldiers and heroes

Women were often presented as mothers. In these images motherhood was visualised in different ways, from a very literal mother to figurative motherhood representing the motherland. Men were depicted in a different way and were often soldiers, managers, leaders and workers. This is visible in many posters and photographs. One example is a poster of Vladimir Lenin and his mother. In this poster from 1972 he is standing next to his mother, comforting her after they received the news about his brothers death. He holds his hand on the back of his grieving mother, his other hand he holds in a fist on the table. His gaze is implying he is planning a way to get justice and to realize his brothers goals, who was a revolutionist trying to overthrow the tsarist regime. On the poster there is a male soldier, a leader, and the father of the Soviet Union. His mother also has a prominent role in the poster, this again strengthens the positive image of the mother. Lenin was honoured throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, in this poster he in his turn honours his mother by comforting her.



Figure 3.9 Propaganda poster soldiers 1945-1965⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-742, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1965.

There are many posters of soldiers, mostly to remember and celebrate the victory in the Great Patriotic War. In the vast majority of the posters, the depicted soldiers are men. When there are women in the posters, they are often caring for the men or presented as a symbol for the motherland. Women have a different role in the posters, an example is visible in the poster printed above. The men are all soldiers, the woman is not. She is the only one not carrying a weapon. The text translates to: 'The deepest bow to you, heroes of victory'. The woman and the men are different, woman is a hero too but she attained that status in a different way. The men became heroes by fighting, women are often glorified for their caring abilities. There were female soldiers, pilots and parachutists but these women were not often depicted in the posters. In the poster above the woman again seems to represent the nation or the motherland, all women and mothers. She is wearing the iconic red scarf around her head. There is a continuity with the previous period, in the way men and women were depicted in relation to the war.

Soldiers were depicted as and considered to be heroes, but the amount of propaganda posters with male construction workers was larger and these posters often had a more heroic feel. A poster from 1973 demonstrates the heroic image of male construction workers. In this poster the worker is standing on a steel construction, he is holding welding tools and has a sturdy pose and heroic gaze. He is depicted as a strong worker, leading the nation to economic prosperity. Men were positioned as role models, fatherly strong figures.



Figure 3.10 Propaganda poster industry worker 1973⁹¹

3.3 Equality equals unity

In the previous part the differences in the way men and women were depicted is discussed. However the formal message of communism was sex equality , which was also evident in many posters. As described above, most posters depicting leaders and builders of the nation are of men. When there is a woman on these posters, she has very masculine qualities. As the next poster shows, the woman has the iconic red bandana but her clothes and body type are very masculine. She is holding construction plans and in the background there are buildings and cranes. A different kind of discrepancy still exists in these images, one between masculinity and femininity. The women that occupy male roles, look very masculine. The opposition men/ women is broken down and replaced by masculinity and femininity.

⁹¹ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-107, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1973.



Figure 3.11 Propaganda poster woman with workers clothes 1970⁹²

A famous image of the Soviet Union is the one of a man and a woman standing side by side together holding up a hammer and sickle. The hammer and sickle are symbols for the work of the land and the industry. Often the man and woman in these posters both have a masculine posture. They are two equal and almost identical Soviet people, the image tells the viewer men and women together built communism.

⁹² Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-114, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1970.



Figure 3.12 Propaganda poster man and woman with hammer and sickle 1973⁹³

In the posters a lot of social roles and functions are depicted with gender equality. In a poster from 1969, two cosmonauts are depicted, a woman on the left and a man on the right. Of both only the helmet is shown and behind the visor there are the two faces. The helmets are identical, the faces are female and male and otherwise identical in colour, style and expression. Again the equality of men and women is stressed in this poster. Both sexes have an equal status of cosmonaut.

⁹³ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-60, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1973.



Figure 3.13 Propaganda poster man and woman cosmonauts 1969⁹⁴

Women were still an important part of the workforce but had to take care of the household as well. This double burden already existed in the period discussed in the previous chapter, however it seemed to have more of an influence on the images in the magazine *Ogoniok* in this period. Women were depicted as mothers and housewives more often in this period. In posters the formal ideology was more evident, in these images women and men were equals and workers. The (double) role of women was not portrayed in the propaganda posters. The magazine gives a more complete view of the different layers of the Soviet identities. Women as caretakers and mothers was more deeply rooted in the Soviet society, there was no need for propaganda or education to consolidate these roles. However the image of communist equality was a norm that needed to be explicitly mentioned. The magazine gives a more realistic view, so it seems.

The posters had a purpose to serve as an example for the way people should act and to keep them satisfied and motivated. Men and women are depicted side by side in the posters, in the magazine there are more differences visible between the sexes. There is a difference between the genres; the

⁹⁴ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-374, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1969.

posters and the magazine. The posters generate more iconic and generalist (universalistic) images while the magazine seems more close to the Soviet reality of male and female roles. The posters prescribe, while the magazine describes the Soviet society and dynamics between the sexes.

It is clear that women were important in the communist doctrine and an important task in the Soviet society. What task that was supposed to be remained a struggle for the length of the Soviet-Era. There were many roles women were expected to fulfil, some of more practical and some of more theoretical urgency. In the magazine *Ogoniok*, in the 1960's and especially in the 1970's the social reality is increasingly apparent. In a copy of *Ogoniok* from 1964⁹⁵ there are pictures of male politicians, male soldiers, of men playing sports and men drinking vodka. The pictures of women are women cleaning, sewing clothes and a little girl playing with her doll. In only a few photo's men and women are both depicted and in a similar position. As the photographs below show, of October 1966, there is a picture of a woman teaching a class and a man working with machinery on the land. These are just two photographs but represent a trend in the magazine. In the magazine gradually more attention went to these gender specific professions.

A consequence of the Soviet ideology with a vision of equal distribution of goods and opportunities, was that there was no real women's movement in the 1960's and 1970's. Women were allowed to work and were encouraged to join the Communist Party.⁹⁶ Emancipation of women was considered to be completed under the communist rule, and as a consequence there was no need for a women's movement, was the idea.

⁹⁵ *Ogoniok* no 13 (1964).

⁹⁶ Wilma Rule and Norma C. Noonan, *Russian women in politics and society* (Westport 1996) 81-82.

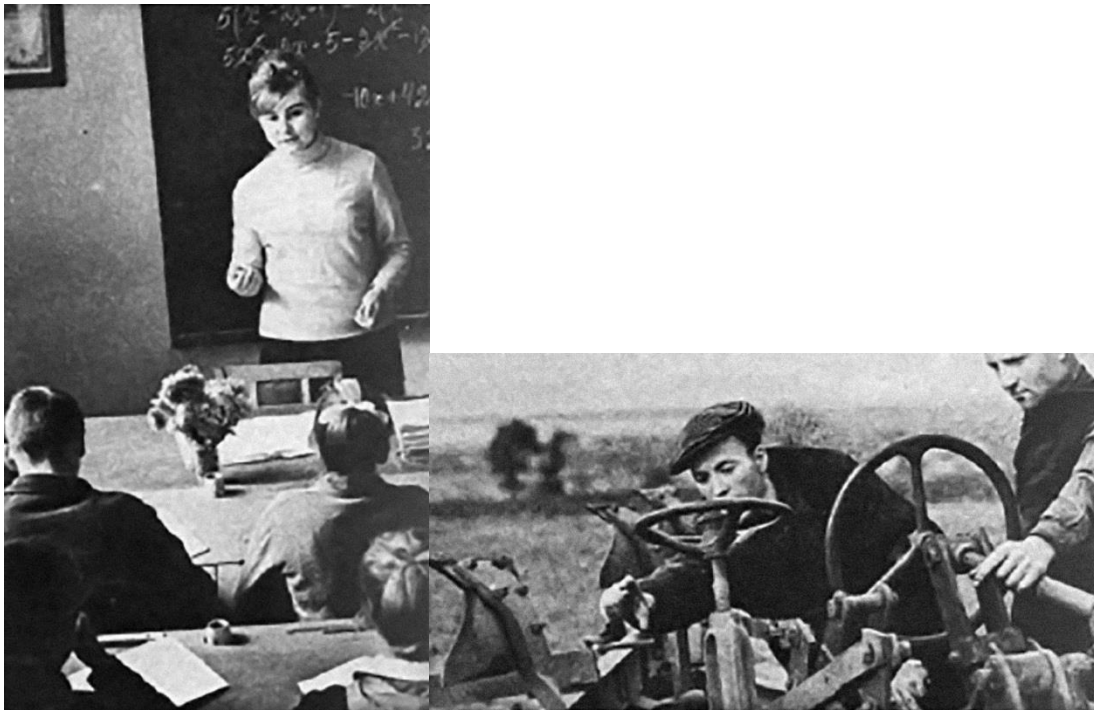


Figure 3.14 and 3.15 Photographs female teacher and men on the land 1966⁹⁷

Aside from professions being gender specific, looks became increasingly important and as a result men and women gradually developed different interests and appearances. Slowly a different picture of women is introduced in the magazine *Ogoniok*. In an item of *Ogoniok* of 1966 there are a few photographs of women in a hair salon. There is a picture of women sitting under dryers with dresses on and high heels and of several women with their new hairdos, they wear make-up and have a very feminine appearance.

⁹⁷ *Ogoniok* no 44 (1966) 32.



Figure 3.16 Photograph women in a salon 1966⁹⁸

These developments caused a different type of identity and identification, one of being different than others instead of having a common Soviet identity. In the formal ideology equality was still one of the pillars of the Soviet society, however in the informal structures being different than the other sex became a means of constructing an identity. Femininity becomes more relevant in this period, the ideological fundamentals however did not change.

3.3.1 Gender inversion

In a cartoon in the magazine *Ogoniok* of 1966 the changing position of women is visible. In this

⁹⁸ *Ogoniok* no 22 (1966) 31.

cartoon seven women are sitting around a picnic table, they are playing the game domino's and are laughing. The women all wear different fashionable hats. In the background there are two men, one is hanging out the laundry and the other one is holding a baby. Both men are frowning and looking at the women. In this cartoon the roles of men and women are disputed. Gender inversion is used to emphasise that gender differences are there for a reason and are not meant to be changed.

Women still had a double burden, being an active member of the workforce and taking care of the household and children. The cartoon could be seen in two different ways, one is as a criticism of a new freedom of women and women having a social life and an interest for fashion instead of looking after their household, children and husbands. Another way to look at it is as a criticism of the double burden of women, showing how it would be when the roles were the other way around. However the title 'march "fool"' indicates that the cartoon shows a very foolish scene.



Figure 3.17 Cartoon gender inversion 1966⁹⁹

Gender roles are swapped and it is supposed to tell the viewer, this would be ridiculous. Identities are changeable but this is a very steady process. The cartoon gives information on how the other is viewed and criticism on the changes of gender specific norms and dispositions in society. The cartoon however

⁹⁹ *Ogoniok* no 10 (1966) 18.

also acknowledges the double burden of women, for it states it should have been the women hanging the laundry and taking care of the children. The emphasis further lies on the differences between the sexes instead of the equality and uniformity.

In a poster from 1974, a man and a woman have very distinct and gender specific roles. The man is standing up and is planning or building something, the woman is breastfeeding a child. Behind the two people there is a rich and prosperous land with a booming industry, judging by the many cranes and high luxurious houses. A series of photographs from *Ogoniok* in the year 1978, shows a similar scene, men are working and wearing hard hats, the women are together in a group with baby carriages.



Figure 3.18 Propaganda poster man woman with typical roles 1974¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Archive Koos van Weringh, Propaganda posters of the Soviet Union, Posternumber 1-150, publisher Sovietski chudoshnik 1974.

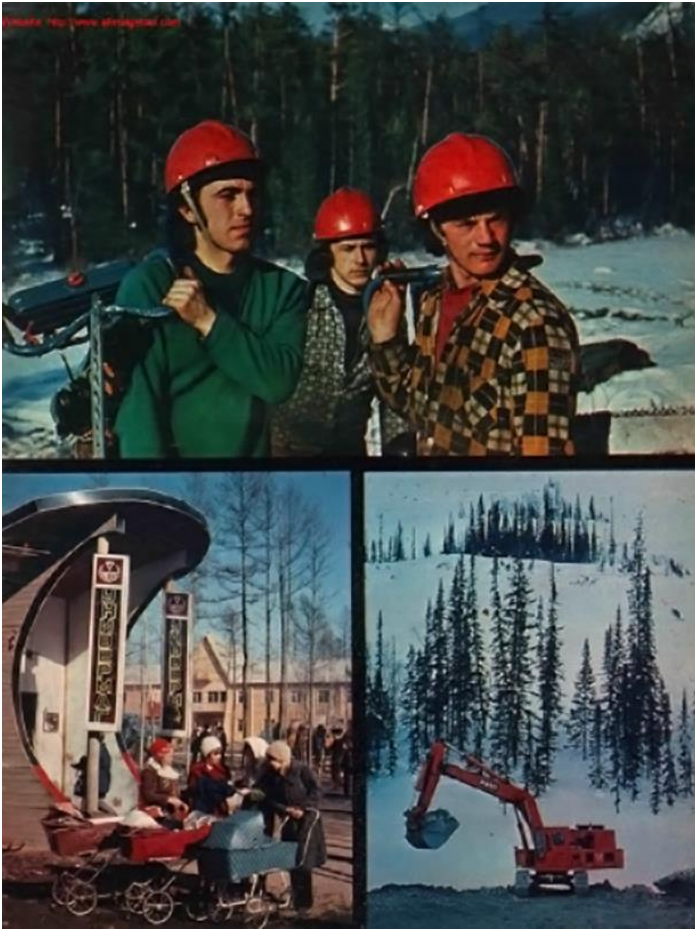


Figure 3.19 Photo collection men and women with typical roles 1978¹⁰¹

There was an ideological equality but in practice, aside from gender specific behaviour as shown in previous parts, there was a different treatment and expectancy of men and women. For the same work men were paid higher wages and were expected to be breadwinners of the family. Although women could, and wanted to work, it was accepted that men earned more and were hired for jobs before women were. This seems like a great advantage but was accompanied with a great responsibility and in economic crises it was a burden for men who could not provide for themselves and their families. In this period there was a low fertility rate and a high divorce rate. Abortion was allowed and accepted in society. These are all social values that would change after the fall of the Soviet Union, this will be discussed in the next chapter.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ *Ogoniok* no 17 (1978) 9.

¹⁰² Michele Rivkin-Fish, 'Conceptualizing feminist strategies for Russian reproductive politics: Abortion, surrogate

3.4 First signs of the future

The text accompanying a picture of a girl in *Ogoniok* is: ‘Tamara on the beach for the first time’. The picture of Tamara in 1982 is forerunner of the time to come. Tamara is at the beach for the first time and looks like she is dreaming of the future. She is an example of an identity in transition. She is a different Soviet woman, with modern fashionable sunglasses, lipstick and a bikini with a print. Young people like Tamara longed for freedom, they looked at the west to create their dreams. Jeans, sunglasses, music, western cars and having money became synonyms for freedom.¹⁰³ They didn’t know that the fall of the Soviet Union was very nearby and they would find out what this freedom meant. For gendered identities it meant more differences between the sexes and a sexual revolution that mixed up all old values and gendered dispositions.



Figure 3.20 Photograph Tamara on the beach 1982¹⁰⁴

motherhood and family support after socialism’, *Signs* (2013) 589.

¹⁰³ Svetlana Alexijevitsj, *Het einde van de rode mens. Leven op de puinhopen van de Sovjet-Unie* (Antwerp 2014) 40.

¹⁰⁴ *Ogoniok* no 38 (1982) 41.

3.5 Conclusion

During this period the economic stagnation under the rule of Brezhnev caused unrest under the Soviet population and willingness for change. People wanted more luxury and consumer goods. The leadership in this period was characterised by elderly men, holding on to old ideas. Like in the period discussed in the previous chapter, much attention was given to the iconic figures of mothers and soldiers in propaganda posters and the magazine *Ogoniok*. Mothers were represented in different ways, from very literal mothers with children to figurative mothers. In the latter case the image of a mother was used to represent fertile ground or the motherland. Sometimes the image of a mother was used as a representation of all mothers. Soldiers in images were almost always men; women were often portrayed as caretakers, and men as heroes or leaders.

The equality of the sexes and the unity of all Soviets remained important pillars of the Soviet Union. In posters gender equality was an important theme and to visualise this, women often looked masculine. The way the concepts femininity and masculinity were depicted, was dependent on the medium and the message. For example women were masculine when the equality between the sexes had to be displayed, when they were depicted as mothers, they looked more feminine. In photographs in the magazine *Ogoniok*, women looked more feminine than in the propaganda posters.

This tendency of feminine looking women became more apparent in this period. The images of the posters and the magazine *Ogoniok* started to grow apart. The posters generated iconic and universalistic images, the magazine seems to be closer to the reality of the roles of Soviet men and women in society. The posters had a different purpose than the magazine, they were tools of the government to propagate their ideology. On the one hand the pictures in the magazine show women in many professions and as parachutists and confirm the image generated in the posters. On the other hand women in the photographs show the other expectations women had to live up to. From these images it can be deduced that the double burden for women remained evident.

There was a struggle between ideology and real life in the Soviet Union, a discrepancy between the formal doctrine and the discourse of everyday life. The Soviet ideology of a collective identity did not change. This was a dilemma because in real life women and men did have different roles. Women were physically able to be mothers, men of course were not. However this was not the only factor that proved to be impossible to overcome. The distinction of women being mothers (not only physically but also in everyday life), housekeepers, and men being managers, leaders, and soldiers was a distinction no formal ideology could break. Women were considered workers, aside from mothers, by society and

the state. Men were considered breadwinners and head of the family. On both sexes this caused a lot of pressure in some occasions. In a period of stagnation and high rates of unemployment, many men and women were not able to live up to the social expectations.

The ideological fundamentals in the period of Khrushchev and of Brezhnev did not change drastically. There was a continuity in ideology and the representation in the images in this period relative to the period discussed in the previous chapter. Overall the frames of identification remained the same, for these were based on the formal ideology of the Soviet Union. The ideology was not a strict guide to what the people had to do but was part of an interaction between the people and the state. However, gendered values adapted through time and are constructions that change, as a result there are small alterations visible. This was caused by a combination of factors, such as the economic stagnation, the unwillingness of Brezhnev for change, influences from the west and modernity slowly creeping in. In the period to come things would really be shaken up.

Chapter 4

A period of tumult and change, 1982-2008

In the period discussed in this chapter many different leaders were involved: Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. The last nine years of the Soviet Union knew three different leaders. In 1991, the Soviet era came to an end. This came as a shock to everybody, including the man often considered responsible: Mikhail Gorbachev. The last years of the Soviet Union and the years after the fall were turbulent times. A social revolution took place and there were many political and economic changes. In this chapter this tumultuous period will be discussed. The previous two chapters were characterised by a continuity; the state ideology remained the same and so did the gendered identity for a great part. However slowly a new era became visible and the sturdy Soviet society started to change. In the period that will be discussed in this chapter these changes emerged even more rapidly. This started with the rule of Gorbachev.

4.1 Changes in government policy

The period between the death of Brezhnev in 1982 and the inauguration of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 was relatively short. However in this period two different General Secretaries both died of natural causes due to their old ages. Yuri Andropov succeeded Brezhnev, he was already in bad health when he started this function. He would be in office for 15 months before he died of a chronic kidney disease. The next General Secretary was Konstantin Chernenko, he was in office from 1984 to 1985, 13 months. Chernenko had a lung disease, and heart and liver failures. Both leaders were in office too brief to make a real impact on the policy.¹⁰⁵ The reformist Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. One of the first things he did, was to dispose of the old conservative elite in the Communist Party. In his first month in office he replaced five conservative party members with his allies and in the next two years many would follow. He wanted to reform the old rigid communist regime for a progressive system.¹⁰⁶ Gorbachev is famous for his concepts *glasnost* and *perestroika*, openness and restructuring. The people of the Soviet Union needed to know the truth about their history and had to be aware of their future (*glasnost*). These conditions would create a climate for economic and social reform and

¹⁰⁵Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia: A History* (Oxford 2009) 449.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, 451-453.

restructuring, or *perestroika*.¹⁰⁷ Gorbachev's reforms were meant to save the Soviet Union, but as we now know he failed at this and eventually in 1991 the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

4.2 *Perestroika* in the family and great expectations

In the Gorbachev period a different kind of posters became widespread aside from the propaganda poster of the earlier years of the Soviet Union. These posters were social posters, with a social theme to encourage people to improve their lives. They were about family values, hygiene and health, against alcohol abuse, smoking and divorce.

In a poster of 1989 a little boy is visible in the front. He looks scared and sad, he looks directly at the viewer. Behind him is a black line which looks like a wall, on the left side there is a man, he looks sad and unhealthy, with lines under his eyes. He looks straight ahead and seems to be feeling hopeless. On the right side of the wall there is a woman. She too looks sad, her hands are folded and she holds them under her chin, it looks like she has a black eye. The text on the poster says: 'and what about me?' The poster is meant to educate people on the wrongs of divorce.

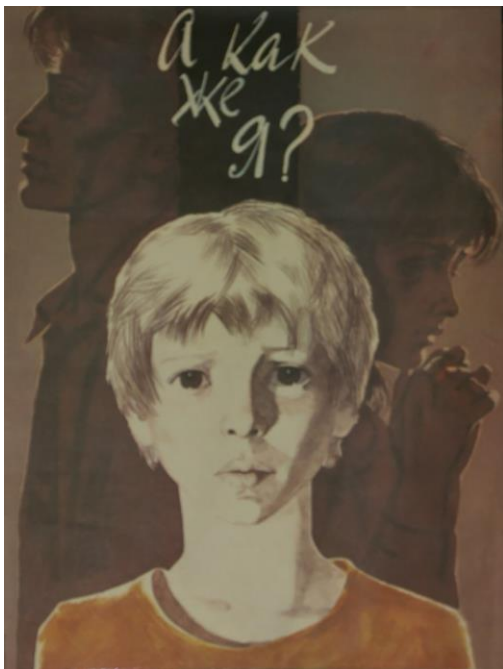


Figure 4.1 Social poster boy and parents 1989 ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika. Een nieuwe visie voor mijn land en de wereld.* (1987) 85-87.

¹⁰⁸ <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/18>

In 1987 the book of Mikhail Gorbachev *Perestroika* was published in which he describes the goals of leadership. In the book new views are given about ideological issues and how these should be dealt with in the context of the party, in international relations and the public and personal lives of the people of the Soviet Union. One sub-chapter is dedicated to women and the family. In his book Gorbachev argues: 'One of our most important social tasks – also a very important task in the anti-alcohol campaign – is improving the functioning of the family and strengthening the role of the family in society.'¹⁰⁹ The poster of the little boy and his parents is one of the ways in which this task was made public.

He stated that the Soviet state put a lot of effort in ending all discrimination against women. Women were treated as equals by law and received a social status that was equal to that of a man. Further he writes that he is proud of the rights for women, for work, equal pay and social security, to build a career and to be socially and politically active. However Gorbachev then takes a turn in his argument, stressing gender differences. In this sense he broke with the Soviet tradition. Before this time equality and unity were two of the most important pillars of the Soviet ideology. This step of Gorbachev was the start of a process of redefining gender roles and expectations. Women may be treated equal as men, but they are not men, Gorbachev argued. Women should have the rights that are according to their own needs and lives. But this is not the only turn, until now the plea was about the (equal) rights of women. Next he argues that, although women are active in science, construction, industry and cultural activities, they do not have enough time left for their obligations at home. These obligations include the household, raising the children and creating a good family atmosphere in the home. The problems of bad behaviour of the youth, bad production, and morals have to do with the absence of a steady family life and family ties. Women should be able to fulfil their essentially (or purely) female task.¹¹⁰ Identity structures shifted in the *perestroika* age, different norms and values became socially accepted and changed the framework of identification for both men and women. An interesting distinction made in the chapter of Gorbachev, although the terms seem to be used as synonyms in the book, is the distinction of rights and obligations. He states that the state neglected to pay attention to the needs and rights of women that originated from her role as mother and place in the

¹⁰⁹ Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 136.

¹¹⁰ Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 135-136.

family, she should have more time to fulfil these daily obligations at home. A woman's obligations are her rights in the argumentation of Gorbachev.

In the *perestroika* period of Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980's and after the fall of the Soviet Union many traditional Soviet posters were re-used to express a discontent with the system. A traditional image that is used in Soviet propaganda posters in many occasions is one of a man and a woman standing side by side, together holding up a hammer and sickle, to symbolise the work force and collective. In a parody of this poster from the *perestroika* period this image is used to show a different social process. Instead of a man and a woman holding up the hammer and sickle, there are now two women. The artist used the symbolic poster to show that it were not men and women that formed the work force, but that only women did all the work. The traditional gendered symbolism is altered and the double burden of women is challenged in this image.



Figure 4.2 Poster two women with a hammer and sickle 1988¹¹¹

¹¹¹ А Шумаков, *перестройка и мы, всесоюзный конкурс плакатов* (Moscow 1989) 66.

In the Gorbachev years, values, norms and dispositions began to shift. However, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the beginning of a new era, accompanied by major political, economic and social changes. The end of the Soviet Union was received with mixed feelings. Some people were excited because they could finally get access to the western freedom that until that time seemed so far away, others viewed Gorbachev as a traitor of communism and the Soviet Union and feared a society without values. Young people had been longing for freedom for a long time and in the West they saw their dreams visualised. American jeans became a metaphor for the freedom they wanted. A woman recalls memories of that time: ‘The streets all of sudden were full of banks and kiosks. There appeared completely different things. No clunky boots and elderly dresses, but stuff that we had always dreamed of: jeans, fur-lined coats, lingerie and gorgeous crockery. All colorful and beautiful. Our Soviet belongings were gray and ascetic and had a military appearance. The libraries and theatres were empty. Instead there appeared bazaars and private shops. Everyone wanted to be happy, immediately if possible. Like little children, they discovered a new world.’¹¹² In this time gender started to become relevant. The clothes people were wearing and the way they perceived and presented themselves became more important for the forming of an identity.

4.3 After the fall of the Soviet Union

After the fall of the Soviet Union there was no longer a state ideology to follow or obey. This meant people had to look elsewhere for guidance. The new identity was a mix of the old and the new. Many changes in the 1990's were economic and political, these changed the Russian society. However, deeply-rooted norms and dispositions from the Soviet Union kept their importance. In the past old values proved to be adamant. In the transition from tsarist Russia to the Bolshevik society, religion never really disappeared, traditional gender norms remained important and there was still a need for a strong masculine leader all throughout the communist Soviet Union. In the post-Soviet society these social characteristics and traditions continued to exist. The expectancy of women to participate in the labour force in the Soviet Union was partly for economic reasons, other reasons were political and ideological. The fall of the Soviet Union was a major turning point on all these levels. It was no surprise that the gendered dispositions based on the communist principles changed after 1991.

The new rights and obligations of men and women were transformed in the period after the fall

¹¹² Alexijevitsj, *Het einde van de rode mens*, 40.

of the Soviet Union. In a broadcast from the Kremlin, Yeltsin stated on the 8th of March 1998 to celebrate International Women's Day: 'It is long established that building a house, putting up its walls and roof, is the job of a man. But they call on you, our women, to ensure the home is a comfortable one'.¹¹³ It seems there was not much left of the complex and paradoxical identity structures that existed in the Soviet Union. However, some connections still existed, like the one between women and peace. Yeltsin states in his speech that Russia's well-being depended on women because 'they think about peace, their children's future. And that means the country's future.'

The images in the magazine *Ogoniok* changed immensely. Comparing items of the magazine from 1989 and 1992, it looks like they are from two completely different era's, societies or parts of the world. In *Ogoniok* from March 10 1989, the picture on the front is a traditional looking picture of a female teacher with many children around her, there is an item about nurses and one about (foreign) politicians, there is some history and some art. The item of *Ogoniok* from February 6th 1992 has a different contents, in almost every picture the changed society is visible. It starts with one of the first pages which displays an advertisement for a ghetto-blaster, television and Mercedes car. Then there are two pages dedicated to Hollywood movies, one of Jean-Claude van Damme. In the remaining content of the magazine there is a picture of a priest who blesses a little boy and musicians with a very large poster of a naked woman behind him on the wall. This is one of the first signs of the sexual revolution to come. In this magazine the new paradoxical identity structures that characterised the post-Soviet period are visible, caused by the sudden presence of advertisement and the contradictory nature of the Orthodox Church versus the new sexual freedom. What is most striking about these changes, is that they seemed to have happened almost overnight.

¹¹³ <http://wwwest.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/1998/3/article/yeltsin-leads-russian-men-in-praising-women/294220.html>, 17-07-15.



Figure 4.3 Photograph musician with a poster of a naked woman 1992¹¹⁴



Figure 4.4 Photographs women boxing 1992¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ogoniok no 6 (1992) 17.

Another photograph from the magazine *Ogoniok* from 1992, shows female boxers. They are not wearing typical boxing outfits but they are wearing feminine underwear, their hair is not tied back but hangs loose. The photograph illustrates the line between masculinity and femininity was shifting. In the Soviet Union, women in masculine roles had a masculine appearance. Gender was irrelevant and men and women as a result blended to one type of Soviet person. Like in the Soviet Union, in this photograph women are involved in an activity that is typically masculine. However in Soviet times the women would have a masculine appearance as well, and in this case the women are not dressed for the sport at all and remain feminine.



Figure 4.5 Advertisement cigarettes 1999¹¹⁶

Old symbols from Soviet times were re-used and adapted in advertisements. In this advertisement for cigarettes the old identity of the Soviet Union was mixed with the new. In the advertisement the stereotypical Soviet male and female workers, instead of a hammer and sickle, hold up a pack of cigarettes. In the back there is a skyline of New York, the advertisers make use of the American promise of freedom and the credit of the trustworthy image of the Soviet workers. The medium of

¹¹⁵ *Ogoniok* no 8 (1992) 24.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/yava-gold-cigarettes-monument-1525655/>, 1999.

advertisement was not new in Russia, advertisement existed in the Soviet Union. However the goals and the scale changed considerably.

The traditional image is of a man and a woman holding up a hammer and sickle, in this advertisement they hold a pack of cigarettes. The hammer and sickle stood for the alliance of industrial workers and farmers, the fact that it was a man and a woman represented the common goals and duties of the entire Soviet population, irrespective of gender. In the Soviet Union the goal of the image was to emphasis equality of the sexes, this meaning is intrinsic in the image because of its iconic value. In the modern advertisement it still holds this symbolism.



Figure 4.6 Advertisement woman pregnant with 'motherboard' 2001¹¹⁷

Another important symbol used in images in the Soviet Union is the mother figure. This symbol too appeared in advertisement in an adapted form. In an advertisement from 2001, a naked woman is depicted with a peculiar looking pregnant abdomen. She is neither a literal nor a figurative mother, or she might be both. She very literally has a pregnant body, however clearly not with a baby. The

¹¹⁷ <http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/artografika-studio-motherboard-2981555/>, 2001.

advertisement is for a motherboard, she is pregnant with a computer. It is even not so much a figurative mother as it is just a 'figure of speech' in this case, a word joke. However, with knowledge of the background of the Soviet mother and the meaning of this iconic figure the advertisement gets a different feel to it. Mothers were holy in the Soviet Union, in this advertisement the mother is just a word joke. The computer started to become holier than mothers in the Russian society.



Figure 4.7 Photographs 'men can cry' 2005¹¹⁸

But images put 'masculine' behaviour and masculinity in an ironic perspective as well. In the introduction to this item in *Ogoniok*: 'macho's cry too', it states that the time that men would keep their mouths shut and would not talk about their feelings is over. The new man does not hide his emotions and tears and talks about his relationship just as much as women do, it states. These pictures and the text are of great contrast with the image of men in the Soviet Union, men as soldiers, heroes and role models. It seems there were no pictures of Russian macho men crying, the pictures are of an American cowboy and the Portuguese soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo. Nowadays Vladimir Putin likes to profile himself in the media as a strong, sportive and manly man, but he also cried in public on a few occasions. In 2012, when Putin was re-elected, he cried in front of a large audience and many cameras, confirming the image of a new Russian man that the article writes about.

¹¹⁸ *Ogoniok* no 5 (2005) 48.

Obviously, in the period starting with the *perestroika* of Gorbachev stereotypical gender roles were revised. Gender was democratized, reformed and opened, like the rest of the Soviet society. Men and women had to adapt to new expectations, femininity got a new meaning and as a result masculinity became more exclusively a characteristic for men. In the *perestroika* years and after, there was also a sexual revolution in Russia, resulting in more sexually explicit images.

4.4 'There is sex in the Soviet Union'

In the 1980's a new television formula was created, *Spacebridge* or *Telemost* in Russian. A live broadcast was established between a city in the Soviet Union and an American city, in each city there would be a live audience to ask each other questions. In the broadcast of December 29, 1985, the cities Leningrad and Seattle were linked. Social issues were discussed and the audiences asked each other questions. In this episode the differences between the societies and incomprehension becomes apparent. There were discussions on human rights and freedom of speech.

The Soviet audience is asked if there is a 'Soviet dream' like there is the 'American dream'. A young woman answers, she states they are all individuals so she can talk about her personal dream. She would like a lot of children, a nice husband and nice work. Aside from that she wishes the world would be peaceful and she will fight for that. An American woman asked a question about the equality of men and women. From the Soviet audience a woman answered that women do have equal chances, partly because there are day care centres so women can work as well. Another question is whether abortion is prohibited or allowed in the Soviet Union, a woman answers and says abortion is the choice of the woman and her family, if she wants to keep the child, she will, if she doesn't, she goes to the doctor and gets a certificate for abortion. It is free of charge of course, she adds. The American woman who asked the question looks a little shocked by this answer.¹¹⁹

From another broadcast a famous quote originates. On July 17 1986 the audiences were located in Leningrad and Boston, the theme of this broadcast was 'women talk to women'.¹²⁰ For this special broadcast all participants were women. They spoke about work, divorce, wages, rights, obligations and social processes. A woman in Boston expresses her discontent about the fact commercials display a lot of sexually explicit images in America, she asks about the experiences of the Soviet women. A woman

¹¹⁹ http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2022083/10891_osa_f83af860_3dbd_4886_a5fa_1f195f1ebb40.html?start=2&query=telemost&startPage=1&qt=false&rows=24 17-07-15. At 34:40.

¹²⁰ http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2022083/10891_osa_4773067d_f634_41ce_922d_5b53986acd75.html 17-07-15

in the Soviet audience answers 'there is no sex in the Soviet Union'.¹²¹ This became a famous statement. Her comment was probably taken out of context, it is not likely she meant that there was literary no sex in the USSR. In a way her comment was true, there was no openness about sex in the Soviet Union, there is hardly a sign of it in the visual sources up to this time. However this would change in a very short time, during the 1990's a sexual revolution would take place in Russia. This sexual revolution had many consequences for the existing identity constructions as they would get more complex in their composition. Many old constructions remained, men as head of the family and women as mothers to name two dominant characteristics in the Soviet Union. Despite the many great changes, old dispositions were not that easily disposed of. The new sexual identity of women becomes apparent in the next two images presented here. Both of them are covers of *Ogoniok* from the early 1990's.



Figure 4.8 and 4.9 Cover *Ogoniok* mirror with woman's lips 1992¹²² and cover *Ogoniok* woman in sexy bunny suit 1994¹²³

In an item of the magazine of 1992, women's day is celebrated as has been done before. However, this

¹²¹ Idem, at 31:18.

¹²² *Ogoniok* no 10 (1992) front.

¹²³ *Ogoniok* no 17 (1994) front.

time on the cover there is not a portrait of a working woman or a mother and child, but the reflection of a woman's lips, with lipstick and long polished nails. The mirror forms the figure 8, referring to the date of the 8th of March. In the Soviet Union only the role of women as mothers, workers and wives was celebrated, this image celebrates a woman's sexuality and womanly features. Another front of the magazine in 1994 shows a woman in a sexy bunny costume. Again this is a new image of women emphasising her sexuality. As the next image shows, this process would continue into the next millennium.



Figure 4.10 Photograph naked stripper hanging upside down on a pole 2005¹²⁴

The phrase 'there is no sex in the Soviet Union' couldn't seem further away when analysing this image, published in *Ogoniok* in 2005. It is a photograph of a naked woman on a stage, hanging upside down in a pole with a large audience of men. In the Soviet Union in many occasions, men and women were placed alongside each other, sometimes in the same function of manual workers and strong Russians, sometimes working together in different roles, mother and worker for example. In this image men and

¹²⁴ *Ogoniok* no 1 (2005) 27.

women are opposites, facing each other and are ostensibly part of two separate groups. They are on two different sides, and in two very different situations, the ones watching and the one being watched. The woman is the protagonist but at the same time comes of worst. She is naked and upside down, in a very vulnerable position. The woman is active, and the men passive spectators, only active in that they take pictures and videos. In this image there is no collective identity like in the Soviet Union, there is a shared identity of all the men together and the identity of the woman. Not only do they not have a collective identity, the interrelations between men and women changed drastically. The photograph shows an example of the exploitation of women which accompanied the extreme sexual revolution. Another example of the changed image of women in the media is a calendar of a company that sells power tools.



Figure 4.11 Calendar woman in a bikini with a hard hat and tools 2004¹²⁵

The image above is a page from a calendar, showing a woman with a hard hat. The hat is not on her

¹²⁵ <http://idea-iv.com/plakaty.php> 17-07-15.

head but in her hand, she is standing on power tools and wearing a small red bikini. It is an advertisement calendar of the company Mastak, published in the year 2004. The company has a tradition of printing calendars in this style every year, calendars like this became very popular. The woman in bikini is not like the Soviet women encountered earlier in this thesis, dressed in working clothes with gloves on, and not like the women pushing carriages while the men work in construction. This is yet another identity for women, the result of the sexual revolution. Women are protagonists but are also objectified. Women in the images are feminine and men are masculine, by making this clear distinction, differences between men and women are highlighted.



Figure 4.12 Advertisement *Ogoniok* couple half-naked in the snow 2005¹²⁶

Images of men and especially women became sexualised, different symbols and standards emerged from the new open society in post-Soviet Russia. In an advertisement in the magazine *Ogoniok*, two young people are depicted in the snow. The advertisement is for a reality television show Dom 2, in this reality show several men and women stay in a house for a period of time and are looking for love. Again the emphasis in this picture is on two opposite sexes. In this image there are two different sexes who come together as a couple, instead of two similar people with one collective identity as in the Soviet posters. New identities emerge in this period as a result of the new open society and new

¹²⁶ *Ogoniok* no 1 (2005) 66.

sexuality adrift. However an opposite trend developed as well, a return to old traditional values.

4.5 The faith of old symbols

Yeltsin was often depicted with Orthodox clergy, this was a message that religion was allowed again. The revival of the Russian Orthodox Church had a great impact on social relations and gendered identity in Russia.



Figure 4.13 Painting Mary and child¹²⁷

A different image of a mother got a new important meaning, the Maria and child. The image shown here is from the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Demolished in the Soviet period and rebuilt later, it is also the cathedral where the feminist punk band Pussy Riot performed their anti-Putin song for which they were arrested. On the one hand the image of women was altered by the sexual revolution and on the other hand a conservative and traditional view on women and the family re-entered the Russian discourse. This later set of norms and values was instigated by the Russian Orthodox Church. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour is a very fitting metaphor for the transitions

¹²⁷ <http://www.xxc.ru/english/foto/inside/s02/f009.htm> 17-07-15.

religion went through in the Soviet Union. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was built in remembrance of the fallen soldiers in 1812, after the last soldiers returned they began to build. In the Soviet period, under Joseph Stalin, it was demolished to build a immensely large Palace of the Soviets. This building was meant to honour Lenin and his legacy, in the plans there was a statue of him on top of the structure rising far above anything in the city. After the ground proved to be incapable of supporting such a structure, it was turned into a public outdoor heated swimming pool under Khrushchev. In 1990, when the Soviet Union and the ban on religion had fallen, Yeltsin gave permission for the rebuilding of the cathedral. It is the main and most important cathedral to this day in Moscow. Together with the resurrection of the cathedral, came the rebirth of the Orthodox religion in Russia. Being absent in the Soviet Union, the state had a monopoly on the collective identity in Russia. In the post-Soviet period the church retook this function. There was no longer a state ideology when the Soviet Union fell, in religion people could still find common values. Even though women had an important role in Russia in the church, officially men were at the top: the bishops and priests. However, women were in charge behind the scenes, of religion as an institution in society. The sexual revolution and capitalism led to more individualism, in the church people found a new community. Because people no longer could, or wanted to, believe in communism, they found a different faith in the church.

4.6 Someone like Putin

Ideology is not easily abandoned, the tradition of father like tsars in Russia left its marks on the leadership in the Soviet Union. However, starting with Brezhnev, the leadership in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia was deficient. There was a stagnation during Brezhnev's rule, Gorbachev is held responsible for the fall of the Soviet Union and Yeltsin was a drunk. But then came Vladimir Putin, Putin was the first strong leader of Russia for a long time. There are many pictures of Vladimir Putin where he looks very masculine: winning a judo competition, posing with a tiger or riding a horse bare chested. There are so many pictures like these, the Dutch newspaper NRC Next could easily make a quartets game out them.¹²⁸ Under Putin there is less democracy but the people don't seem to mind, Putin is a strong leader, he doesn't drink and can lead the country into better times, so is believed.¹²⁹

The masculine Putin was popular in Russia, in 2002 a song hit the charts by 'Singing together' a Russian pop-group, titled 'Someone like Putin'. In this song two girls sing about how they dumped their

¹²⁸ <http://www.nrcnext.nl/files/2011/12/poetinkwartet-1.pdf>

¹²⁹ Allard Detiger (director) *We love Putin* (2003).

boyfriends and want someone like Putin. The lyrics go like this:

'My boyfriend is in trouble once again
Got in a fight, got drunk on something nasty
I've had enough and I chased him away
And now I want a man like Putin

One like Putin, full of strength
One like Putin, who won't be a drunk
One like Putin, who wouldn't hurt me
One like Putin, who won't run away

I've seen him on the news last night
he was telling us that the world has come to crossroads
With one like him, it's easy to be home and out
And now I want a man like Putin¹³⁰

What is very apparent in these lyrics, is the glorification of Putin as a person, and more notably as a man. It also gives a stereotype of the average Russian man and boyfriend, drunk and getting into fights. The strong working woman and Soviet mother are excluded from this song. The women performing the song sing about leaving their boyfriends and in this way show a degree of independence on the one hand. On the other hand they want and need a strong man and thus position themselves in a weaker role. Putin is portrayed as a strong dependable man. After a period of decreasing confidence in the government and leadership under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, under Putin once again the cult of personality becomes an important tool. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian people were in search of an identity and Putin allowed them to feel they are part of a strong group. When you are proud of your country and its leader it is much easier to accept and embrace your identity. However, the strong nation and qualities like decisiveness, strength and trustworthiness are masculine in this new narrative as illustrated by the song lyrics.

4.7 Conclusion

Starting with Gorbachev the Russian society went through many intense changes. His concepts *glasnost* and *perestroika* set these changes in motion. He cleared the way for an open society, in this society a common identity and equality were lost. The population had great expectations of a new society and opportunities to come. In this period different sources came into existence, criticism was

¹³⁰ Songlyrics 'someone like Putin', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk_VszbZa_s

allowed and propaganda was adapted. Social posters were a new medium to propagate social norms and values by the government. After the fall of the Soviet Union, advertisement replaced propaganda.

Gorbachev caused a break with the past, he made it his task to return morals to the Russian society. Divorce rates were very high and he tried to bring back stronger family values. This was accompanied by a different image of women. This was a woman that was allowed to take care of the household and children, to be a housewife. A new idea came into existence, that women are not men. Women were allowed to be different. Gorbachev tried to take on the difficulties of the double burden and tried to smoothen gender differences. Parodies of propaganda posters show a popular opinion stating that women did all the work, and men did not live up to their tasks. This kind of criticism and a forming of a popular opinion only became possible in the Soviet Union under the influence of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

After the fall of the communist society, commerce took the place of propaganda in the streets. Propaganda served as guideline for the people and now advertisements were taking over this function. Soviet icons, tropes and propaganda themes were re-used and adapted in advertisement. When the communist state fell, Russia went through economic, political and social changes. Visual sources followed these lines. Propaganda posters disappeared and the magazine *Ogoniok* shows an entirely different society. Russian people finally had access to western goods, jeans became synonym for freedom. In the visual sources a more feminine appearance emerged and in some cases this changed in a feminine and sexual appearance. The rapidly sexualising image also meant an objectification of women. Soviet ideology no longer could prescribe the lives of the people and they had to find new values. In 1986 people had to chuckle about the comment that ‘there is no sex in the Soviet Union’, after the fall of the Soviet Union a comment like this would have been absurd, an accelerated sexual revolution had taken place. Aside from the typical mother and working Soviet woman, now there was a new sexual identity as well.

An almost opposite process in this period was the return of the church. The church regained importance, when people did not have ideology to believe in, they turned to religion. Although the Orthodox Church is organized in a patriarchal manner, women were in charge of the social functions of the church. The collective identity that existed during communism was lost to a growing individualism. In religion people tried to find a common identity again.

Putin profiled himself as a strong leader of a strong country, this is in the tradition of Soviet leaders. Putin is dependable, what Gorbachev missed, he doesn’t drink, unlike Yeltsin and he is young

and fit, unlike Andropov and Chernenko. Not only the presidents missed these qualities, so did many men in Russia, like the song lyrics displayed above demonstrate. Aside from the male qualities displayed in the song, it can tell us something about the women as well. The girls that sing the song, and many girls in Russia, are both strong and weak. They know what they want but they are often objectified and say they need a strong man. In this period femininity and masculinity got a different meaning, gender and sexuality were no longer fixed by an ideology or discourse but subject to a rapidly individualising and opened society.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I will recapitulate the findings of my research. These findings will be divided into three sections. The first section covers the period of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1985. I will combine the periods discussed chapter 1 and chapter 2 because there were no major turning points in this period. In the year 1985, Gorbachev came to power and this moment indicates a political, social and cultural break with the previous period. Hence, the next section presented here is the transition period of 1985 to 1991, the Gorbachev years and the last years of communism. The third section is enclosed by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the year 2008, which is the end of the period researched in this thesis. First, I will present my central question and sub-questions which were the basis of this thesis. Following, I will make some concluding remarks about the visual sources which I used. Then I will answer the sub-questions according to the periods mentioned above. Finally I will summarize the research findings and in this way formulate an answer to the central question of this thesis.

5.1 Questions and sources

The central question of my thesis was: *In what ways is gender involved in the process of redefining national identity in (post) Soviet Russia in the second half of the twentieth century?* To be able to answer this question I have formulated four sub-questions:

1. What is the meaning of gender and national identity, and how are these concepts linked?
2. What are major social-political, economic and cultural changes in (post)Soviet Russia, circa 1950-2000?
3. How and -to what extent- are gender specific symbols used in the construction of national identity of (post) Soviet Union in visual sources since ca. 1950?
4. In what ways are formal ideology and informal ideas involved in the presentation of the gendered national identity in these visual sources, and to what extent do they relate to major social-political and cultural changes in (post) Soviet Union?

The sources I used for this research were propaganda posters, advertisement posters and images

(photographs and cartoons) from the magazine *Ogoniok*. By using the scheme of analysis, I was able to filter the images and extract what I thought were relevant representations of identity and gender.

The images in the magazine were closer to reality, propaganda had an agenda and as a result mirrored the Soviet ideology more than society. After the fall of the Soviet Union, advertisement replaced propaganda. Where people used to see posters of icons of communism, now there were promises of freedom and wealth. This had an impact on the identity frames and identification of people in the (post)Soviet society.

5.2 The Soviet Union, 1953 – 1985

The period that is subject of research in chapter 1 and 2 of this thesis, was relatively uniform. Ideology and national identity were linked to each other in this period. Gender was subject of ideological and state controlled structures. This period was characterized by a continuity on political and cultural levels. Economically there was a low in the Brezhnev period, in the 1970's. In this period people became increasingly restless and no longer blindly accepted imposed ideological norms. However the economic crisis did not affect the ideological fundamentals and associated identity frames.

Soviet ideology propagated unity and equality. In the Soviet Union an individual identity did not exist, it was supposed to be the same as the collective identity. People shared a collective memory. The emancipation of women often was a means to an ideological end, such were the images of the first female cosmonaut. This was foremost a way to show the Soviet ideological goals were a success. There were two main gender scenarios in the Soviet Union. The first was the equality scenario, all people were equal and uniform. They had the same rights and obligations. The second was a family scenario, men were providers and women took care of the children and household. The scenarios often existed at the same time, causing a schizophrenic identity. Women had a double burden, having to take part in both scenarios.

Gender specific symbols used in the visual sources were strongly linked to the Soviet dogma. In the images this resulted in men depicted as active fighters, or icons for victory. Leaders were presented as father figures. Women were often portrayed as more passive and abstract tropes, symbolising notions like peace or the (mother)land. Depictions of men and women were used to represent the pillars of communism; the workforce, unity, equality and brotherhood. Femininity and masculinity sometimes got an iconic implementation as well. For example the masculine worker symbolised the communist unity and prosperity, this worker could be male or female. In propaganda there was often a collective

gender. However, 'feminine' behaviour or femininity slowly appeared in visual sources starting in the late 1960's, especially in the magazine *Ogoniok*. In the propaganda posters the focus remains stronger on equality and uniformity. In these propaganda sources women often have a masculine look, this made it easier to fit both men and women in a common, communist identity.

There were differences between the positions of men and women in the Soviet society and as stated by the ideology, a discrepancy between formal ideology and practical life. On the one hand ideology was not a mirror of society, but people did integrate visualised top down ideas into their culture. This way informal ideas and formal ideology were in a continuous interaction with each other. Differences between the sexes were sought to be eliminated. But in everyday life the elimination of the differences between sexes was not easily established. There were formal and informal layers of equality in the Soviet society. In a formal sense, on an ideological scale, equality and emancipation of women was far more advanced than on an informal level. It was proven to be a difficult task to recognise the differences between the sexes and implement equality of both sexes at the same time.

5.3 A transition period, 1985 – 1991

The period 1985 to 1991 was marked by transition. The progressive Gorbachev broke with the past and caused major political changes. He changed many traditions that were deeply rooted in the Soviet society. Altering the status quo was something the Soviet Union was not able to cope with and in 1991 the USSR ceased to exist. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* had important social implications. This period turned out to be a transition period, making place for new identity structures. During the Brezhnev period there was an economic crisis, in the 1980's the economic reforms of Gorbachev were not sufficient to improve the economy. There were no foodstuff and consumer goods, the shelves were empty. As a result people became restless, dissatisfied and wanted change.

Gorbachev broke with the equality tradition. Women and men were different and were supposed to perform different tasks. The state put more emphasis on the family ties and values. After more than sixty years of fixed Soviet identities, communism and prescribed norms, people now had to start redefining their identities. *Glasnost*, openness about society meant honesty and openness about identity structures.

Criticism of the leadership and communist doctrine was allowed in this period. Parodies of iconic Soviet images appeared. An example of this is the image of two women with a hammer and sickle, this was done to show women did all the work. Gendered symbolism was used and adapted to

appoint social discontent. Social posters were designed by the state and were meant to solve social illnesses. Because many of those illnesses were, in the eyes of Gorbachev, linked to the degrading family life, traditional gender roles were propagated to give family life a positive boost. Because of the fact criticism was now allowed, informal and formal structures came closer to each other. Ideology was less of an imperative and social relations influenced norms and dispositions.

5.4 Post-Soviet society, 1991 – 2008

The end of communism caused the development of new political, economic and social templates. Literally everything changed: the political organisation, economic system, norms and values, images of men and women and expectations. Ideological fundamentals disappeared and were replaced by new beliefs. In post-Soviet Russia the equality and family scenarios survived, however, many other scenarios emerged. To some extent, it was up to the people themselves to make a decision which one to follow. The actions of the people were no longer on behalf of the state, like it was in the period of the Soviet Union. Individuality now was an option as were the Russian Orthodox Church, capitalism, consumerism, sexuality and alcoholism, to name a few popular choices. After the fall of the Soviet Union, gender became relevant and individuality the standard. There were different morals and gender roles.

In recent sources a different use of femininity and masculinity is visible. Identities shifted, the sexual revolution caused that a sexual identity was added to the Russian narrative. Aside from women depicted as mothers and workers now the sexual identity of women in the different visual sources got a new important meaning. In contrast to the new sexual identity, the church provided for new identity cadres and collective memories, traditional norms and values regained importance.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the communist state ideology and the demand of uniformity were no longer determinative in people's lives. Suddenly the composition of one's identity became more complex. There were now different ideologies and sources to follow. Social transformation was spontaneous instead of being instigated and controlled by the state.

5.5 Summary of research findings

Despite the equality scenario during the Soviet Union, there were clear differences in the way men and women were depicted. Several binary oppositions were often presented. Examples of these were: women propagating peace and men at war, caring mothers and heroic soldiers, passive women and

active men. These oppositions sometimes were linked to masculinity and femininity, irrespective of which sex was depicted. Symbols and tropes were used in posters to create a reference for identity frames.

There were three important changes in the identity cadres in the Soviet Union. The first was a gradual change during the Soviet period. Modernity and influences from the West, caused identity frames to slowly adapt to new expectations. The second change was under the rule of Gorbachev. This was a break with the previous period. The new norms and expectations meant no more equality and unity at all expense. The fall of the Soviet Union instigated the third change and was a firm break with the past. The way men and women, and appointed masculinity and femininity, were depicted changed immensely and almost overnight.

National identity frames in all periods were strongly linked to gender. During the existence of the Soviet Union this was marked by a search for collective memory and similarities between the sexes. More freedom in the Gorbachev era and after, meant different gendered identity frames growing apart. Men and women became part of opposite groups, masculinity was exclusively a feature for men and only women were feminine. The differences between the sexes became an important part of creating an identity and belonging to a group. New identity structures emerged and were mixed with the old. The (post)Soviet identity is a construct of the history that is outlined in this thesis, with its many paradoxes resulting in a conglomerate of contradictions.

APPENDIX I

Scheme of analysis regarding images Soviet Union Gender nationality

General information on poster

Collection en Number poster	
Year and place production	
Edition	
Black and white/ colour, size	
Short factual description (one or more people, actions performed, scenery)	

Depicted in the image

Age and appearance persons	
<i>Behaviour:</i>	
- Active/ passive?	
- normal/ abnormal?	
- Victim/ heroe?	
- Emotions (happy, angry, proud, sad, hopeful etc)	
<i>Surroundings and objects</i>	
- Inside/ outside? (work, recreational etc.)	
- Ominous/ cheerful	
Objects (Working gear, gun, car, rocket, microphone, food etc.)	
Reference to national holiday or remembrance? (Womens day, labour day, mens day, WOII etc.)	
Famous person(s)? Who? Name, sex, domain (sport, politics etc.)	
Anonimous person(s)? - sex, apperance	

The image on gender and nationality

Nationalism/ communism etc.	
Religion	
West vs East	
Progressive/ conservative	
Is there a clear message and what is that message?	
1. Positive of negative message?	
2. Is the image typical for the time?	
3. Is the message connected to a specific happening or (intended as) 'timeless'?	
4. Is there a reference to the history, present time or future?	
5. Is the image realistic or futuristic/ utopian/ defeatist?	
What values and norms are present in the image? (equality, workers ethos etc.)	
Symbols/ tropes/ narrative	
What symbols are depicted in the image?	
What tropes are being used in the image?	
What narrative is the image based on?	
Is there a reference to national identity in the image?	
Is there a reference to gender roles in the image?	
What relation between gender en nationality in present in the image?	

Sources

1. *Ogoniok*

- 1953 no. 10
- 1954 no. 9
- 1954 no. 25
- 1956 no. 18
- 1959 no. 11
- 1964 no. 13
- 1966 no. 10
- 1966 no. 22
- 1966 no. 23
- 1966 no. 44
- 1973 no. 10
- 1978 no. 17
- 1982 no. 38
- 1992 no. 6
- 1992 no. 8
- 1992 no. 10
- 1994 no. 17
- 2005 no. 1
- 2005 no. 5

Archive: <http://journal-club.ru/?q=image/tid/371>

2. Propaganda posters private collection Koos van Weringh (16 posters)

- 1962, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974.

3. Propaganda posters online archive (4 posters)

- 1954.

<http://www.omsklogo.ru/>

4. Online advertisement archives (2 posters):

- 1999, 2001.

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