

Women's History in Russia

Women's History in Russia:
(Re)Establishing the Field

Edited by

Marianna Muravyeva and Natalia Novikova

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P U B L I S H I N G

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Contributors.....	viii
List of Tables	xiv
Introduction	xv
Part I: Women’s History Today: Challenges and Perspectives	
Chapter One.....	2
Gendering Russian Historiography (Women’s History in Russia: Status and Perspectives) Natalia Pushkareva	
Chapter Two	16
Overcoming Soviet Academic Discourse in the Regions: The History of Russian Women’s Movements Irina Iukina	
Part II: Sexuality, Identity and Moral Order: Russian Gendered Body under Control	
Chapter Three	28
Legal Definitions of Sex Crimes in the Laws and Commentaries of Russian Lawyers (1860s—1910s) Marianna Muravyeva	
Chapter Four.....	50
“The Fallen Sisters”: Prostitution in the Discourse of Russian Feminists at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century Susanna Kradetskaia	

Chapter Five	67
Women’s Piety in a Post-Revolutionary Russian Province: Self-Identification and Social Practices Maksim Kail	
Chapter Six	86
Soviet Women in Partisan Groups and in Occupied Zones during the Second World War: Experience, Survival and Fight Irina Rebrova	
Chapter Seven.....	101
Injured Narratives and Homosexual Subjectivities in Russia: The Production of Rights Vocabulary in Post-Soviet Context Alexander Kondakov	
Part III: Labor, Economy and the Gender System in Russia	
Chapter Eight.....	118
Women’s Entrepreneurship in Provincial Russia before the Revolution Svetlana Filatova	
Chapter Nine.....	137
International Women’s Day and the Construction of the Soviet Gender System Natalia Kozlova	
Chapter Ten	156
Nazi Germany and the Status of Women in the USSR in the 1930s Alexander Ermakov	
Chapter Eleven	175
“Naturally, I’m the One in Charge of Nutrition”: Mothers as “Food Managers” in Contemporary Russian Families Olga Gromasheva	
Chapter Twelve.....	193
Why are Children’s Rights so Dangerous? Interpreting Juvenile Justice in the Light of Conservative Mobilization in Contemporary Russia Natalia Sherstneva	
Bibliography	216
Index	250

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 8.1. Women's entrepreneurship in distillation industry in Penza province	132
Table 11.1. Division of food-related housework*	179

INTRODUCTION

This book emerged as a result of the encouragement of research activities by the Russian Association for Research in Women's History over the past few years. With each passing year the Association's conferences and networking have attracted a growing number of scholars from Russia and other countries. These gatherings serve as significant meeting places for all those who are interested in women's history, gender and feminist studies. The Association constitutes an efficient institutional framework, providing researchers with information about their regular meetings and a venue for publishing their findings.

The Association was established in 2008 and functions as the Russian Committee of the International Federation for Research in Women's History (IFRWH). Its formation turned out to be a lengthy and troublesome process that developed in reaction to both academic and public discourses which marginalized the history of women. The isolation of Russian researchers from each other, partially sustained and even enforced by the practice of pursuing Western grants, made it difficult to unite efforts and resources. This isolation came to an end with the founding of the Russian branch of the IFRWH in 2003. However, at this stage, it was an organization in name only. In 2007, a group of Russian delegates at the International Federation's conference in Sofia, Bulgaria, provided the Russian Committee with an effective framework that has continued to serve its purpose ever since.

Today, at least officially, Russian women's history and gender studies have been acknowledged as legitimate and promising disciplines, and the Association contributes greatly to the development of these research fields. One of its missions is to bring together scholars at different stages of their professional careers from all parts of Russia to build an academic forum where all involved in doing women's and gender history can exchange findings and ideas.

The Russian Association's annual convention has become the chief event for researchers interested in all matters relating to women. Since 2008, the year of the commemoration of the First All-Russian Women's Congress of 1908, seven conferences have taken place in different university centers across Russia; their resulting publications vividly

demonstrate how women's historical writing progresses in Russia and which topics and methodological trends dominate in its practice today.

Gendering Russian women in the twenty first century: Feminism against traditional values

In the past couple of years, the Russian academic community, together with Russian society, has experienced an intense backlash against the liberal ideology of Russian modernization. That backlash has manifested itself in the constant and persistent calls for traditional values and the rebuke of gender as a concept, which is viewed as allowing people to choose their sex. Women have been expected to return to their "natural state" as mothers and housekeepers; feminism once again became a precondition for bad motherhood and a general threat to the family and was even held responsible for "unnatural vices."¹ Such an attack on gender and feminism as academic concepts and their further politicization underscore the importance of women's history. They also force scholars to reflect on the reasons for and roots of such hostility. Furthermore, they bring up imminent questions about the nature of these traditional values and their origins. These are the questions that we plan to answer with this book.

Recent work by feminist historians shows that Russia has a deep-rooted tradition of exploring the history of women.² From the late eighteenth century onwards, Russian historiography developed women's themes systematically, advanced various methodological approaches (including critical feminist ones) and posed new interpretations of the subject. It is noteworthy that changing sociopolitical environments and public discourses prevailing at various stages of the Russian past determined the research agenda of, the methods for the study of, and the nature of the historical analysis of women's history. For example, the problem of women's property rights became a focus of discussions about the direction of modernization in late Imperial Russia whereby an improvement in women's property rights became a criterion for social progress.³ In the revolutionary period, all aspects of women's struggle for equality were promoted while the Soviet regime assigned researchers the task of developing biographies and collective portraits of women who contributed to the revolution and socialist reconstruction.⁴

The historical narratives shaped over the course of the last two centuries opened up a set of topics, which many contemporary researchers regard as extremely relevant. Pioneering authors of the nineteenth century sought to define the roles of Russian women in the social and political life of the country, as well as their contribution to the Russian culture and

history. One of the most popular genres of historical writing at that time was the biography of a prominent female political and public figure. The majority of these studies were written in a celebratory, almost hagiographical, manner. Consequently, the literary style masked the fact that they were based on careful research and reliable evidence. Instead, they highlighted how the hopes of "progressive forces" were pinned on Russian women.⁵

Among the many works about women published in the second half of the nineteenth century, we can find only a few which belonged to the pen of women historians. The formation of an independent Russian women's movement at the turn of the century helped to widen research fields and provided women researchers with resources for studies and publications. Women's history became a cognitive practice of the movement from this time onwards. The bulk of histories about women were written by those who were involved in political struggles.⁶ Consequently, among the new topics called into being by the women's movement were women's education and women's subordinated positions at different times and under different political regimes. Unlike the earlier works on similar subjects mentioned above and written from an anthropological perspective, these studies opened up a new research agenda that focused on the roots and causes of gender inequality, as well as the development of strategies to emancipate women from discriminative treatment.⁷

The Russian women's movement also challenged the character of long-standing public debates on the nature and social role of prostitution. Among others concerned in that exchange of views, the voices of Russian feminists reflected the vital interests and needs of women. An essential aspect of their politics was the demand for an end to the double standard of sexual morality.⁸

Importantly, the Russian women's movement also advanced the need for a comprehensive history of the movement itself. These stories focused on the conceptualization of the movement, on the search for its roots in Russian history and political culture, and on the analysis of the relationships between women's groups and organizations and other progressive movements of the period. At this initial stage in the late development of the historiography of the Russian women's movement, some approaches of historical writing such as the comparative analyses of Russian and Western feminisms, were adopted. Autobiographies and biographies of prominent female leaders and feminist activists were also produced. The latter sought to discover the key attitudes and values held by the first generations of Russian feminists. The individual biographical approach focused not only on women's accomplishments, but also on the

reasons *why* those women acted in particular ways. In these life stories, an acute sense of social injustice and the desire to change the world for the better were often named as causes of women's social actions.⁹

All the above-mentioned themes constituted a valuable contribution to Russian women's history and, as many researchers acknowledge today, exerted some influence on Russian political discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century when leading political parties debated the "woman question."

After the revolutions of 1917, the character and content of Russian women's historical writing was determined by two major factors. The first was linked to the general political environment and those limits that the new political regime set on the women's movement's development. Henceforth, any move towards establishing an autonomous, self-directing women's movement became impossible. Under such circumstances, writing feminist history in Russia was seriously hampered and, what is more, became a suicidal practice.¹⁰

Other influential factors in the development of the Russian women's historical writing involved the drastic changes in Russian intellectual culture, particularly in the study of history which was now reduced to the investigation of "significant" political issues, social movements and revolutions. Marxist theory and class analysis were acknowledged as the only reliable methodologies of historical inquiry, whereas nation, race, gender, religion and other determinants of personal or collective identity formation were completely ignored. Although Russian women's historiography survived the political upheavals and still produced a great number of published works, its existence and development were strongly determined by the dominant ideology, which stressed economic determinism and class antagonisms. Consequently, Russian women's histories of the 1920s and 1930s tended to overemphasize the scale and importance of the women workers' political movement, whereas the activities of the feminist ("bourgeois") parties were totally ignored, and those women activists who survived the revolution and the Civil War preferred not to recall their feminist past, at least publicly. This time also witnessed a rising tide of interest in biographical writing, which, by putting women of the revolution and the party leaders at the center of historical change, was to provide female readers with motivational examples. Thus over a long period, the interest of Soviet historians in women's political activity had been conditioned by their assumption that women merit historical discussion only as participants of the Russian revolutionary struggle.¹¹

By the mid-twentieth century, publication of new work on Russian women's history continued, but its repertoire was reduced to popularized narratives of women's contribution to the revolutionary liberation of the country and celebratory life stories of outstanding canonized women of the revolutionary past. At the same time, in spite of the availability of a vast number of published works, women's history as an academic discipline was marginalized and regarded as historically insignificant.¹²

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Russian women's historiography experienced a new birth. For the first time in many decades, Soviet authors scrutinized the Russian feminist foremothers' activities. The first autonomous self-managed women's organizations emerged during the 1905—1907 revolution. They were later labeled "bourgeois." It was only with the revival of an autonomous feminist movement in Russia (as well as in the West in the 1960s) that the questions of its origins, nature and history were raised. In the early 1990s, against a background of enthusiastic democratic discourse, popular activism and political parties' formation, as well as signs of a sexual revolution, a great number of national and regional conferences and seminars devoted time and space to various aspects of Russian women's past and present. Many Russian scholars are engaged now in the effort to comprehend and interpret the theories and methods of women's and gender studies; they discuss them both as a discipline and as a discourse. Publications that have appeared in the last several years cover a broad range of topics. They offer new perspectives on women's experiences and the role of gender in structuring historical change.¹³

Main issues and themes

The Russian Association conference programs reveal that there are close links between research practices in the past and nowadays. Many subjects broached for the first time by the initial generation of Russian historians of women still attract the attention of scholars who are eager to find new sources and offer further interpretations of events and processes. Particularly prolific are those who work in regional archives and museums. Based on traditional positivist methodology, their writings present an enormous amount of factual data and in the end draw a detailed and nuanced picture of Russian women's past. At the same time, much interest today has focused on new areas of study. These are advanced by novel trends in the modern historiography and they have shaped the hard process of reappraising Russian women's history, its subjects and methods.¹⁴

This book reflects some general developments within recent women's and gender historical writing. The essays contained within manifest concerns about the discipline's position within the Russian academic world and university curriculum, its progressive evolution, and its means of promotion among both specialists and the general public. Today, historians of women tend to think about the state of affairs within the growing group of researchers within women's and gender history, which has turned out to be diverse, at times discrete and at other times combative. The first chapters provide important insights into the complicated process of the institutionalization of women's history in contemporary Russia. Natalia Pushkareva admits that the study of women and gender in Russian historiography is still in a marginal position and delineates the ways in which the Russian academy dismisses new methodologies and pejoratively labels women's issues a "feminist intervention." In spite of this unfavorable environment, Pushkareva points to the significant contributions of her colleagues in Russia, especially those within "provincial" university centers, to both the historiography of women and the integration of women's subjects in history courses.

Irina Iukina, in her chapter, gives a detailed analysis of the new research and publications on Russian women's movements coming from the Russian regional academic institutions. Echoing Pushkareva's concerns about the unfavorable environment and anti-feminist mood of the authorities, she points out that there is evidence of a transition to a new official narrative that reflects some of its Marxist and state centric legacies. That narrative tends to occlude and obfuscate the activities of women. The history of civil activism and the political history of Russia are still very much patriarchal, male-dominated and male-centered, leaving little or no room for women's agency.

The second part of this collection is devoted to a relatively new area of historical research in Russia: the problem of constructing sexualities, sexual behavior, and sexual norms in the past. As the chapters presented in this book demonstrate, scholars apply different approaches and methodologies to these issues. Marianna Muravyeva looks at legal documents and writings of late Imperial Russia to reveal and assess the dominant discourses concerning criminalized sexualities. Her gender-sensitive analysis demonstrates that the "progressive" language and scientific rationales that lawyers used at that time paradoxically led to the preservation of traditional models of sexuality in the modernizing Empire. At the same time, Susanna Kradetskaia employs a traditional approach in her study of the Russian feminists' discourse about prostitution, placing this issue within the context of women's rights and agency. She shows that

Russian feminists discussed the question of sexual exploitation within the frameworks of gender discrimination and an emerging civil society, thus providing a very early feminist analysis of sex work. For them, sex work was about women's status and women's rights rather than about social problems or "saving women" campaigns.

In her chapter, Irina Rebrova takes a different approach to women's equality and agency by scrutinizing Russian women's oral stories to understand the ways in which women perceived their contributions to winning the Second World War. The importance of this work is not only in its quite novel subject of research but also in its valuable primary source data, which the author collected in the field over the last several years. These oral stories highlight the fact that neither men nor women thought themselves to be equal during the war. Women regarded and described their contributions in traditional gender role patterns, stressing their nurturing and supportive roles. At the same time, these narratives also reveal the ways in which women liberated themselves and realized their agency.

Maksim Kail and Alexander Kondakov discuss the problems of gender and sexual citizenship in Russia using two very different groups with strikingly similar identity politics, that of religious women during and after the Revolutions of 1917 and individuals from the contemporary LGBT community. Maxim Kail's chapter concentrates on the experiences of the most "invisible" or "silent" groups of women in the history of Soviet Russia, that is, pious Orthodox women. The author carefully examines the ways that women from Smolensk region used to preserve their religious identity amidst the hostile political setting of post-revolutionary Russia. Kail's analysis demonstrates that the revolutions gave religious women an opportunity to be visible in public spaces and allowed them some sort of an agency to become citizens and retain their religion.

Alexander Kondakov analyzes the human rights discourse in Russia as applicable to gay women and men in terms of their subjectivity and citizenship. Using interviews with LGBT people from St. Petersburg he shows how heteronormative human rights discourses are constructed and how they effect and shape gay men's and women's subjectivity and define their citizenship.

All these chapters portray a nuanced, complicated and diverse picture of sexual practices as well as the State's attitudes and attempts to control them. Additionally, they investigate individual identities and their relationship to sexuality, self-expression and agency. As different as these authors and themes are, it becomes very clear that Russian sexual practices and gender identities have been developing in spite of tremendous social

and political control. The emergence of this field of study has encouraged different groups overtime to reflect on how they express their personal freedoms.

The third and final part of the book deals with women's experiences at the crossroads of public and private discourses. It connects spheres of social relations, policy-making and women's self-representations at different points in Russia's distant and recent past. In her chapter on women's entrepreneurship in pre-revolutionary Russia, Svetlana Filatova develops a long-standing historiographical tradition to depict Russian women who, in comparison with their Western counterparts, were privileged as far as their property rights were concerned. She relies on various types of evidence to show that women's independent entrepreneurship was quite widespread in the Volga region of fin-de-siècle Russia. She shows that women often engaged in entrepreneurial activities for a variety of reasons, ranging from the exigencies of poverty to their simply being business minded. All of them, though, proved to be remarkable exemplars of business success against a backdrop of an evolving patriarchy. Both noble- and lower-class women used Russian civil and commercial law to their advantage to provide for their families, to manage their estates and businesses, and to alter stereotypical perception of women's place in society.

Women's participation in the labor force after the October Revolution of 1917 and Bolshevik's emancipation policies are studied by Alexander Ermakov in his chapter. The material reveals that the Soviet state's practices of dealing with the women's labor force were thoroughly investigated by the Nazi government with functional aims in view. The Nazis originally expressed a lot of negative criticism about women's emancipation and their break from traditional gender roles, which Nazi ideology thought absolutely crucial to their success. However, on the eve of the Second World War, they carefully borrowed some Soviet policies they saw as being useful in recruiting women into the labor force to sustain the German economy. In both countries, despite opposite gender ideologies, women had more in common than these regimes wanted to allow: in reality women played an important and often crucial role in their respective country's political, economic and military successes.

The history of the now tarnished International Women's Day from its establishment at the beginning of the twentieth century its disintegration in the post-Soviet era is the subject of Natalia Kozlova's chapter. Kozlova poses an important question about the paradoxical transformation of the political meaning and symbolic representations of this public holiday in the context of the formation of the Soviet gender order. The chapter

underlines the problematic nature of the gender-blind equality espoused by Soviet ideologists and expressed via ritual celebrations of International Women's Day. The holiday's gender-biased nature revealed itself during the 1970s onwards, when it shifted from praising women's achievements to highlighting their femininity and to constructing "true" women, who by nature were different from men. As a result, in the post-Soviet era women became hostages of fading gender-blind equality. They found themselves carrying a double burden, that is, having had to work to provide for their families, and to do all the housework. Although their femininity continues to be celebrated during the 8 March holiday, women are becoming more essentialized in the public discourse.

In her chapter, Olga Gromasheva examines Russian women's double burden in further detail through an analysis of the food management practices of married women. Using interviews with women, Gromasheva shows that Russian women struggle to retain this double burden and need to compromise by often sacrificing either their careers or reducing the quality or quantity of the housework they perform. At the same time, interviewees reproduce the traditional status quo as they try to find suitable explanations for their actions.

Natalia Sherstneva focuses on a different aspect of this status quo of the traditional gender order, that is, on the rights of children and gender roles within the family and wider family autonomy in contemporary Russia. She, however, is more interested in the analysis of the public discourses concerning traditional values and conservative gender mobilization among certain active groups which are protesting against the introduction of juvenile justice in Russia. These protest campaigns have brought to light the issues of gender, family, and traditional gender order, and have deeply politicized them to the point that gender equality becomes a battlefield of modernity against tradition.

Overall, this part of the book provides a crucial and important analysis of the roots of the present-day situation regarding gender equality and human rights of women in Russia. All authors agree that women were always able to adapt to any form of coercion and negotiate their way through it, however, often sacrificing their agency.

What is the difference?

The picture of Russian women's historical writing that emerges from this book is one of great diversity. The histories of women included here come from scholars with multi-disciplinary backgrounds and differing points of view. Together they represent a much nuanced and rich picture of

Russian women. The authors also offer valuable insights into the regional histories of Russian women, underlining how diverse and distinct these stories can be thanks to Russia's geographical scope.

This collection of essays by Russian scholars alone is the first of its kind in addressing a broad English-speaking audience. We have tried to present the theories and methodologies that are employed within the Russian national historiography to make sense of Russian gender and women's history. We hope that the volume will further facilitate the exchange of scholarship and contribute to the de-marginalization of Russia and Russian women. We do not find it useful to assess the historical development of Russian gender experiences through the lens of binary oppositions such as East and West. We hope that this book also demonstrates the importance of not reducing Russian women's history and women's experiences to the West/East paradigm.

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Natalia Novikova

Yaroslavl—Oxford, 6 March, 2014

Notes

¹ On conservative mobilization and gender equality see chapter 12 of the book. On the backlash and gender see Anna Temkina and Elena Zdravomyslova, "Gender's crooked path: Feminism confronts Russian patriarchy," *Current Sociology* 62(1) (2014): 1—18; Anna Temkina, "The Gender Question in Contemporary Russia," *Global dialogue* 3(1) (2012), <http://isa-global-dialogue.net/the-gender-question-in-contemporary-russia>; Janet Elise Johnson and Aino Saarinen, "Twenty-First-Century Feminisms under Repression: Gender Regime Change and the Women's Crisis Center Movement in Russia," *Signs* 38(3) (2013): 543—567.

² See, for example, Natalia Pushkareva, *Gendernaia teoriia i istoricheskoe znanie* (St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2007).

³ See Chapter 8.

⁴ Natalia Pushkareva, *Ruskaia zhenshchina: istoriia i sovremennost'* (Moscow: Lodomir, 2002).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Natalia Novikova, "Early Historical Accounts of the Russian Women's Movement: a political dialogue or a dispute?" *Women's History Review* 20(4) (2011): 509—519.

⁸ See Chapter 4.

⁹ Irina Iukina, "Ideologiia rossiiskogo feminizma pervoi volny," *Sotsial'naiia istoriia* 2003 (2003): 352—366; Irina Iukina, *Istoriia zhenshchin Rossii: Zhenskoe*

dvizhenie i feminizm v 1850—1920-e gody (St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2003). See also: Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820—1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Barbara Alpern Engel, "Engendering Russia's History: Women in Post-Emancipation Russia and the Soviet Union," *Slavic Review* 51(2) (1992): 309—321.

¹¹ Pushkareva, *Ruskaia zhenshchina*; Engel, "Engendering Russia's History."

¹² Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700—2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹³ See Chapter 1. See also Pushkareva, *Ruskaia zhenshchina*.

¹⁴ On the Association's conferences see Natalia Novikova, "Zhenskaia istoriia i sovremennye gendernye roli: III Mezhdunarodnaia nauchnaia konferentsiia Rossiiskoi assotsiatsii issledovatelei zhenskoj istorii," *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta. Seriia: Istoriiia* 1(15) (2001): 168—172; Anna Shisheliakina, "O V Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii RAIZhI 'Zhenshchiny i muzhchiny v kontekste istoricheskikh peremen', priurochennoi k godu rossiiskoi istorii, 4—7 oktiabria 2012 goda," *Zhenshchiny v Rossiiskom obshchestve* 4(65) (2012): 86—89.

PART I

WOMEN'S HISTORY TODAY: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER ONE

GENDERING RUSSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY (WOMEN'S HISTORY IN RUSSIA: STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES)

NATALIA PUSHKAREVA

At the end of 1803, the eminent Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin expressed the hope that in the future a scholar would appear “whose talented pen would produce a gallery of portraits of illustrious Russian women in history.”¹

In the subsequent two centuries of research on the topic of women in Russian history, a considerable body of scholarship has been produced.² By the end of the twentieth century, factual knowledge about the place of women in political, economic, cultural, and religious life had grown to the point of permitting conclusions and creating conceptual frameworks that explain both the common and the exceptional in the history of both illustrious and ordinary Russian women.

The birth of the new historical field of women's history coincided in Russia with the period of perestroika, when Russian humanities scholarship encountered and adopted a wide range of Western concepts. The intellectual products of Western scholars were not just stylish theories, but rather concepts that could inform the analysis of Russian realities. But even before the introduction of the concept of gender to cultural studies in Russia, a number of humanities scholars contested the Marxist dictum that dominated Soviet scholarship: that women in the pre-Soviet period were downtrodden and disenfranchised, passive, uneducated, and benighted.³

These historians included Grigorii Tishkin, Olga Khasbulatova, and myself. Even before there was official permission, we demonstrated that the history of women deserved autonomous existence within Russian scholarly discourse. In the early 1980s, we repeatedly came up against serious expressions of dissent from those who established research priorities and who excluded women's history from the list of worthy

topics. The ideologues who permitted and forbade the study of various topics based their determination not to allow the institutionalization of women's studies and women's history on the Marxist principle that everything "in the long past of humanity is the history of the worldwide historical suppression of the female sex."⁴

Marxism itself, when seen from a feminist perspective, is just one more version of patriarchal ideology, in which the understanding of "sex" was and remains to this day a category of lesser significance than "class" or "social order." The differentiation in male and female roles, as Marxism still affirms, was conditioned by the circumstances of class antagonisms, and the "suppression of the female sex" arose together with them, and with the development of private property.⁵

In order to resolve the "woman question," all that would be needed would be to liquidate private property. This question concerning equal opportunities in the realization of rights for men and women had not in fact been resolved, but it was unacceptable to say so in Russia in that period.⁶

I would like to emphasize again that the institutionalization of women's studies and the recognition of women's topics in the historical discipline began in Russia almost simultaneously with the appearance of interest in these areas in the West. As this continuing tradition of scholarship demonstrates, the notion that the study of sex, of relations between the sexes, and the status of women arose in Russia only at the end of the 1980s or even in the post-Soviet period, in the wake of the concept of gender, is inaccurate. Just as the Westernization of "barbaric" Russia in the eighteenth century could not have occurred without the socio-cultural transformations of the seventeenth century, so the "domestication" of Western concepts in the perestroika and post-Soviet periods could take root only because the carriers of new ideas and approaches could draw upon a mass of factual material that had been collected over nearly two centuries.⁷

In the Soviet Union of the 1970s—1980s, the socio-political circumstances did not permit any indulgence in the ideas of feminism. Even the word "feminism" itself took on an ironic cast,⁸ thanks to the strengthening of anti-feminist propaganda by the Bolsheviks and then by Soviet ideologues.⁹ They contended that working women had more interests in common with working men, than with "bourgeois feminists." That was why the feminist consciousness in Russia did not arise as a reaction to "male chauvinism" or "machismo" as in the West.¹⁰ In contrast to the West, where the typical opposition was between masculinity and femininity, male and female, in the Soviet Union, "women's topics" arose

out of the homogenization of sexual differences, which was characteristic of Soviet ideology. The bearers of the ideas and practices of discrimination against women were not men as a social group, but rather the agents of the Soviet government, democratic in its enunciated slogans and totalitarian in fact.¹¹

As a matter for discussion, Russian tradition, to a significantly greater degree than in the West, sequestered sex. Almost nobody (except for Igor Kon) studied the history of sexuality in Russian historiography until the end of the twentieth century. The cultivation of “female” problematics, writing style, approaches to analysis in the Soviet Union did not consist of a struggle with male domination, but rather with the recognition of the differences between the equivalent sexes, which Soviet ideology (with its focus on the creation of the “personality of the Communist future”) had tried to erase.¹²

The peculiar mental amalgam of the Soviet period oddly united “Russian mentality, Orthodoxy, and atheism.”¹³ Along with this, the Marxist idea of the “class struggle” extended to women of different social statuses, and the Soviet concept of the “working mother” (women who had obligations both to work and to bear children),¹⁴ and much more, together formed what might be called “state paternalism” over women. This approach allows us to see that in the period of Soviet power, the issue was not one of women’s specific interests, but rather how the social needs of women and men could be equalized.¹⁵

In the final analysis, although there was an interest in the subject, the topic of women in history was studied without regard to defining its themes and without any incentive to create an independent discursive practice.¹⁶ Soviet historical scholarship was suffused with ideology, which was interested in affirming existing Marxist dogmas in regard to women. Consequently, it regularly produced works on the history of women’s participation in revolutionary and liberation movements, on their military actions in wartime, and on their entry into non-feminine professions.¹⁷

The beginning of recognition of the topic of women in Russian historical scholarship

In the mid-1980s, the manner of life changed, which represented a watershed in the way of thinking of many Russian men and women. This shaped the history of the development of women’s studies.

The social transformations of the mid-to-late 1980s might be identified as the primary factor that influenced the development of new independent directions in historical scholarship. Other factors derive from this starting