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The Daily Lives of Urban Women during the Khrushchev Thaw in Soviet and Post-Soviet Scholarship

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Abstract: The article discusses the rise and changes of scholarly interest in urban women's everyday life in the USSR of the mid-twentieth century. By studying the Soviet and post-Soviet historiography of women's everyday life during Khrushchev's Thaw, the authors explain that at first this subject was treated in analogy to the customary celebration of Soviet achievements: also, the "women's question" would eventually be "resolved". With rising doubts about the "resolvability" of the complex problems related to gender relations came a paradigm shift towards reflections on the difficulties and contradictions in the lifestyle of urban women. At the center of debate were now the necessity for shortening the working day and for additional vacation days, as well as the "double bondage" of women who had to combine a professional workload with heavy family obligations. The authors argue that in the 1990s (a period now often called "the new thaw," and "the nineties of the gender debates"), the political aspects of female life in the 1950s and 1960s became marginal in scholarship. The main attention was now focused on the home and family spheres, on problems of corporeality and fashion, and on the "woman's voice" in literature, cinema and media. In consequence, some aspects of women's everyday life during the Thaw years remained unexplored. Finally, there are no generalizing works that would compare women's everyday life on the levels of the USSR, Russia, or Russia's regions, and little work has been done on ethnocultural characteristics of women's life in the post-war USSR.

Keywords: women's history, everyday life, urban life, historiography, thaw

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Женская городская повседневность второй половины 1950-х – начала 1960-х гг. в советской и постсоветской историографии

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Аннотация: Анализируются причины и следствия актуализации научного интереса к проблемам женской повседневности в пространстве советского города середины прошлого века. Проследив историю изучения женской повседневности в СССР периода политической оттепели (1950–1960-х гг.),

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авторы выяснили, что сначала эта проблема рассматривалась в парадигме апологии достижений советской власти в решении «женского вопроса». Смену парадигм характеризуют сомнения в его «решенности», перенос фокуса внимания с истории побед на сложности и противоречия в образе жизни горожанок (проблема сокращенного рабочего дня, дополнительных дней отпуска при огромной домашней загруженности, «двойной связанности» профессиональными и семейными обязательствами). Доказано также, что в 1990-е гг., которые ныне часто называют «новой оттепелью» и «гендерными 90-ми», изучение политических аспектов жизни женщин 1950–1960-е гг. отошло на второй план. Главное же внимание оказалось сфокусировано на домашней, семейной сфере, проблемах телесности и моды, «женском голосе» в литературе, кино и СМИ. Часть аспектов проблемы женской повседневности в годы оттепели так и осталась неизученной. Нет обобщающих работ по женской теме, в которых бы сопоставлялась женская повседневность в союзном, российском и региональном масштабах, мало изучаются этнокультурные особенности женского быта в послевоенном СССР.

Ключевые слова: женская история, повседневность, городской быт, историография, оттепель

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Introduction

The anthropological turn in the humanities has boosted interest in the everyday lives of ordinary people. While ethnographers have always studied the subject, cultural anthropologists are now beginning to examine how individuals react to historical events, as well their lifestyles and social interaction.¹ The Thaw in Soviet history, the decade after Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 under the rule of Nikita Khrushchev that was characterized by the relative liberalization and greater attention to private life, is particularly interesting for its impact on women's history, especially after the publication in 2004 of the essay collection, *Women in the Khrushchev Era*.²

The lives of urban women had long been neglected in the Soviet Union, V.R. Bilshay first addressed the topic in 1948 with her book, *Soviet Democracy and the Equality of Women in the Soviet Union*.³ Like similar works of the time, her study of how to resolve the “woman question,” focused on female participation in the labor market, which was considered to be “liberation from domestic bondage.”⁴ In those years, when paying attention to the rights of working women, no one asked how effective the relevant laws were. Instead, sociologists generally agreed that the “the concern of the Party and the state for the welfare of Soviet women” had resolved the woman question.⁵ Whether women actually felt satisfied was left unsaid.

¹ N.L. Pushkareva, “Istoriya povsednevnostey,” in *Teoriya i metodologiya istorii* (Volgograd: Uchitel' Publ., 2014), 312–325; A.V. Belova, “Women's everyday life as a subject of everyday history,” *Ethnographic Review*, no. 4 (2006): 85–97.

² *Women in the Khrushchev era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

³ V.L. Bil'shay, *Sovetskaya demokratiya i ravnopravie zhenshhin v SSSR* (Moscow: Juridizdat Publ., 1948).

⁴ A.P. Us, *Chto dala sovetskaya vlast' zhenshchinam* (Minsk: Gosizdat BSSR Publ., 1950); M.D. Ovsyanikova, *Fakty i tsifry o polozhenii zhenshhin v SSSR i zarubezhnykh stranakh* (Moscow: [N.s.], 1954).

⁵ A.A. Abramova, *Okhrana trudovykh prav zhenshhin v SSSR*. Moscow (Gospolizdat, 1954); K.G. Gorshenin, *Sovetskie zhenshchiny imeyut odinakovyie grazhdanskiiye prava s muzhchinami* (Moscow: Izd-vo polit. lit-ra Publ., 1956).

Scholars emphasized the importance of improving urban infrastructure, the working conditions of female workers, and the quality of their leisure.⁶ But they hesitated to address the limits on the ability of women to improve their professional qualifications, or to be adequately paid for important positions.⁷ To them, the public, rather than the individual, was important, as was clear with the first study of changes in domestic life during the Soviet era – a collective monograph by the staff of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁸ Its authors entirely neglected the everyday lives of urban women as they differed from those of urban men. Nevertheless, the volume marked a breakthrough in the study of Soviet life.

The emergence of Soviet sociology in the late sixties led to new approaches to examine the everyday lives of women, which, among other, now also began to consider the present. Scholars now looked at such matters as leisure, the content of free time and recreation, and introduced the concept of the *socialist way of life*.⁹ While they did not focus on the details of women's domestic lives, sociologists did pay attention to motherhood, unequal pay, the safety of working women, and their excessive workloads.¹⁰ As a result, they began to publish about the “difficulties and contradictions” between engaging women in socially useful work and fulfilling their maternal and family responsibilities.

From the late ‘sixties until the first half of the eighties, according to the dictates of the ideological department of the Communist Party’s Central Committee, studies of everyday life tended to be descriptive, and hewed close to how official propaganda depicted the lifestyle of the Soviet citizen. Sociologists did turn their attention to new aspects of everyday life, such as the structure of the urban environment, the interaction between individuals and their families and social groups, the characteristics of urban settlement, family obligations, as well as the stability of traditions – including the reluctance of men to share their wives’ domestic burden. For the first time, with some alarm, scholars commented about the character of women's work,¹¹ although their involvement in activities outside of the family were seen in a very favorable light.¹²

In 1964, the Novosibirsk sociologist G.A. Prudenskiy¹³ turned his attention to what the country’s citizens did during their leisure. He was one of the first to conclude that women carried out most of a family’s domestic responsibilities: 54% of them spent more than four hours a day on housekeeping, and 8.5 hours on weekends.¹⁴ B.A. Grushin con-

⁶ M.D. Ovsyannikova, *Fakty i tsifry*; T.N. Zueva, *Rol' sovetskikh zhenshin v razvitií nauki, kul'tury i iskusstva* (Moscow: Mysl' Publ., 1956).

⁷ N.D. Aralovets, *Zhenskiy trud v promyshlennosti SSSR* (Moscow: Profizdat Publ., 1954); V. Bil'shay, *Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., 1959).

⁸ *Selo Viryatino v proshlom i nastoyashchem. Opyt etnograficheskogo izucheniya* (Moscow: AN SSSR Publ., 1958).

⁹ *Sotsiologiya v Rossii* (Moscow: Institut sotsiologii RAN Publ., 1998), 473.

¹⁰ V.S. Belova, *Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR* (Moscow: Znanie Publ., 1975); *Zhenshchiny Strany Sovetov* (Moscow: Politizdat Publ., 1977); *Zhenshchiny na rabote i doma* (Moscow: Statistika Publ., 1978).

¹¹ M.A. Korobitsyna, *Zhenskiy trud v sisteme obshchestvennogo truda pri sotsializme* (Sverdlovsk: [N.s.], 1966); V.B. Mikhailuk, *Ispol'zovanie zhenskogo truda v narodnom hozaystve* (Moscow: Ekonomika Publ., 1970).

¹² M.M. Shestakova, *Deyatel'nost' KPSS po vovlecheniyu zhenshin v kommunisticheskoye stroitel'stvo v gody semiletki (na materialakh Srednego Povolzh'ya)* (Saratov: [N.s.], 1967).

¹³ G.A. Prudenskiy, *Vnerabochee vremya trudyashhiysya* (Novosibirsk: SO AN SSSR Publ., 1961).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

sidered their daily routines at home to be free time and personal skills development (ignoring the matter of gender). Continuing this theme L.A. Gordon and E.V. Klopov showed how technological developments changed eased housekeeping by women and improved their lives. They confirmed the fact that over the past 50 years the time spent such tasks had been reduced by seven hours per week. Nevertheless, there was no question about the persistence of inequality among the sexes in this regard, as men did no more than half the work of women.¹⁵

E.V. Porokhnyuk and M.S. Shepeleva “discovered” the topic of women's everyday life in 1975 with their article about a social experiment that cut the hours of female construction workers in Odessa to lighten their domestic responsibilities. The experiment lasted almost a year, and a survey of the participants provided many insights into the responsibilities of housekeeping, family and motherhood.¹⁶ The study's conclusion confirmed the experiment's success: the productivity of women's work increased, the academic performance of their children improved, and their husbands increased their participation in household chores.

Many sociologists studied how people budgeted their time, but paid no attention to the everyday lives of women.¹⁷ The topic of domestic life was left to scholars specializing in “family studies,” who looked at how the distribution of household duties was changing.¹⁸ In their work about the importance of the domestic sphere for lifestyle satisfaction, I.P. Trufanov and Z.A. Yankova stressed the realities of everyday city life, explaining that women bore most of the responsibilities at home.¹⁹

Life itself pushed sociologists into new directions. Thus, the magazine *Sem'ya i Shkola* (“Family and School”) hosted a heated discussion on its pages in response to E. Andreeva's article about the inequality of opportunities between women and men. Despite the law's guarantee of equal rights, she caustically observed, “only girls learn Domestic Science,” and “when a boy plays football, a girl washes dishes.”²⁰ Her solution to this inequity was to restructure education to teach children that a man can “wash diapers, bathe the child and swaddle him, not to mention other household work,” in addition to eliminating gender differences in school.

Some rebutted by insisting on the immutability of a woman's destiny: bearing children given her natural desire to have a family. There were others, such as S. Ghazaryan, who disagreed with both of these points of view, while V. Mikhaylova argued that shortening a woman's workday only created a “second shift” at home, to serve her husband. Much was written about the state's “care for women”: kindergartens, canteens, and centers for consumer services. It was argued that, the higher the level of education of women,

¹⁵ B.A. Grushin, *Svobodnoe vremya: Aktual'nye problem* (Moscow: Mysl' Publ., 1964); L.A. Gordon, Ye.V. Klopov, *Chelovek posle raboty: socialnye problemy byta i vnerabocheho vremeni* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1972); L.A. Gordon, N.M. Rimashevskaya, *Pyatidnevnyaya rabochaya nedelya i svobodnoye vremya trudyashchikhsya* (Moscow: Mysl' Publ., 1972).

¹⁶ E.V. Porokhnyuk, M.S. Shepeleva, “O sovmeshchenii proizvodstvennykh i semeinykh funktsiy zhenshin-rabotnits,” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, no. 4 (1975): 102–108.

¹⁷ V.I. Bolgov, *Budzhet vremeni pri socializme* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1973).

¹⁸ N.G. Yurkevich, *Sem'ya v sovremennom obshchestve* (Minsk: Belarus' Publ., 1964); Z.A. Yankova, *XX vek i problemy sem'i* (Moscow: Znanie, 1974); Z.A. Yankova, *Struktura gorodskoy sem'i v socialisticheskoy obshchestve* (Moscow: [N.s.], 1974).

¹⁹ I.P. Trufanov, *Problemy byta gorodskogo naseleniya SSSR* (Leningrad: Leningrad State University Publ., 1973).

²⁰ E. Andreeva, “Protiv patriarhal'nykh nraovov,” *Sem'ya i shkola*, no. 1 (1967): 9–10.

the more likely that there would be parity between the sexes in housekeeping.²¹ Meanwhile a number of historians attributed advances in equality between women and men to the Party's efforts to improve social conditions and raising the standard of living of the population, while keeping quiet about domestic problems, such as crime and drunkenness.²²

Having carried out research about the history of the Soviet family up to the 'sixties, A.G. Kharchev, one of the founders of Russian family studies, was the first to address such questions as spouses' assessment of their relations and attitudes to premarital sex. He also touched on the topic of women's domestic life, reasoning that "liberating women, granting them equal rights with men in all areas of life is the supreme value."²³ Kharchev's works were followed by a great number of publications about the sociology of the Soviet family. Scholars began to consider family life both in the village and the city, the distribution of responsibilities, marital satisfaction, and parental roles, as well as such previously taboo topics as sexual behavior and contraception. Physicians at the time avoided writing about sexual dysfunction in marriage, although fragmentary references to new standards of feminine hygiene began to appear in the medical literature.²⁴ The émigré press was a different matter; it did not shy away from discussing abortion, and carried articles about the law of 1955 and the rights (more precisely, absence of rights) of Soviet women.²⁵

The issue of women's labor came to the fore in the seventies,²⁶ especially when the UN declared 1975 to be the Year of the Woman, which encouraged sociologists to gather statistics on the matter. One study of the hours women and men spent outside and around the house showed that "men devote 7–10% more time on self-care, eating and sleeping, as well as entertainment and recreation."²⁷ Comparing the lives of Soviet women to those of their contemporaries in the West, scholars did point out that the Soviet government provided longer maternity leave, low cost nurseries and kindergartens, and a good infrastructure for protecting women's health, both in Moscow and elsewhere.²⁸

²¹ S. Gazaryan, "Ne uhdit' ot glavnogo," *Sem'ya i shkola*, no. 3 (1967): 4–6; V. Mihaylova, "Snova na kuhnyu?" *Sem'ya i shkola*, no. 3 (1967): 4–6; A. Pimenova, "Kto zhe glava sem'i?" *Sem'ya i shkola*, no. 4 (1967): 18.

²² A.E. Kharitonova, "Osnovnye etapy zhilishhnogo stroitel'stva v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 5 (1965): 50–64; N.Ya. Bromley, "Uroven' zhizni v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7. (1966): 3–17.

²³ A.G. Kharchev, *Byt, sem'ya, dosug* (Moscow: Znanie Publ., 1969), 69; A.G. Kharchev, *Brak i sem'ya v SSSR* (Moscow: Mysl' Publ., 1979).

²⁴ E.A. Sadvokasova, *Sotsial'no-gigienicheskie aspekty regulirovaniya razmerov sem'i* (Moscow: [N.s.], 1968); S.M. Yakovleva, *Sposoby i sredstva kontratseptsii* (Leningrad: Meditsina Publ., 1970).

²⁵ I.A. Kurganov, *Zhenshhiny i kommunizm* (New-York: Christian Publ., 1968).

²⁶ A.G. Kharchev, S.I. Golod, *Professional'naya rabota zhenshhin i sem'ya* (Leningrad: Nauka Publ., 1971); L. Gordon, V. Klopov, and E. Gruzdeva. "Etapy zhiznennogo tsykla sem'i i byt rabotayushchey zhenshhiny," in *Izmenenie polozheniya zhenshhiny i sem'ya*, 139–149 (Moscow: IKSI AN SSSR Publ., 1972); N.M. Shishkan, *Trud zhenshhin v usloviyakh razvitoogo sotsializma* (Chisinau: Shtiinca Publ., 1976); *Zhenshhiny na rabote i doma* (Moscow: Statistika Publ., 1978).

²⁷ V.B. Mikhailiyuk, *Ispolzovanie zhenskogo truda v narodnom khozaystve* (Moscow: Ekonomika Publ., 1970).

²⁸ V.S. Belova, *Zabota sovetskogo obshchestva o zhenshhine – materi, truzhenitse, grazhdanke* (Moscow: [N.s.] 1975), 37–41; V.G. Chumanenko, *Polozheniye zhenshhiny pri kapitalizme* (Moscow: Profizdat Publ., 1975), 55–61; Ye.E. Novikov, V.S. Yazykova, Z.A. Yankova, *Zhenshhina. Trud. Sem'ya* (Moscow: Profizdat Publ., 1978); I.Ye. Tomskiy, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskiye problemy zhenskogo truda* (Novosibirsk: Nauka Publ., 1979); E.M. Zuikova, N.N. Plaksina, *Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR i ego mezhdunarodnoye znachenie* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1976).

While their work did not shed much light on the ‘fifties,’²⁹ the statistics for the seventies did show dramatic improvements in the availability of consumer and cultural goods, but paid limited attention to gender.³⁰ Data did reveal that, by the end of the ‘sixties, more than half of the jobs in such areas as social security, education, and culture were held by women, and they accounted for 76% those in retail.³¹ But it was impossible to draw any conclusions about the daily lives of people in the workforce, and no one studied differences between the sexes.

In 1981 the journal *Soviet Ethnography* published an article by M.G. Rabinovich and M.N. Shmeleva “On the Ethnography of the City,”³² which provided a detailed “program for studying the ethnography of cities,” with a special section on domestic life. This plan proposed describing urban households, the distribution of family responsibilities, raising and educating children, daily life, leisure at home, inter-family communication, the transfer of traditional knowledge from older generations, schedules for work and holidays, as well as home remedies for people and their pets. While it was ambitious, their program did not touch on gender.

The Perestroika era in the late ‘eighties and early ‘nineties saw major changes in the social sciences and the humanities. Ethnologists and historians now also began to study women and, eventually, gender, and they applied new approaches to other fields while also beginning to consider such new topics as the history of motherhood, family concerns, and domestic work. While scholars also studied the effects of socialist emancipation,³³ their research still paid little attention to years of the Thaw.

At the same time, academic journals became more critical, and emphasized the low social status of women, as well as the differences between laws about the equality of the sexes and their application.³⁴ Some also noted that women were necessary, but only as extra labor, for the totalitarian state, which portrayed itself as the “father-patriarch.”³⁵ Any shortcomings mentioned during those years were usually attributed to earlier inattention to gender.³⁶ For the first time, scholars raised the issue of wage inequality for highly

²⁹ A.Ye. Kotlyar, S.Ya. Turchaninova, *Zanyatost' zhenshin na proizvodstve* (Moscow: Statistika Publ., 1975).

³⁰ *Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR: Statisticheskiy sbornik* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat Publ., 1963); *Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR: Statisticheskiy sbornik* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat Publ., 1975).

³¹ *Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR: Statisticheskiy sbornik* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat Publ., 1975), 29, 32–33.

³² M.G. Rabinovich, M.N. Shmeleva, “K etnograficheskomu izucheniyu goroda,” *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, no. 6 (1981): 15–17.

³³ Z.P. Krylova, D.S. Akivis, M. Kostygova, I.A. Zhuravskaya, *Sovetskaya zhenshchina: trud, materinstvo, sem'ya* (Moscow: Profizdat Publ., 1987); A.M. Nechaeva, *Okhrana materinstva i detstva v SSSR* (Moscow: Moskovskiy rabochiy Publ., 1988); L.T. Shineleva, *Zhenshchina i obshchestvo* (Moscow: Politizdat Publ., 1990); *Trud, sem'ya, byt sovetskoy zhenshchiny* (Moscow: Yuridicheskaya literature Publ., 1990); V.A. Romanov, *Kul'tura byta i tendentsii eyo razvitiya v sovetskom obshchestve* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1992); *Evolyuitsiya sem'i i semeynaya politika v SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1992).

³⁴ G.A. Morozova, “Sotsial'nyy status zhenshchiny v sotsialisticheskom obshchestve,” *Nauchnyy kommunizm*, no. 3. (1989): 111–117; T.G. Kiselyova, *Zhenshchina i sem'ya v posleoktyabr'skiy period* (Moscow: MGUK Publ., 1995).

³⁵ O.A. Voronina, “Zhenshchina i socializm: opyt feministskogo analiza.” in *Feminizm: Vostok, Zapad, Rossiya* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1993), 205–225.; N.L. Pushkareva, “Russkaya zhenshchina v sem'e i obshchestve X–XX vv.: etapy istorii,” *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, no. 5 (1994): 3–15.

³⁶ E.G. Azarova, *Problemy ravnopraviya zhenshchiny i muzhchiny v sotsialisticheskom obespechenii v SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1989); M.G. Pankratova, “Russkaya zhenshchina segodnya,” in *Zhenshchiny Rossii – vchera, segodnya, zavtra* (Moscow: Rossiya molodaya Publ., 1994), 12–24.

educated women.³⁷ In their analyses of the rights of women, S.G. Ayvazova, M.G. Pankratova, and N.N. Kozlova also looked at the decade of the Thaw,³⁸ but they mostly focused on the very low representation of women in politics and rarely paid attention to their domestic lives.

During the years after the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, Russian historiography began actively to employ the notion of "women's everyday life", including the values held by Soviet women. But the relevant literature about gender differences in people's daily routines was largely limited to Moscow, Leningrad, and other large cities, rather than the provinces.³⁹

As a result of this growing interest, work began to be done on domestic life in the post-war decades,⁴⁰ which tended to focus on how people adapted to the difficult socio-economic conditions of the time. Meanwhile, scholars also began to look at sources they had hitherto ignored – diaries, letters from citizens to newspapers and government agencies, and even the reports (*svodki*) of state security agencies on public sentiments. Yet even though these years came to be known as "Gender Nineties" (*gendernye 90-e*) – the time that gender entered the humanities – authors of surveys generally did not consider differences between the sexes in everyday life, not to mention gender itself.⁴¹

The rise of a new field in Russian historiography, the private lives of women, made it possible for Russian scholars to reconstruct the everyday lives of women – "regularly repeated," "primary, unconditional for all women, although different in content and meaning."⁴² Women's studies, followed by gender studies, opened up new horizons. Whereas until then the ideology of "sexless sexism" (I.S. Kon) had prevailed in Soviet scholarship, beginning in the 'nineties the number of books and articles about women's history grew dramatically.⁴³ But they ignored the "political thaw" as authors mostly reflected on the general psychological differences between men and women, as well as on the prevailing stereotypes of the Soviet period.⁴⁴ The former might well have been a prerequisite for research into women's everyday consciousness during a particular historical era, but no one published about it.

³⁷ L.T. Shineleva, *Zhenshchina i obshchestvo* (Moscow: Politizdat Publ., 1990); *Trud, sem'ya, byt sovetskoy zhenshchiny* (Moscow: Yuridicheskaya literature Publ., 1990).

³⁸ S. Ayvazova, "Ideynye istoki zhenskogo dvizheniya v Rossii," *Obshhestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, no. 4 (1991): 20–25; N.H. Kozlova, "Sovetskaya predstavitel'naya sistema: k voprosu uchastiya zhenshchin v deyatelnosti mestnykh organov vlasti," *Zhenshchiny v sotsial'noy istorii Rossii* (Tver': TGU, 1997), 12–20.

³⁹ N.L. Pushkareva, "Russkaya zhenshchina v sem'ye i obshchestve X–XX vv.: etapy istorii," *Etnograficheskoye obozreniye*, no. 5 (1994): 3–15; A.A. Vozmitel', V.A. Yadov, *Povsednevnyaya zhizn' v usloviyakh krizisa. Sotsial'nyye struktury i sotsial'nyye sub'yekty* (Moscow: ISRAN Publ., 1992); N.N. Kozlova, *Gorizonty povsednevnosti: golosa iz khora* (Moscow: Institut filosofii RAN Publ., 1996); Yu. Gradskova, *Obychnaya sovetskaya zhenshchina* (Moscow: Plyus+ Publ., 1999).

⁴⁰ Ye.Yu. Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy. 1945–1964* (Moscow: Rossiya molodaya Publ., 1993).

⁴¹ I.A. Zherebkina, "Feministskaya teoriya 90-kh godov: problematizatsiya zhenskoy sub'yektivnosti," in *Vvedeniye v gendernyye issledovaniya* (St. Petersburg: KHTSGI – Aleteyya Publ., 2001), 49–79.

⁴² N.L. Pushkareva, "Gendernyy podkhod v istoricheskikh issledovaniyakh," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1998): 41–62.

⁴³ Yu.Ye. Aleshina, "Problemy usvoyeniya roley muzhchiny i zhenshchiny," *Voprosy psikhologii*, no. 4 (1991): 74–82; I.S. Kon, *Seksual'naya kul'tura v Rossii. Klubnichka na berezke* (Moscow: Ob'yedinennoye gumanitarnoye obshchestvo Publ., 1997), 369.

⁴⁴ I.S. Kletsina, *Gendernaya sotsializatsiya* (St. Petersburg: RGPU im. A.I. Gertsena Publ., 1998); S. Ushakin, "Pole pola: v tsentre i po krayam," *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 5 (1999): 111–116; B.I. Khasan, Yu.L. Tyumeneva, "Osobennosti prisvoyeniya sotsial'nykh norm det'mi raznogo pola," *Voprosy psikhologii* no. 3 (1997): 32–39.

Fascinated by the emergence and preservation of patterns of gender asymmetry in society, anthropologists paid more attention to the history of everyday life.⁴⁵ One pioneer was S. Chuikina, who published the first article about the nuances of women's lives half a century earlier. However, she considered a very narrow sector, namely urban managers of the "illegal public sphere" in the late Soviet era (clubs, parks, salons, cafes), and described the life style of these creators of the "environment for the emergence of thoughts, ideas, and, ultimately, public opinion."⁴⁶

Dozens of works on the anthropology of urban everyday life were published at the turn of the 21st century, which were distinguished by their interdisciplinarity, as well as applying the methodologies of neighboring fields in ethnology. Defining "making history of the daily routine" as a research tool, M.M. Krom considered the fashion, daily routines, and leisure to be the "critical background" that provided the foundation for understanding ambitions and relations, and yielded insights into the range of people's daily concerns and world-views.⁴⁷ By being integrated into the history of gender, such approaches provided a deeper understanding of the differences between the everyday lives of women and men.⁴⁸

Among other, scholars paid attention to history of women's emotions, as well as their pastimes and concerns. When their focus was on the city as a whole, gender issues "broke into" such studies. N.B. Lebina's guide to everyday life in the Soviet era, including such problems as drunkenness, suicide, prostitution, and crime, was particularly important. She was also the first to touch on such topics as the use of synthetic fabrics and household chemicals by women, as well as fashion, intimacy and sexuality.⁴⁹ Following in her footsteps, I.B. Orlov⁵⁰ continued to reconstruct of the Soviet world of the 'sixties in such areas as consumer services, leisure, exercise, family strategies and "household rule," the place of "discrete services," and mass tourism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. However, unlike N. B. Lebina, he did not touch on gender.

The same can be said about the work of A.M. Dotsenko, who described the city of Kuibyshev (now again Samara) during the same decade. He discussed housing construction and the way of life of urban women, as well as their involvement in sports and tourism. However, what exactly was typical of the quotidian routines of women in the city is unclear, like I.V. Utekhin's candidate's thesis about St. Petersburg communal apartments, where women conducted their private lives, maintained families and friendships, in addition to their ideas about feminine care and family roles.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ye.I. Gapova, "Gendernaya problematika v antropologii," in *Vvedeniye v gendernyye issledovaniya* (St. Petersburg: Aleteya Publ., 2001), 120–135.

⁴⁶ S. Chuikina, "Otkrytyy dom i yego khozyayka (Iz istorii uchastnits dissidentskogo dvizheniya)," in *Feministskaya teoriya i praktika: Vostok – Zapad* (St. Petersburg: PTSGI Publ., 1996), 294.

⁴⁷ M.M. Krom, "Povsednevnost' kak predmet istoricheskogo issledovaniya," in *Istochnik. Istorik. Istoriya. Istoriya povsednevnosti* (St. Petersburg: ALETEYA Publ., 2003), 134–140; I. Utekhin, "O smysle vkluchennogo nablyudeniya povsednevnosti," in *Istochnik. Istorik. Istoriya. Istoriya povsednevnosti* (St. Petersburg: ALETEYA Publ., 2003), 154; N.L. Pushkareva, "Subject and methods of studying 'the history of everyday life'," *Ethnographic Review*, no. 5. (2004): 3–19.

⁴⁸ A.V. Belova, "Women's everyday life as a subject of everyday history," *Ethnographic Review*, no. 4 (2006): 85–97.

⁴⁹ N.B. Lebina, *Entsiklopediya banal'nostey. Sovetskaya povsednevnost': kontury, simvolyy, znaki* (St. Petersburg: Dm. Bulanin Publ., 2006).

⁵⁰ I.B. Orlov, *Sovetskaya povsednevnost': istoricheskiy i sotsiologicheskyy aspekty stanovleniya* (Moscow: GUVSHE Publ., 2009).

⁵¹ L.B. Brusilovskaya, *Kul'tura povsednevnosti v epokhu 'ottepeli': metamorfozy stilya* (Moscow: MGU Publ., 2000); I.V. Utekhin, "O smysle vkluchennogo nablyudeniya povsednevnosti," in *Istoriya Pov-*

The new century saw a further expansion of the source base historians used, as they began also to include oral stories. This enabled them to draw attention to new topics, including the (un)fair distribution of family responsibilities and benefits, and the stereotypes of Soviet everyday life. The book of the émigrés P. Vayl and A. Genis, as well as that of B.A. Grushin, about various aspects of everyday life through the prism of public opinion, described the general atmosphere of the Thaw years and the way of life of townspeople. However, these authors also ignored gender, as did the Yu.V. Aksyutin, who focused on the *mentalités* of those years.⁵²

One could have expected a discussion of the gender characteristics of women's everyday life during the fifties and sixties from N.N. Kozlova's book,⁵³ which was based on the notes, letters, and personal memoirs of townswomen, and newspaper notes of the Soviet era. Her book includes a chronicle of the days of one of the millions of ordinary women, describing of her life, "marriage, divorce, children, abortions." However, she did not compare of the lifestyles of women in the capitals and the regions, nor discuss what was typical of each gender.

Young historians have provided a new perspective on history of everyday life during the Thaw. Their works showed the Soviet women's press, including *Rabotnitsa* (Female Worker), *Krestyanka* (Peasant Woman), and *Sovetskaya Zhenshchina* (Soviet Woman) as a "school of education" for female readers (including political education), as well of how the image of women evolved from that of a non-national masculine worker who had no personal interests and was indifferent her beauty to feminine representatives of the Soviet Union's various republics.

Historians of Soviet cinema noted the shift from the "unerotic" films of the Stalin era to those in subsequent years, which portrayed intimacy.⁵⁴ They also suggested that the gender discourse of women's periodicals foresaw changes in the social behavior of townswomen as previous moral and ethical norms were eroded. Their conclusion is confirmed by studies of the interest of the "younger children of the war" in jazz, hipsterism, and Western fashion, which became features of city life in the sixties.⁵⁵

Seeking insights into the private sphere of women's lives in a Soviet city of the sixties, the St. Petersburg scholar O.Iu. Gurova studied changes in the cut of women's underwear, "a commonplace product of socialist industry," as indicative of changes in the history of emancipation.⁵⁶ While her research focused on fashion, S.V. Zhuravlev and Yu. Gronov scrupulously examined the confrontation between industry and the state in

sednevnosti. Sbornik nauchnykh rabot (St. Petersburg: Yevropeyskii Publ., 2003), 7–14; A.M. Dotsenko, *Nachalo povsednevnoy zhizni sovetskogo goroda. 1950 – pervaya polovina 1980-kh (po materialam Kuibysheva)* (Samara: SGU Publ., 2007).

⁵² P. Vayl', A. Genis, *60-ye Mir sovetskoyu cheloveka* (Moscow: NLO Publ., 2001); B.A. Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale obshchestvennogo mneniya* (Moscow: Progress–Traditsiya Publ., 2001); Yu.V. Aksyutin, *Khrushchevskaya otpepel' i obshchestvennyye nastroyeniya v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: [N.s.], 2004).

⁵³ N.N. Kozlova, *Sovetskiye lyudi: Stseny iz istorii* (Moscow: Yevropa Publ., 2005).

⁵⁴ E.V. Gamel'ko, "The image of a Soviet woman on the pages of the 'Worker' magazine," *Molodoy uchenyy*, no. 7. (2009): 174–177; T.Yu. Dashkova, "Lyubov' i byt v kinofil'makh 1930-1950-kh gg.," in *Istoriya strany – istoriya kino* (Moscow: Znak Publ., 2004), 166–169; V.V. Smeyukha, *Protsessy identifikatsii i zhenskaya pressa* (Rostov-on-Don: Rosizdat Publ., 2012).

⁵⁵ L.B. Brusilovskaya, "The culture of everyday life in the era of the 'thaw': style metamorphoses," *Social Sciences and Modernity*, no. 1 (2000): 163–174.

⁵⁶ O. Gurova, *Sovetskoe nizhnee bel'e: mezhdru ideologiy i povsednevnost'yu* (Moscow: NLO Publ., 2008).

those years.⁵⁷ At the same time, they devoted little attention to the needs and value systems of women, simply attributing them to the desire to imitate characters in Western movies (of course men did likewise!).

In a similar study, I.V. Vinichenko considered the Soviet woman's adaptation to new economic, socio-political, and cultural circumstances by showing changes in the way the press and cinema portrayed them.⁵⁸ She noted that the fashions of the characters now became important to the plot, unlike pre-war films, which ignored them. Vinichenko also explained how the home environment promoted new ideals, including women's personal space – even in the small apartments typical of many of them. From her point of view, the city became the locus of innovations in women's history, which other scholars also considered after the publication of her dissertation.⁵⁹ They examined the contrast between the desires of women (“to dress beautifully”) and the ideological policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (“to dress modestly,” to crush any wishes to stand out in a group).

By the 2010s, women's and gender history had become independent fields, as academic conferences recognized. However, traditionally minded historians were reluctant to consider gender in their work, to adjust in their periodization accordingly, and to see the 'sixties as a crisis in the gender order imposed by the state as it lessened its intervention in social relations and the growing conflict between motherhood and work.⁶⁰ Sociologists, historians and cultural scientists have interpreted recent research findings in different ways. Reflecting on the domestic life of women, M.V. Antonova noted, “under socialism the social status of women, who performed at least three roles – mother, worker and socially active woman – is full of contradictions.”⁶¹ She saw that society's low regard for stay-at-home women in the past had imparted a negative connotation to the term “housewife,” in contrast to those who were capable both of holding jobs as well as maintaining a comfortable home and raising children in the spirit of communist morality.

Meanwhile, I.V. Vinichenko, A.A. Dneprovskaya and V. A. Ryzhenko studied how changes in the economic, social and cultural policy of the state during the Thaw affected the socio-cultural image of townswomen.⁶² They suggested that in the thirties, “when they went out in public women acquired masculine traits” as they adopted male habits, such as smoking, cursing and drinking. By contrast, different social expectations during the 'sixties led them to adjust their appearance.

⁵⁷ Yu. Gronov, S. Zhuravlev, “Power of fashion and Soviet power: a history of confrontation,” *Historian and Artist* 9, no. 3 (2006): 125–130.

⁵⁸ I.V. Vinichenko, *Sovetskaya povsednevnost' 50-kh – serediny 60-kh gg. XX veka: zhenskiy kostyum v modelyakh odezhdy i bytovoy praktike* (Omsk: OGU Publ., 2009); N.L. Pushkareva, “Women's and Gender History: Results and Development Prospects in Russia,” *Historical Psychology & Sociology* 3, no. 2 (2010): 51–64.

⁵⁹ O. Vaynshteyn, “My favorite dress: the dressmaker as a cultural hero in Soviet Russia,” *Fashion Theory*, no. 3 (2007): 101–126; A. Kimerling, “Platform against galoshes, or dudes on the streets of the Soviet city,” *Fashion Theory*, no. 3. (2007): 81–99.

⁶⁰ E.A. Zdravomyslova, A.A. Temkina, “State construction of gender in Soviet society,” *Journal of Social Policy Research* 1, no. 3–4 (2003): 299–321; N.L. Pushkareva, “The gender system in Russia in the 20th century and the fate of Russian women,” *New literary review* 117 (2012): 9–10.

⁶¹ M.V. Antonova, *Soviet social policy: family and household aspect. 1950s–1960s: Leningrad* (St. Petersburg: Saint-Petersburg State University of Economics Publ., 2010).

⁶² I.V. Vinichenko, A.A. Dneprovskaya, V.A. Ryzhenko, “Izmeneniye v sotsiokul'turnom oblike i povsednevnoy zhizni sovetskoy zhizni zhenshchiny-gorozhanki v period ‘otpepli’,” in *Istoricheskiye, filosofskiyе, politicheskoye i yuridicheskoye nauki, kul'turologiya i iskusstvovedeniye* (Tambov: Gramota Publ., 2011), 46–50.

Specialists in cultural studies began to look at images women in Soviet mass art. They were also interested in such themes as women's attitudes to work, the combination of their public and personal interests, as well as the material well-being of townspeople. However, their conclusion that,

in the visual arts of that time there are no female images whose work would become a factor of personal happiness,⁶³

is debatable.

Many works were published about everyday life in Moscow, Leningrad, Kuibyshev and Perm in the early 2010s. While no one studied the south of Russia, much research had already been done in the fifties and 'sixties about the daily lives of Siberia's townspeople. One work of post-war everyday life in Tyumen stands out.⁶⁴ Its author suggested an approach to studying the domestic life of women, considered the availability of housing, food, medical care, as well as how Tyumen's citizens, including women, dealt with their everyday challenges. Noting the gender imbalance as a result of the Second World War, she also examined how the city's women assumed the leading role in their families. Recent studies of the change of townswomen's attitude to childbearing in one of the regions of the Urals helped our understanding of everyday life during the Thaw.⁶⁵ Despite society's needs, birth rates began to decline in the early 'sixties as women bore fewer children due to the demands on their time outside of the family.

As in previous decades, Leбина continued to play a leading role in discussions of everyday life during the Thaw. Based on her study of Leningrad in the sixties, she spoke about the "destruction of the grandiose style in Stalinist culture and quotidian pursuits."⁶⁶ She also touched on issues related to women, including the awakening of a discourse on female sexuality, its influence on style and fashion (S.V. Zhuravlev and Yu. Gronov also published about this at the time),⁶⁷ their attitudes towards motherhood (which confirmed the conclusions of demographers about the decline in childbearing), and the difficulties they faced.

Make-up and fashion have begun to attract particular attention in recent years. Scholars note that the 'sixties witnessed a turning point not only in attitudes towards the appearance of young girls, but also that of more mature women. Cultural studies experts tried to grasp this subtle distinction when looking at how women's magazines represented women of different generations during that decade.⁶⁸ One of their findings was that such publications began to provide advice to women about preserving their youth. The U.S. based sociologist S.A. Ushakin continued along this line by analyzing Soviet

⁶³ G.P. Sidorova, *Sovetskiy tip povsednevnoy ekonomicheskoy kul'tury v massovom iskusstve 1960–1980-kh godov: tsennostnyy aspekt* (Moscow: MGU Publ., 2012).

⁶⁴ S.A. Rafikova, *Byt rabochey sem'i Zapadnoy Sibiri v 1960-e gody* (Krasnoyarsk SibGTU Publ., 2007); A.V. Zhidchenko, *Povsednevnyaya zhizn' v novom gorodskom rayone v 1950–1960-ye gg.* (Omsk: OGU Publ., 2013).

⁶⁵ O.G. Cherezova, "Fertility and change in reproductive attitudes of the population of the Sverdlovsk region in the 1960s–1970s," *Ural Historical Journal*, no. 3 (2014): 112–117.

⁶⁶ N.B. Leбина, *Povsednevnost' epokhi kosmosa i kukuruzy. Destruktsiya bol'shogo stilya. Leningrad, 1950–1960-ye gody* (St. Petersburg: Kruga Publ., 2015).

⁶⁷ S.V. Zhuravlov, Yu. Gronov, *Moda po planu: istoriya mody i modelirovaniya odezhdy v SSSR, 1917–1991* (Moscow: IRI RAN Publ., 2013).

⁶⁸ V.Yu. Smirnova, "Construction of age in the magazine "Worker" in Soviet times," *Woman in Russian Society*, no. 1 (2016): 92–102.

“materialism” in apartments and their excessive clutter half a century ago, and described women's domestic life in the ‘sixties as “the pursuit of things that can be obtained.”⁶⁹

As we have seen, since the turn of the 21st century, those studying the everyday life of Soviet women during the Thaw have been least interested in feminism and female socio-economic participation.⁷⁰ In the early 2010s some were obligated to write about this question in their dissertations, but today no one looks at the extrafamilial social activity of women, such as their representation and participation in the institutions of government as well as their attempts to promote a feminist agenda in discussions at the city and republican levels.

At the same time, research has shown that the share of women occupying managerial positions during this period was negligible, and female workers were seen as less qualified than men. The reasons for this imbalance turned out to be the heavy burden of housework on the former as well as their greater attention to domestic concerns.⁷¹ Neither Russian nor foreign scholars are eager to examine the involvement of Soviet women in public life.⁷²

Conclusion

Despite growing interest in historical and cultural anthropology, after more than a half century of research into the place of women in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev Thaw many questions remain. Scholars still focus on the same topics, although they have widened the scope of gaze. Yet the everyday lives of women in the period have not been a specific focus of their inquiry.

During the ‘sixties, attention was only paid to *certain* aspects of women's life in the USSR, such as their working conditions and the challenges they faced in obtaining childcare. The advent of Soviet sociology in the following decades also aroused interest in the socialist way of life as scholars began to consider reduced working hours for mothers, additional leave, extended care for children, women's health, fair pay for women's labor, among other.

Abandoning its previous methodological narrow-mindedness, Russian historiography made an anthropological turn in the nineties. Feminism entered the political discourse, while scholars began to examine the alienation of women from power and addressed their underrepresentation in the organs of government by suggesting formal women's quotas for election to their positions. Psychologists and ethnologists further developed the women's theme, historians widened their source base to include oral narratives and unstructured biographical interviews, while scholars of women's history and urban anthropology found many points of intersection between their domains.

⁶⁹ S. Ushakin, “Servantiki zastoya: o krasote i pol'ze sovetskogo veshchizma,” in *Eto bylo navsegda* (Moscow: GTG Publ., 2020), 75–89.

⁷⁰ N.L. Pushkareva, “The gender system in Russia in the 20th century and the fate of Russian women,” *New literary review* 117 (2012): 8.

⁷¹ E.L. Badmatsyrenova, *Gosudarstvennaya politika po vovlecheniyu zhenshchin Buryatii v obshchestvenno-politicheskuyu deyatel'nost': 1923–1991 gg.* (Ulan-Ude: Buryat State University Publ., 2011); L.A. Shevchenko, *Istoriya zhenskogo dvizheniya v Irkutskoy oblasti: 1920–1990-ye gg.* (Belgorod: BGU Publ., 2012); A.Yu. Teplyakova, *Istoriicheskiy opyt vovlecheniya zhenshchin v trudovuyu i obshchestvenno-politicheskuyu deyatel'nost' vo vtoroy polovine XX–nachale XXI v.* (Belgorod: BGU, 2013).

⁷² N.L. Pushkareva, O.V. Bol'shakova, “Gender Studies in the Russian 20th Century,” *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History* 65, no. 1 (2020): 318–328.

Introducing of the concept of “women's everyday life” to social sciences and the humanities provided a new impetus, which has led to a more sophisticated understanding of the lifestyles of female members of the urban intelligentsia as well as the history of dissident women in Moscow and Leningrad during the ‘fifties and ‘sixties. Although the number of publication on history of women’s everyday life grew rapidly, there were no articles or theses dedicated to that of townswomen in the years of the Thaw.

Recent scholarship has made many important findings about such topics as women's fashion in the sixties, the interiors of apartments, as well as the influence of the media, literature and cinema on the structure of women's lives during the Thaw. Meanwhile, long-standing taboos have been lifted on Soviet sexual culture, female sexuality, family planning by women, and there were new insights into motherhood and childlessness. There have also been studies about women’s everyday life in the countryside as well as the role of nationality.

Interdisciplinary approaches to the theme continue to improve, the spirit of the glorious period of common hopes right after the Revolution is being revived, and there is a common understanding about the values and worldviews of Soviet women. Nevertheless, the daily lives of urban women during the Thaw remain neglected.

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