Bolshevik Wives

A Study of Soviet Elite Society

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A B S T R A C T

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This thesis explores the lives of key female members of the Bolshevik elite from the revolutionary movement's beginnings to the time of Stalin's death. Through analysing the attitudes and contributions of Bolshevik elite women – most particularly the wives of Lenin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Bukharin – it not only provides for a descriptive account of these individual lives, their changing attitudes and activities, but also a more broad-ranging, social handle on the evolution of elite society in the Soviet Union and the changing nature of the Bolshevik elite both physically and ideationally.

Chapters one and two focus on the physical and ideological foundations of the Bolshevik marriage. Chapter one traces the ideological approach of the Bolsheviks towards marriage and the family, examining pre-revolutionary socialist positions in relation to women and the family and establishing a benchmark for how the Bolsheviks wished to approach the 'woman question'. Chapter two examines the nature of the Bolshevik elite marriage from its inception to the coming of the revolution, dwelling particularly on the different pre-revolutionary experiences of Yekaterina Voroshilova and Nadezhda Krupskaya.

Chapters three and four then analyse two key areas of wives' everyday lives during the interwar years. Chapter three looks at the work that Bolshevik wives undertook and how the nature of their employment changed from the 1920s to the 1930s. Chapter four, through examining the writings of wives such as Voroshilova, Larina and Ordzhonikidze, focuses upon how wives viewed themselves, their responsibilities as members of the Bolshevik elite and the position of women in Soviet society.

The final two chapters of this thesis explore the changing nature of elite society in this period and its relationship to Soviet society at large. Chapter five investigates the

changing composition of the elite and the specific and general effects of the purges upon its nature. Directly, the chapter examines the lives of Zhemchuzhina, Larina and Pyatnitskaya as wives that were repressed during this period, while more broadly it considers the occupation of the House on the Embankment in the 1930s and the changing structure of Bolshevik elite society. Chapter six focuses on the evolution of Soviet society in the interwar period and how the experiences of Bolshevik elite wives differed from those of 'mainstream' Russian women.

While previous studies of the Bolshevik elite have focussed upon men's political lives and investigations of Soviet women's policy and its shifts under Stalin have mainly concentrated upon describing changes in realist terms, this thesis demonstrates that not only is an evaluation of wives' lives crucial to a fuller understanding of the Bolshevik elite, but that by comprehending the personal attitudes and values of members of the Bolshevik elite society, particularly with regards to women and the family, a more informed perspective on the reasons for changes in Soviet women's policy during the interwar period may be arrived at.

Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures and bibliography.

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Preface

The chief concern when rendering Russian words into transliterated and translated English throughout this thesis has been to maximise readability while preserving meaning. To this end in the text of the thesis Russian names and terms have been transliterated accurately, but with sympathy for the English-speaking reader and awareness that standard transliterations of many names diverge from the Library of Congress system. Russian names have also been kept consistent in the text, except in the cases of name changes (for example, Golda Gorbman to Yekaterina Voroshilova), although at times to avoid repetition the Russian form of first name and patronymic (Yekaterina Davidovna) has been used.

To facilitate locating reference works, citations in the thesis as well as its bibliography are rendered in Library of Congress (ALA-LC) form omitting ties and diacritics and using name forms as they appear in the work being cited. This means that in a few select cases, the rendering of names in citations and the body of the thesis will diverge (for example, Yulia Pyatnitskaya in the text and Iuliia Piatnitskaia-Sokolova in citations). Where Russian texts are directly sourced, unless otherwise stated the translations that appear in the text are mine.

Acknowledgements

Thanks firstly are due to my two honours supervisors, John Milfull and Ludmila Stern from the University of New South Wales who not only encouraged me through my first foray into Soviet history writing but also provided me the opportunity throughout this doctoral process of sharing my work with others and gaining feedback from scholars in the area. On that note, I should like to express my appreciation to those who helped me out throughout the thesis either through suggesting sources, providing contacts or simply responding to my requests, amongst them Derek Watson, Stephen Fortescue, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Stephen Cohen.

Two bouts of researching in Russian archives could have proved considerably traumatic if it was not for the assistance and kindness of a number of people. The Praxis organisation, headed by Arch Getty in California and Elena Drozdova in Moscow was invaluable in navigating through Russian bureaucracy and finding me accommodation in Moscow. Olga Lagotska and her mother Anna Spiridonovna provided me much-needed support as well as an interesting perspective for my ideas when staying with them and I am particularly grateful to Olga for assisting me through the tasks of organising a meeting with Molotov's grandson and even interrogating the FSB about access to their archival documents. Most directly helpful of all in Moscow, however, were the accommodating staff at RGASPI, particularly those in the reading room who have to negotiate through an awful load of bad Russian from visiting researchers, not least myself, for little reward.

Back on the home front my thanks to friends and family for being so patient during the years of this PhD. Thankyou to colleagues for providing stimulating accounts of their own research as well as valuable feedback for mine through seminars and to the department's PhD coordinators for facilitating those presentations. I should also like to acknowledge the valuable financial assistance in the form of a University Postgraduate Award and Faculty scholarship that extended my opportunities for research in Russia.

Finally, and most of all, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor Graeme Gill for his wisdom, nous, patience and good humour. It would have been impossible to survive four years with a supervisor that did not possess such qualities, but he possesses them in abundance.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The October Revolution of 1917 marked a watershed not only in the establishment of a new political framework in Russia – a new set of state actors working with a new set of political rules – but also, perhaps more remarkably, a new ideological framework. A central tenet of the ideology of socialism that the Bolsheviks purported to adopt was the concept of equality and as such a core pursuit upon assuming power was not simply to be the reformation of the ownership of the means of production but a commitment to the restructuring of the highly inequitable Tsarist system they had inherited.

Much has been written about the two chief tools employed in that restructuring – the presence politically of the one ruling party that claimed to represent the working masses and economically of legislation that radically restructured ownership, bringing both business and labour under state control. Much has been said about the Soviet political system and its economic successes and failures. What has been considered less, however, are its ideational strengths, deficiencies and shifts, particularly as they pertain to specific areas of policy-making[1]. This is despite the fact that the Bolshevik Revolution clearly prefigured not simply a political and economic, but also an ideational revolution, a revolution that had already failed by the time of Stalin's death.

[1] Ideational changes in the Soviet Union have, nevertheless, been discussed, although it is not prudent to compare a shopping list of ideas-based approaches to political and economic works here. Much in particular has been written by scholars of recent Soviet history concerning policy shifts undertaken in the Gorbachev years. See, for example, Archie Brown's *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) for an explanation of the change in the ideas behind policy undertaken in the Soviet Union's last decade. In terms of shifting policy in the inter-war period, many general discussions of 'Stalinism' provide the reader with an insight into not only ideational shifts, but the motivations and methods behind them. More specifically, analyses of particular policy areas and particularly Soviet propaganda approaches have much to say about changing ideas in the early Soviet period. See, for instance, Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Commissariat of Enligtenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) for details of shifts in ideas about education in the early Soviet Union, Lynne Attwood's *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-53* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) for an examination of ideational shifts in the approach to women's policy and Victor Buchli's *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2000) for a discussion of *byt* reform and changing ideas about Soviet everyday life. On the nature of more general ideological matters much has also been written on the shifting foundations of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism. See, for example, Brzezinski's *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1962) or Alfred G. Meyer's works on Leninism, Marxism and the Soviet political system (including *Leninism*, New York: Praeger, 1965 and *Communism: Studies in Political Science*, New York: Random House, 1962).

If the concept of equality was central to the new idea of socialism in the USSR, two central measures of the success of its implementation were to be found in how well the two greatest inequalities in the pre-revolutionary Russian empire were addressed by the new Bolshevik elite. These two inequalities were those of class and sex.

In class terms, the Russian empire had been fairly starkly divided – the vast majority of its population by 1917 were still peasants, emancipated in name but still very much tied to the estates of those few rich noblemen in the ruling classes. In sex terms, a slim majority of the population – its women – faced unequal treatment politically, where laws restricted their access to property, education and the pursuit of power, socially, where community standards strongly constricted women's freedom and spiritually, in a state whose soul was guarded by a patriarch.

Outline

This thesis will explore both of these two central measures and thus, by extension, consider the success of the Bolshevik's ideational revolution. It will conduct this exploration in a most particular way, however, focussing on a decisive ideational battleground in the Soviet Union – the halls and chambers of the Kremlin. These areas were not simply the corridors of official political power, but the monitors of social change: they were not simply the structures in which official state policy was produced but the grounds in which the Bolshevik elite community developed. It is the central contention of this thesis that only by understanding the nature of this Bolshevik elite community can the environment in which policy was made be fully appreciated and the social mores and unofficial positions of policymakers become known. With further knowledge of these key areas the reasons for the failure of the Soviet Union's ideational revolution will, in turn, become more apparent.

In studying the community of top Bolsheviks in the period from the establishment of the Bolshevik faction through to Stalin's death, particularly from the perspective of ideational change, two central questions throughout this thesis will be linked to the two chief inequalities of the pre-revolutionary system. Thus on the issue of class, a question that will be examined in the succeeding chapters is to what extent the Bolshevik elite community had by their nature become a 'new class' (as Milovan

Djilas put it) by the time of Stalin's death, insulated from the conditions and insecurities of the population at large and thus ill-suited to make policy decisions on behalf of the general community. It is on the issue of sexual inequality, however, that the narrative is most interesting and has most to inform us. For while many new political structures have overseen the arrival of new privileged elites, no state before or since the establishment of the Soviet Union has had more to say about the changing of the gender divide or indeed seen more rapid shifts in the politics of gender.

In focussing on the Bolshevik elite, their social community and their approach towards the sexes, this thesis will have as its core an examination of those women at the heart of Bolshevik elite society – not inspirational figures such as Nikolaeva, Stasova, Armand and Kollontai who were marginalised politically, but rather those women who had an even greater impact upon the personal lives and mindsets of top Bolsheviks – the 'Bolshevik elite wives'. These spouses and partners – the well-known, such as Krupskaya and Zhemchuzhina, the obscure, such as Kuusinen and Aroseva, the unconventional, such as Litvinova and Larina, and the steadfast, such as Ordzhonikidze and Voroshilova – all led surprisingly different lives for women who lived within the same tight-knit community, yet as a whole can tell us much about the attitude of the top Bolshevik elite towards marriage, family and society, knowledge which in turn will help to tease out why and how Soviet social policy changed as it did.

To accomplish this study of Bolshevik elite society, the following chapters will undertake a systematic, but almost ethnographic, approach, focussing in particular on the women of the Bolshevik elite and the social aspects of Kremlin society[2]. Much as a classic ethnography, this thesis is concerned with presenting a broad but deep portrait of the Bolshevik elite, utilising a 'thick description' as Geertz terms it (namely an

[2] The circumstances of the group being studied – the fact that the elite no longer exist, that the nature of their private lives was guarded and that only limited interviews have been conducted with elite members – means, however, that many traditional ethnographic techniques, such as those which involve entering into a dialogue with the group being studied, could not be employed in this research. Without being a 'true ethnography' – which involves the examination of everyday cultural practices from the view of an insider – the spirit of this thesis is to nevertheless focus on a sociological account of top Kremlin figures and their lives, rather than a political portrait of key figures or (as will be discussed later in the introduction) an examination of the upper echelons of Bolshevik society from the perspective of 'elite theory'. Although there is some considerable latitude in the practice of ethnography, for an introduction to the general principles underlying its method see, for instance, M. Hammersley & P. Atkins' *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2007). For Geertz's approach and details on his 'thick description' see his *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

examination of the elite's behaviours as well as their context), and a combination of individual subjective accounts with factual analysis and a series of case studies to present a vivid tapestry of elite social life over the course of several decades. Because each of the individuals that will be examined in the following chapters led such different lives, emerging from different backgrounds and holding varying ideas and motivations it will not be the task of this thesis to seek out blanket statements about what united Bolshevik wives as a group, so much as to use their diverse stories to present a more nuanced portrait of Bolshevik elite society than has previously been possible. While individually each portrait itself might not present a comprehensive account of Bolshevik elite *byt* ('everyday life'), when evaluated together as a group such individual wives' stories combine to allow for a full and rich perspective on Soviet elite society.

The first two chapters of this thesis will concentrate on establishing the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary foundations of the Bolshevik elite marriage and society, considering the theoretical position of women under socialism, but also the practical situation of women such as Krupskaya involved in elite marriages before and after revolution. Chapters three and four will focus upon particular aspects of Bolshevik elite women's lives in the Soviet Union – their roles in politics, in work and as representatives of their sex in the new Soviet social order. The final two chapters of this thesis will examine the changing structure and nature of Bolshevik elite society – the establishment of privilege, but also the destruction of the Purges – and enable conclusions to be drawn about the success of the Soviet Union in terms of questions of class and sex. In totality, therefore, this thesis will not simply provide a response to the question of the success of the Soviet Union's ideational revolution, particularly in regards to the 'woman question' and the coming of a new elite, but it will be important for its descriptive content – its tapestry of personal accounts from key wives of the Bolshevik elite will provide for a better understanding of the nature and everyday lives of the privileged few of the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Having undertaken a broad overview of the thesis, with consideration of the fact that the primary focus of this work is the life of Bolshevik elite wives and its implications for the nature of Soviet policy towards women (and indeed towards class), prior to going through the methodology of this thesis and the source materials it

draws upon in greater detail, it is necessary to establish briefly both the nature of the elite for the purposes of this discussion and the central issues and problems that the woman question presents for an historian.

Parameters – the 'elite' and timescale

'Elite' (*elita* in Russian) was not a term that top Bolsheviks would have agreed upon for themselves, it having strong connotations of disconnectedness from the *hoi polloi*, connotations of privilege and being the member of a separate 'class' in society. Nevertheless, it is both an apt and necessary term when discussing those top Bolsheviks in the first decades of the Party, who might otherwise variously be called 'ruling cadres', 'Party bosses' or 'political patrons'. In this thesis the term 'elite' – often rendered as 'Party elite', 'Bolshevik elite' or even 'Kremlin elite' – refers to the most influential figures in the Soviet Union of the time. It does not and cannot be based simply around membership in a particular political organization, though the great majority of those discussed in succeeding chapters were not only members of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), but also of its Politburo. Neither was the elite confined solely to politics: although politicians' wives are the focus of this research, elite society also included (at different times) military figures such as Gamarnik and Tukhachevsky and members of the Soviet cultural establishment such as Demyan Bedny and Maxim Gorky. Geographically speaking, while the elite were concentrated, they were not all to be found in Moscow either – members such as Kirov and Zinoviev were based in Leningrad. Nevertheless, despite these differences, the Bolshevik elite, like few others internationally or in historical terms, was socially a highly homogenous entity. As will be focussed on in chapter five, by the mid 1930s over half of the group were accommodated in a handful of apartment buildings in Moscow, a geographical concentration of power that saw influence in Russia more isolated than perhaps even under its tsarist regime. Through restricted social circles – from similar workplaces, to schools for elite children, to shops and services provided for top Party officials to the provision of chauffeurs for elite families – the milieu in which the elite circulated was similarly restricted and the community tight-knit. Even despite the great impact that the Terror had upon the constitution of the elite it was still a society which, by its nature and the political positions of its members and the environment in which it

operated, is clearly discernable and able to be set aside not only from Soviet society at large but even from the *nomenklatura*.

Because the nature of the elite in the interwar years was strongly linked with Stalin, but also since questions of the Soviet Union's ideational revolution in terms of women's place and the 'new class' were largely resolved by the time of the Great Patriotic War, this dissertation sets as its endpoint the death of Stalin. By 1953, although reforms under later Soviet leaders were to have an effect on the nature of the elite, the existence of the *nomenklatura*, elite privilege, elite accommodation and the system of cadres schools had all been stabilised under Stalin's tenure as the USSR's pre-eminent politician and as such much of the detail of elite lives and the structure of Bolshevik elite society described in this thesis will be applicable to the last decades of the Soviet Union as well. In terms of a starting point for this investigation, while the evolution of Soviet society can only be discussed from its establishment in 1917, the nature of the Bolshevik marriage and the socialist attitude towards women was something evolving before the revolution and therefore the first chapter of this thesis, in discussing beginnings, will look at the role of women in socialism from the 19th Century in Russia and consider the biography of figures like Krupskaya and Voroshilova from their formative experiences in the last decades of the Russian Empire.

Within the elite and within a central time frame of 1917 to 1953, this dissertation is even more keenly focussed upon Bolshevik wives. The nature of Bolshevik elite marriage will be discussed particularly in chapter one, but it can be said now that the Bolshevik elite wives who form the focus of this work tended themselves to play complex and various political roles in the Soviet Union. None had serious political power other than by virtue of their marriages, yet real political power eluded the great majority of men as well during the period under discussion. Some were deliberately and seriously involved in conventional politics, occupying top party positions – indeed both Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin's wife) and Polina Zhemchuzhina (the wife of Molotov) held positions for a time as deputy people's commissars. The majority, however, appear to have seen their chief political role as providing a much less

progressive 'support' role for their husbands[3]. It is the specific nature of their lives and mentalities that makes up the substance of this dissertation.

The Woman Question

As stated already, these women's lives are not only important in themselves as exemplar of Bolshevik elite society in practice, but can be situated more broadly in the narrative of the role of women in the Soviet Union and the comparison of their actual position in Bolshevik society to socialist theoretical underpinnings. It is in this context – Bolshevik elite women's lives as a manifestation of an official elite response to the *zhenskii vopros* or 'woman question' – that the stories of women detailed in the following chapters can be employed to assist the resolution of the key problem of the practical regression of women's position in the Soviet Union occurring under a state that was, at least on paper, ideologically progressive.

In 1936 the Soviet Union released a new constitution, written at the height of Stalin's reign over the state. Concerning women, it stated the following:

> **Article 122.** Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured to women by granting them an equal right with men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child, pre-maternity and maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.[4]

In print then, the provision of paid maternity leave, the constitutional guarantee of equality in pay and leisure, education and state protection made the Soviet Union a model state. This official position unsurprisingly strongly complements the official socialist position of equality of the sexes. The core problem of the *zhenskii vopros* for researchers, however, has been not simply that this stated position was disconnected from reality and had been from the beginnings of the Soviet experiment, but that the

[3] For Bolshevik elite wives' attitudes towards their own positions see in particular chapter four.
[4] Soviet Constitution of 1936. For the full text see, for instance, F.J.M. Feldbrugge [ed.], *The Constitution of the USSR and the Union Republics* (Netherlands: Alphen aan den Rijn, 1979).

position of women in Soviet society had actually become more unequal even as the state became more stable[5], and hence its inability to confront serious social problems increased.

At the same time as the adoption of the 1936 constitution only two of the seventy-two full members last elected to the Party's Central Committee were women[6], women's literacy was approximately 20% lower than men's across Soviet society, the system of women's departments set up in the 1920s had been abolished and, just six months earlier in June 1936, the progressive laws of 1920 that had permitted abortion were rescinded with the following years to see a marked increase in pro-natal agitation, not least through the introduction of awards for mothers of multiple children.

Just as it was surprising that a country so economically backward as Russia had been the first to embrace a Marxist revolution, it was a quite extraordinary turn of events for a culture that had been dominated by patriarchy – from the male heads of village communities[7], to the 'little Father' the tsar, to the Orthodox faith's patriarchs themselves – to now proclaim itself at the forefront of women's emancipation in the first half of the 20th Century.

This extraordinary social change, the dissonance between proclaimed public policy and its implementation, the apparent restoration as the Soviet Union developed of many more conservative, pre-revolutionary women's policies and the fact that a 'solution' to the *zhenskii vopros* or 'woman question' was finally being attempted in Russia by a coterie of middle-aged Marxist men have led the subject of women in the interwar Soviet Union to be addressed by a panoply of scholars from many different perspectives (for example Marxist and feminist) and through the use of many different methodologies (including –social and oral history).

Mostly, the evaluation of changing women's policy in the USSR has taken on a very descriptive tone: the subtleties of changes in practice, the effect of changes

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5 Indeed, not only as the USSR became more stable, but also as the proportion of women in the Party and the workforce increased.

6 Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's widow and Klavdiia Nikolaeva, a party member since 1909 and one time editor of *Rabotnitsa* and head of the ZhenOtdel. The seventy-one members of 1936 were as elected at the XVII Party Congress in 1934 and include those that had since passed away (such as Kirov).

7 The power balance at play in Russian peasant life is, of course, more complicated than just that of a vertical line of power descending from a male leader. Peasant matriarchs often exhibited considerable power within their own sphere of influence.

socially and the roles of women in policy changes have all been examined[8]. Given the conundrum of an ostensibly progressive regime regressing, however, relatively few pages have concentrated on explaining why such a transformation took place and even fewer have identified non-economic reasons for such a shift. Biographical accounts of top Bolsheviks can note, for instance, the 'boys club' nature of Soviet politics – from its roots in violence, to its birth in bloody civil war to the all-night boozy dinners of Stalin and even the schoolboy nature of political discourse[9] - and the fact that top Bolsheviks were not firmly in tune with the interests of Soviet women has not escaped many commentators. Neither has it escaped mention that many Soviet policies towards women can be explained through recourse to purely economic and practical reasoning, rather than any interests in social justice of the position of women themselves: the increased employment of women, the skilling of women in terms of

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[8] See particularly, in this context, Gail Lapidus' *Women in Soviet Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1978) for a more statistical account of the practical position of women and Mary Buckley's *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1989) for an ideological overview of women's place. Attwood's approach details the subtleties of changes to women's policy through an examination of Soviet women's magazines (*Creating the New Soviet Woman*). Goldman (*Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 and *Women, The State & Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Engel (*Women in Russia, 1700-2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), both provide a descriptive analysis of changes and their effects. For accounts of the roles of women in policy changes as well as the effects of changes on them, see particularly more autobiographical works, including Fitzpatrick and Slezkine's *In The Shadow of Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Clements' *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) for the individual stories of early revolutionary women in the interwar period.

[9] Frequently these matters are brought up quite indirectly by historians, rather than commented on explicitly. The violent nature of Stalin's beginnings, for instance, is noted by historians like Simon Sebag Montefiore in his *The Young Stalin: The Adventurous Early Life of the Dictator 1878-1917* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007) and Miklós Kun in *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003). The presence of a 'siege mentality' in top Bolshevik figures because of the Russian Civil War and the nature of Bolshevism is widely discussed. See, for instance, Donald Raleigh's *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 76) which talks of the legacy of couching the Soviet government as responding to attack or Graeme Gill's *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) for an institutional account of the results of the fear of petit-bourgeois contamination. The nature of Stalin's informal but powerful gatherings of top Bolsheviks for all-night drinking sessions at his dacha is most evocatively described by Montefiore in his *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), while Milovan Djilas narrates his experiences of them as an eyewitness in *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962). A droll imagined account of how this coterie acted is given in Voinovich's short story 'A Circle of Friends' (for an English translation by Richard Lourie see Clarence Brown [ed.] *The Portable Twentieth-Century Russian Reader*, London: Penguin, 1985). Crude caricatures of political actors as drawn by figures like Bukharin and Mezhlauk are almost reminiscent of drawings passed between schoolboys (see Vatlin and Malashenko [eds.] *Piggy Foxy and the Sword of Revolution*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), while simply the rhetorical nature of Central Committee meetings makes them seem, if not childish, then overtly masculine (see, for instance, the collected stenographical records in J. Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov's *The Road to Terror*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999).

adult literacy schools, even the drives to 'deveil' women in Central Asian republics all could be justified in terms of increasing Soviet productivity and the power of the state.

Whilst all of these are true, however, it is an incomplete answer to the woman question to simply claim that regression can be explained by dominant male personalities alone. This is one of the roles of this thesis – to examine, through an account of the relationships of major Bolshevik figures to their partners – possible attitudinal reasons for government policy during the Leninist and Stalinist periods of Soviet history. By focussing on the personal relationships of members of the Bolshevik elite a greater understanding of the private mores and thus public motivations of key figures in the Soviet administration will be made available. In selecting a key group that were most directly influenced by new Soviet programmes and most readily transformed by changes in public policy[10] another evaluation can also be made – an assessment of to what extent pre-revolutionary ideals as to the status of women in a future socialist society were realised.

Personalities

This thesis, although exploring the elite as a group and citing evidence from a broad array of elite members, will focus specifically on four key individuals. The chief reasons for selecting these figures as a focal point are twofold: firstly, in an area of study for which there are relatively few source documents available there is a greater degree of primary – often autobiographical – material concerning these four women than many others of a similar rank and status. Secondly, taken as a group they provide a typical cross-section of the upper echelons of Soviet society. Their status as representative figures will be examined in more detail as their lives are explored in later chapters, but broadly speaking in their activities and their periods of prominence as a whole each figure serves an archetype for a number of less prominent Bolshevik wives.

Nadezhda Krupskaya, as Lenin's wife, a Party organiser and long-term member of the Central Committee following her husband's death, has many typical attributes

[10] That is, were at the forefront of women's activism and were the first to receive benefits such as childcare and maternity leave in a country whose size and bureaucracy made many changes quite gradual.

of a revolutionary wife and confidante in the first years of Soviet rule. As Deputy People's Commissar for Enlightenment, she also most strongly represents the many female members of Bolshevik elite society who contributed directly to the USSR's early political platform. Anna Larina, as Bukharin's wife, provides an insight into the generation that followed Krupskaya's – a group born to revolution and born amidst revolutionaries. In other wives' lives there are echoes of Anna Larina's: both Nadezhda Allilueva and Olga Kameneva (like many others) also came from 'revolutionary families' to remain part of the rather exclusive set of Bolshevik elite through marriage to prominent husbands. A host of other wives of prominent figures also went through the political, and practical, assassination of their husbands and through the Gulag system[11] just as Anna Larina did, though none wrote accounts of the process of dealing with being an enemy of the people quite like Bukharin's wife.

Where Krupskaya and Larina have more resonance when discussing the 1920s and early 1930s, from a crop of Stalin's later court come the wives of two other figures – Vyacheslav Molotov and Kliment Voroshilov – through whom an account of the second half of Stalin's period in office can be examined. Polina Zhemchuzhina[12] was not only the wife of a man considered Stalin's natural successor by many during the 1940s, but was also the highest ranked woman in Soviet politics during part of this period. As well as being on the Central Committee (as a candidate member from 1939 to 1941), she was to hold prominent posts as the director of a perfume factory, in the fish industries commissariat, the perfumes and cosmetics administration, the commissariat for light industry and finally as a prominent campaigner during the Great Patriotic War in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. As a woman arrested in her own right[13] for her political activities and also as a prominent member of the ZhenOtdel (*Otdel po rabote sredi zhenshchin pri komitakh VKP(b)*), or women's departments of the Party throughout the 1920s, Zhemchuzhina also by association provides an insight into the working lives of Bolshevik wives in the 1930s and the restrictions placed upon them by their husbands.

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[11] Including Kalinin's wife, Zhemchuzhina, the relatives of the Tukhachevskys, the Yakirs, Gamarniks, Rykovs, Tomskys and countless other families.

[12] Born Polina Semyonovna Karpovskaya, she used 'Zhemchuzhina' (Russian for 'pearl') as a revolutionary moniker and kept it even after her marriage to Molotov.

[13] And not simply for being linked to a husband or family member considered 'an enemy of the people'. There is some debate, of course, as to whether her arrest was simply part of a 'power game' that Stalin conducted with Molotov and this will be discussed later in the thesis.

Finally, through an examination of Yekaterina Voroshilova's comparatively quite unremarkable life, a consistent backdrop is given to the society of Bolshevik wives and its development. As a less prominent member of Bolshevik circles right from the revolution until more than a decade after Stalin's death, Voroshilova's life provides a long term and coherent look at the changes that happened under Stalin in Bolshevik society. Her status as a mother and an assistant director at the Lenin Museum is an archetype for many revolutionary wives of the time, while her autobiography and diaries of the late 1940s and 1950s provide a valuable insight into the last years of Stalin and thus the final years being examined in this thesis.

In order not to abstract areas of the everyday lives of Bolshevik wives from the context of the individuals being discussed, this thesis will be adopting a two-fold approach. In terms of time it is broadly chronological: chapters one and two deal with the early years of Bolshevik elite society, first under tsarism and then through the chaos of the revolutionary years. Chapters three and four then deal with two separate arenas of Bolshevik life before the final two chapters focus on the evolution and conclusion of the shift that occurred in Bolshevik elite society in the time period under examination. While the women discussed above form the mainstay of the experiences described in each chapter, in order to avoid a non-representative account that focuses on these four to the expense of generalisable and broader statements about Bolshevik wives as a group, the lives and accounts of many other women will be surveyed in the following chapters. Most prominently, these lesser case studies will include Ivy Litvinov, Nadezhda Allilueva, Yulia Pyatnitskaya and Zinaida Ordzhonikidze.

Available Sources

To appreciate what material is available for this study, but also to explain how this social portrait informs a number of pre-existing strands of Soviet scholarship it is necessary to examine the types of primary and secondary sources presently available in this area of research.

Secondary source material broadly falls into four categories – theoretical, historical, biographical and gender approaches to the issues at hand.

Elite Literature

In terms of theoretical literature, there are veins of sources that are not focussed necessarily on the area of Russian history but deal with the expected evolution of elite groups, their structure and their relationship to the rest of society. C. Wright Mills popularised this notion for an American audience with his *The Power Elite*, proclaiming broadly the notion of military, economic and political elites with a highly flexible system of transfer between each strand of his tripartite power base. In Soviet terms, the distinction between political, economic and military power is altogether less necessary and even the legal distinction between state and Party power becomes considerably clouded at times, but most importantly the notion of top Party officials as a functioning elite provides a strong conceptual framework for this study. Elite theory in itself has become a niche field, although much of the research in the area has been focussed on Western political institutions rather than upon the Soviet Union[14].

There are a number of ways in which the Soviet elite might be defined – through geography, proximity to the de-facto leader, political influence, privilege and also, somewhat ironically, according to the 'souls' they might manipulate[15]. A recognition of a Soviet elite and descriptions of its evolution are also important to consider as benchmarks from which to assess social change within the group being studied. Models of the more general evolution of the Soviet elite, especially politically, and the transformation of the society it impacted on range from the ritualisation of practices described by Getty to the rule-based analysis of Gill, to the enprivilegement of the elite described by Djilas and its cousin, the bureaucratisation under Stalin declaimed by Trotsky[16]. They also include, less specifically, the concepts

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[14] For some of the 'elites' of this field consider, for instance, Thomas Bottomore (*Elites and Society*, London: Watts, 1964) and Robert Putnam (*The Comparative Study of Political Elites*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976).

[15] With the adoption of the *nomenklatura* system, the ability for an official to get his own candidates on such lists for party positions is a strong predictor of his influence in general, while the appointment of candidates on the approval of Central Committee bodies ensured a stable powerbase for the elite. For a more detailed explanation of the effect of the *nomenklatura* system see, for instance, Mikhail Voslensky's *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984) or chapter three of Gill's *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*.

[16] These theses are elucidated upon in the following works (amongst others). Getty's *Origin of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), *The Road to Terror* and "Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-1938" (*Russian Review* 58: 1 [1999], pp. 49–70), Djilas' *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (London: Unwin, 1966), Gill's *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* and *The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) and Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972).

of the increase of authoritarianism and the idea of social conservatism – especially a re-establishment of tsarist era norms. This thesis will argue in part that it was the pre-revolutionary cultural baggage of the elite that in many cases drove the regression in Soviet social policies through the 1930s and 1940s.

In choosing to focus on the wives of the 'political elite' in Soviet society, this thesis will, in a relative sense, downplay the roles and involvement of other family members of top Bolsheviks and fail to investigate in detail the stories of women who rose to top Party positions without the help of familial connections. While the situation for these two further groups is explored through the following pages and this thesis contextualises the evolution in the role of the Bolshevik elite wife within the path of Soviet attitudes towards women more generally, wives of top Bolsheviks are the focus of this study for several reasons. A first is the simple need to restrict the set of personalities being discussed – something that an examination of all prominent women in early Soviet Russia would not allow. Since no women achieved prominent political office in the period under discussion[17], if women such as Nikolaeva, Stal and Kollontai were to be a focus of discussion, this study would be less one of elite society and more concerned with second tier political positions and how women were kept from being in the top echelons political elite.

Another reason for choosing the wives of top Bolsheviks as a target for research is, of course, that (unlike figures such as Kollontai) there has been little research hitherto focussed on them but, most significantly, the fact that in examining wives' lives we are naturally given an insight into the attitudes and prejudices of their husbands makes an examination of figures like Larina and Voroshilova even more enticing. For while the attitudes and interests of figures such as Pavel Dybenko (Aleksandra Kollontai's partner) and Alexander Armand (Inessa Armand's husband) are of historical interest, a greater understanding of the real life positions of figures such as Molotov (Zhemchuzhina's husband) and Stalin (Allilueva's husband) towards women and women's issues actually provides an insight not only into Soviet elite society but into Soviet policy-making with regards to women more broadly.

Since this thesis is a discussion of 'intra-elite relationships' – that is, between different members of the same class in society that enjoyed similar privileges by

[17] That is, there were no women as Politburo members during the Lenin and Stalin periods and neither did any woman head a major Commissariat or government body.

virtue of their position – although a great deal has been written on the notion of elites and their actions, little of this literature is considered important for this study as, by and large, its focus is on the general nature of historical elites, their methods of achieving power or their interrelationships with other groups in society. Thus, areas of study such as patron-client relations, which considers the symbiotic relationship between the elite and lower-level officials (the *nomenklatura*), while important for considering the elite in perspective, are of little benefit in working through the nature of Bolshevik elite marriages and the relationships between top Soviet husbands and wives.

For the reader who wishes to greater contextualise the position of the Soviet elite, Mikhail Voslensky's seminal *Nomenklatura* is, however, a good starting point[18] as are more specific and modern works including those by Easter and Fitzpatrick[19]. In more general terms, literature on the notion of the elite and social stratification is considerable. Seminal works in the area include Gaetano Mosca's *Elementi di Scienza Politica* (translated as 'The Ruling Class' and first published in 1896) and Vilfredo Pareto's theories of elites, how they come to power and lose influence, developed at the turn of last century[20]. More recent theorists, such as Suzanne Keller, have synthesised and consolidated such earlier works and, as has been seen, authors have also applied elite theory to analysis of the Soviet state[21].

While it is interesting and occasionally enlightening to compare how general elite theory compares to the practice of top Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union, it is not the intention of this work to evaluate elite theory from this perspective and nor is it considered that examining more general positions of what the elite *are* stands to benefit the analysis in the following chapters. These pages are not so much concerned with how the Bolsheviks seized power, nor how political influence was won and lost by individual members of the elite. Rather, the task at hand is to produce a social portrait of life within Bolshevik elite society. Therefore, while it is a useful exercise to, for instance, consider the validity of Mosca's axiom that 'all ruling classes tend to

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18 M. Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984).

19 See Gerald Easter's *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, 2000) and Sheila Fitzpatrick's article "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-1939", *Slavic Review* 38:3 (September 1979), pp. 377-402.

20 See G. Mosca*, The Ruling Class* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939) and V. Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

21 Suzanne Keller, *Beyond the Ruling Class* (New York: Random House, 1963).

become hereditary in fact if not in law' in the context of the chosen career paths of Bolshevik children (which will be examined in future chapters), the actual truthfulness of this statement and other generalisations about the nature of elites is not significant to this thesis' argument. Thus, while there will be some limited discussion of how Soviet elite society is best classified in future chapters (and hence, for instance, whether Djilas and Trotsky were accurate with their representations of changes in the elite under Stalin), this is by no means to suggest that this thesis positions itself as a work within the realm of 'elite studies'.

Literature on Women in Russia

While the above theoretical literature provides a rationale for discussing top officials as part of a coherent society, to evaluate the effect that the Soviet elite had upon women's roles and position in Soviet society it is appropriate to turn to more gender-based sources. In this area, historians such as Gail Lapidus, Melanie Ilic, Barbara Alpern Engel, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Cathy Porter, Lynne Attwood and Barbara Evans Clements[22] have all addressed the place of women in Soviet society through statistical, cultural and biographical studies. Their studies, particularly in terms of the motivations and reasons given for the shift in Soviet social policy provide an important background to this thesis, but it is also hoped that the insight a specific focus on the wives of prominent Bolsheviks might bring to the area will lead to a more nuanced approach to the motives given for various policy changes.

Biographical Literature

Finally, historical and biographical secondary sources provide a large corpus of background literature for such a study. Historically, there are many general accounts of the Kremlin elite and their intrigues, ranging from general histories such as Simon Sebag Montefiore's *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, to histories of specific eras,

[22] Many of these authors' works have already been noted in footnote seven. In addition to those publications already cited are Cathy Porter's analyses of Aleksandra Kollontai (*Alexandra Kollontai*, New York: The Dial Press, 1980) and Larissa Reisner (*Larissa Reisner*, London: Virago Press, 1988), *A Revolution of Their Own: Voices of Women in Soviet History* (B.A. Engel & A. Posadskaya-Vanderbeck [eds.], Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) and Melanie Ilic's *Women in the Stalin Era* ([ed.] Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) and *Women Workers in the Soviet Inter-War Economy: From 'Protection' to 'Equality'* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

such as Gorlizki and Khlevniuk's *Cold Peace* or Getty and Naumov's *Road to Terror*, from histories of specific places such as examinations of the lives of those in the House on The Embankment[23] to specific groups such as the works on Kremlin women by Larisa Vasilieva, Galina Krasnaia and Valentina Kraskova[24]. There are also a number of interesting broad historical portraits of the periods in question, which enable a comparison of elite and 'ordinary' society at these times – including Troyat's *Daily Life in Russia* and Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism*[25].

While the publication of Vasilieva's work in particular might seem to have already addressed some of the material of this thesis, it should be noted that while she provides some interesting details into Soviet elite life during the period being discussed her works, like many modern popular accounts in Russia today, are prone to sensationalism and rumour and she fails to provide any coherent history of its subjects: as the subtitle of *Kremlëvskie zhëni* reads, it is a book dedicated to "facts, reminiscences, documents, rumours (*slukhi*), legends and the author's perspective (*vzglyad avtora*)".

Biographically, there are books too numerous to mention individually on members of the elite. Focussing on the four main women being examined in this thesis, in terms of Lenin, Volkogonov's and Service's biographies provide a solid foundation for an examination of his life[26], while the works of Pearson, McNeal and Sokolov all document Lenin's relationship with his two partners – Armand and Krupskaya[27]. On Bukharin, Stephen Cohen's seminal *Bukharin and the Bolshevik*

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[23] That is, including Trifonov's fictional work with its eponymous apartment block as well as several more recent Russian publications including *Tainy i legendy Doma na naberezhnoi* (M. Korshunov & V. Terekhova, Moscow: Slovo, 2002) and *Oknami na Kreml': iz istorii "Dom na naberezhnoi"* (T. Ter-Egiazarian et al, Moscow: Izd-vo 'Novaia Elita', 2004). The full title of Gorlizki and Khlevniuk's work is *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

[24] Those being Larissa Vasilieva's *Kremlëvskie zhëni* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2003) in Cathy Porter's translation as *Kremlin Wives* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1994) and *Deti Kremlia* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2002), *Kremlëvskie deti* by Kraskova (Minsk: Literatura, 1998) and *Tainy kremlëvskikh zhën* by Krasnaia (Minsk: Literatura, 1997).

[25] H. Troyat, *Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979) and S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[26] Referred to here are D. Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (London: HarperCollins, 1994) and R. Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[27] Michael Pearson having written *Lenin's Mistress* (New York: Random House, 2001) about Armand, Robert McNeal being the author of *Bride of the Revolution: Krupskaya and Lenin* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1973), and Boris Sokolov having documented the stories of both in his *Liubov' vozhdia* (Moscow: AST-Press, 2004).

Revolution remains an important resource[28]. For Voroshilov there are no prominent biographies available and this was the case for Molotov too until recent years saw the publication of Derek Watson's quite political examination and the first volume of Vyacheslav Nikonov's more personalised account of his grandfather's life[29].

It is a testament to the secrecy, family ties and close-knit nature of Kremlin society during the time under discussion that there are so many works on the era that are partly biographical, partly autobiographical, a moiety of which is primary material and a moiety secondary. Specific problems with evaluating the reliability of such sources, but also a discussion of the role of family members as 'preservers of an elite member's legacy' will be discussed in the body of the thesis, but for now 'hybrid' and primary source materials available for this thesis should be outlined.

Personal accounts of life within the Bolshevik elite are patchy but nevertheless not incredibly scarce. While Vyacheslav Nikonov as the grandson of Molotov cannot remember this society under Stalin, the sons and daughters of Bolsheviks of the time can. In this area of 'family literature' can be found Sergo Beria's account of his father, Svetlana Allilueva's two famous works on her parents and life in the Soviet Union, Vladimir Alliluev's account of his family's life, Svetlana Gurvich-Bukharina's notes on her father, Ivy Litvinov's preserved papers, Olga Aroseva's part publication of her father's diary and Aino Kuusinen's personal account of life in Kremlin society[30]. Somewhat more autobiographical still are Yekaterina Voroshilova's notes on her childhood, typed up, but never published and available in the Russian archives, Anna Larina's *Nezabyvaemoe* (published in English as "This I Cannot Forget"), her husband's prison writings including his autobiographical novel *Vremena* (translated as "How it All Began") and Krupskaya's collected works, including a short

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28 S.F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

29 Referred to here are D. Watson, *Molotov: A Biography* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and Nikonov, V. *Molotov: Molodost'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2005), both published in the same year. At the time of the author's talking with Vyacheslav Nikonov, he was continuing to research and write his biographical account of Molotov, planning to release at least three volumes in total.

30 These works are respectively S. Beria, *Beria, My Father: Inside Stalin's Kremlin* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2001); S. Allilueva's *20 Letters to a Friend* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1968) and *Only One Year* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1969); V. Alliluev *Khronika odnoi sem'i: Allilueva-Stalin* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2002); S. Gurvich-Bukharina *Big Parents* episode and "Doklad N.I. Bukharina v Parizhe, 3 Aprelia 1936 g. kak ego politcheskoe zaveshchanie" in V. Zhuravleva [ed.] *Bukharin: chelovek, politik, uchënii* (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literature, 1990); the mostly unpublished papers of Ivy Litvinov, revealed in part in John Carswell's *The Exile: A Life of Ivy Litvinov* (London: Faber and Faber,1983); the mostly unpublished diary of Arosev revealed in part in O. Aroseva & V. Maksimova, *Bez grima* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2003) and Aino Kuusinen's memoir *Before and After Stalin* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1974).

autobiography and numerous vignettes about her life[31]. To all of these written sources must be added a number of audio-visual materials produced since the collapse of the Soviet Union, most prominently by Konstantin Smirnov and Aleksei Pimanov for Russian television audiences. Smirnov's *Big Parents* (*Bol'shie roditeli*) conducted interviews with many sons and daughters of famous Bolsheviks of the era being discussed, including those of Khrushchev, Budyonny, Malenkov, Zhukov, Rykov, Bukharin, Postyshev, Konev, Sergeev, Ordzhonikidze, Beria, Pyatnitsky and Mikoyan. Pimanov's examination of the secrets of the Kremlin, entitled *Kreml'-9*, has also concluded a number of a similar interviews of surviving figures from the era[32].

In contrast to such 'presented' primary sources, there are also a number of sources not designed for publication but available now in the archives, most prominently in the Russian State Archives for Socio-Political History (RGASPI). These include, most broadly, letters between husbands and wives sent from the pre-revolutionary period right through to past the end of the Stalin era. Couples for whom there are extant letters available in the archives include the Andreevs, Zinovievs, Kollontais, Kirovs, Rykovs, Radeks, Sverdlovs, Lunacharskys and Krzhizhanovskys. Amongst the four major protagonists of this thesis there are some 80 pages of letters between Molotov and Zhemchuzhina, hundreds of pages of Krupskaya's letters to friends and relatives – especially to Lenin's siblings – and a number of letters from Yekaterina Voroshilova – most notably to her children. As well as letters, there are a number of manuscripts (including two books, one by each of Lunarcharsky's two

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[31] Voroshilova's autobiography, 'A Few Pages from My Life' (*Stranichki iz moei zhizni*) is to be found in RGASPI, *f*. 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 432. Larina's autobiography is *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994). Bukharin's complete prison writings are presently only available in Russian (*Tiurmenye rukopisy N.I. Bukharina v dvukh knigakh*, Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1996), although his *Filosofskie Arabeski* are now in English (*Philosophical Arabesques*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005) as is his semi-autobiographical novel (*How it All Began*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Krupskaya's accounts have been published in many different editions, but her ten-volume set of writings, mainly on pedagogy, also includes a comprehensive set of biographical and autobiographical materials (*Pedagogicheskie sochineniia v desiati tomakh*, Moscow: Idz-vo Akademii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk, 1957-1963).

[32] *Big Parents* episodes were produced by Telekompaniia Ton for Pervyi Kanal, from 2000 to 2002, written and presented by Konstantin Smirnov. Thanks are due to Elena Fedorova from NTV for supplying relevant episodes to the author. Aleksei Pimanov wrote and presented the *Kreml'-9* series through Telekompaniia Ostankino, VOX-Video and Pingvin in 2004. The title is a reference to the KGB's Ninth Directorate, which was in charge of the security of Soviet leaders. Pimanov was also responsible for publishing several books with the *Kreml'-9* mark as an adjunct to his series. A troika of such programs is rounded out by Nikolai Svanidze (a distant relative of Stalin's first wife, Ketevan Svanidze), who produced his *Istoricheskie khroniki* series for Telekanal Rossiia at a similar time.

wives) and personal documents available[33]. In the case of Voroshilova, a much fuller examination is made possible of her life through the availability of her private diaries of 1945 to 1959 and an autobiographical typewritten text of her early life. In the realm of personal documents, ID documents, tsarist police reports, notebooks, exercise books, report cards, progress reports and other such records on Voroshilova and Krupskaya in particular are also now to be found in the RGASPI *fondi*[34]. As a much more chilling diary account, the private account of Pyatnitsky's wife, Yulia Pyatnitskaya-Sokolova as she struggled through Soviet life in 1937 following her husband's arrest, but preceding her own, is also now available in publication under the title *Golgofa*[35].

The Nature of Biographical and Subjective Soviet Literature

In examining sources such as the diaries of Voroshilova and Pyatnitskaya, it should be noted that an examination of the nature of Soviet diaries and personal sources can be informed by previous research on Soviet private writing, particularly more recent methodological literature that has arisen on the back of Jochen Hellbeck's examination of Soviet-era diaries. Hellbeck's central thesis in his *Revolution On My Mind* and elsewhere in his diary literature is that daily accounts of life, such as that of Voroshilova, frequently mark not simply a 'documentation' of *byt* but an attempt at 'becoming': a structured opportunity for the author to 'manufacture' himself or herself in the Soviet context into a 'new citizen' through cultivating the personal attributes deemed worthy of a model Soviet worker[36]. While such a characteristic does not seem as patently true of Yekaterina Voroshilova's work as of Hellbeck's own examination of Stepan Podlubny, it is nevertheless prudent to note that the

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[33] RGASPI have notoriously shifted some *fond* numbers in recent years. The particular RGASPI *fondi* for each individual mentioned above as at the end of 2005 are given in the bibliography.

[34] Most wives' documents are located in the same *fondi* as their husbands, with the exception of the more famous Krupskaya and Kollontai.

[35] See V.I. Piatnitskii [ed.], *Golgofa: Po materialam arkhivno-sledstvennogo dela No. 603 na Sokolovu-Piatnitskuiu Iu. I.* (St. Petersburg: Palitra, 1993).

[36] J. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Sheila Fitzpatrick summarises Hellbeck's approach as follows: "*Revolution on My Mind* is part of a broader recent trend among young scholars, influenced by Michel Foucault and more directly by Stephen Kotkin, to study the Stalinism of the Soviet 1930s as a civilization in the process of invention. Critical of older social historians' focus on resistance and survival strategies and of their tendency to dismiss ideology as window-dressing (full disclosure: that means me), they aim to bring ideology back to center stage. They do this by way of discourse analysis – that is, close examination of texts, particularly first-person texts like autobiographies, confessions and, in this case, diaries." (S. Fitzpatrick, "Journals of the Purge Years", *The Nation*, August 28, 2006).

creation of such a source as Voroshilova's diary (typewritten and archived as it was) should by no means be considered through the same lens as that of a history of the times by a detached writer.

In introducing a collection of Russian women's life stories in the early Soviet period, Sheila Fitzpatrick makes note of some more general characteristics of women's accounts from the time that have more resonance still with the writings of Pyatnitskaya and Voroshilova. Apart from noting the political connotations and potential consequences of diary-keeping (namely that diaries were confiscated during secret police searches and frequently used as evidence against their authors), the tendencies that Fitzpatrick notes for women to focus on the revolution and war in accounts, to gloss over the horrors of the Terror (something that was, as will be seen, certainly true of Voroshilova's account), to contrast pre-revolutionary and revolutionary lives and finally for family dramas to be considered "too trivial" for mention in the diaries of upper-class women all ring true to some extent in the accounts examined in this thesis[37]. Thus, the examination of wives' portrayal of their own lives (particularly in Chapter Four) is necessarily informed by an understanding of the nature and context of Soviet diaries and, in particular, Soviet women's accounts of their own lives[38].

Non-Personal Sources

In terms of non-personal primary sources, there are of course many contemporaneous Soviet sources that can help inform an understanding of the era under discussion, although it must be said that due to the unpopularity of personal and social histories by the Soviets (in large part because of their Marxist historical emphasis), there is little in the way of primary sources of the time which illustrate the sorts of lives the women under discussion led. Soviet biographical listings do not list spouses and family of prominent figures as a rule (unlike Western *Who's Who*s) and even in

[37] See the Introduction by Sheila Fitzpatrick in *In the Shadow of Revolution*.

[38] For further examination of how Russia women present themselves in text – particularly in more recent decades than are discussed in this thesis – see Marianne Liljestrom's work on the area, including *Useful Selves: Russian Women's Autobiographical Texts from the Postwar Period* (Helsinki: Kikimora, 2004) and (M. Liljestrom, A. Rosenholm & I. Savkina [eds.]) *Models of Self: Russian Women's Autobiographical Texts* (Helsinki: Kikimora, 2000).

official internal Party records there was rarely a reference to spouses and family[39]. In addition, wives were expected not to seek opportunities on the basis of their husband's power and many went out of their way to distance themselves from their husband's professional careers – not adopting their husband's surnames, answering phone calls at home with no reference to their spouse's position and taking employment without notifying their employer of their family background[40] – all leading to a distancing of wives in an official sense from their husbands.

Despite this general aversion to openly documenting the private lives of public officials, general resources from their lives – from newspapers, to ongoing publication of *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'ianka* magazines, to Party directives – all provide further background for many of the episodes to be discussed in further chapters and an examination of the woman question and the changes in policy over maternity and the ZhenOtdel in particular will be discussed in future chapters on the basis of this context.

Dealing with Sources

Overall, therefore, a vast landscape of primary and secondary source material exists from which to base such an ethnographic examination as this thesis. There are some clear issues that need to be addressed in employing these sources, however. A first is reliability, a second depth, and a third novelty.

That something so integral to Lenin's life as his long-term love interest with Inessa Armand should have been suppressed for over 70 years is testament to both the unwillingness of Soviet historians to focus on the personal lives of their leaders and also of the strong ability of Soviet authorities to restrict publication of material deemed damaging to their interests and the image of major Soviet personalities. This ability to censor has had the dual effect of both suppressing actual sources but also of inviting the use of rumour and innuendo in accounts of times and issues for which

[39] Even when there is a reference to family, frequently records are incomplete. In the All-Union Society of Old Bolsheviks *anketa* records, for instance, of eight of its most prominent members (Andreev, Bukharin, Kaganovich, Kirov, Litvinov, Molotov, Ordzhonikidze and Voroshilov – all married), under the 'family members' field only Litvinov and Molotov wrote responses, with only Litvinov noting his wife. See RGASPI *f.* 124, *op.* 1.

[40] This is not to claim that wives neither benefited from their husband's position nor that they as a rule abandoned the privileges their status brought. For more particularly about privilege, see chapter five.

definitive sources are not available. This requires an historian studying the period to adopt a somewhat contradictory approach to evaluating sources – a need to 'read between the lines' of official sources and 'decrypt' the Aesopian language of primary documents and the necessity to come to more popular modern sources with a good degree of scepticism.

Another necessary tool for the scholar of Stalinist era politics is to recognise the background and loyalties of the author of any source. Unsurprisingly, the testaments and partial hagiographies of major figures such as Beria, Bukharin and Molotov by their descendants has created some very conflicting accounts of events and figures, extending to even the most basic observations[41]. Even in private documents, such as Voroshilova's diaries, it should not be expected that self-censorship was not at work, for major political figures knew well enough from political intrigues of the era that ultimately any personal manuscripts could potentially fall into the 'wrong hands' and have dire consequences.

Other than an awareness of these issues of reliability – of censorship, bias and unsubstantiated rumour – and a willingness to note them and act prudently with sources as a result, there is little for a researcher to do but cope with these necessary issues and make his reader aware of them.

This study has considerable advantages in providing a 'thick description' of Bolshevik elite society in a way not possible through individual biography and providing personalised context in a way not possible in a broader study. For while primary source materials are, broadly speaking, substantial, many times material evidence concerning specific areas of the life of specific women is found lacking. It was in recognition of this fact that as investigation of the roles and influences of Soviet wives increased, so too did the scope of this thesis, thus overcoming the lack of data that might prevent examination of a single Bolshevik wife in any thorough and thought-provoking way. While it will be argued that the four central figures of this thesis are broadly representative of a large group of Bolshevik wives[42], to address a fuller range of circumstances and to provide a more substantial contextual analysis,

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[41] As is explored in more detail later, there is even a marked difference in evaluations of Zhemchuzhina's manners and upbringing depending upon whether the source was hostile to the Molotovs.

[42] That is, to be specific, of wives of members of the Politburo specifically (approximately 25 at any one time), and with much in common with all wives whose husbands occupied key posts and who were part of House on the Embankment or Kremlin society (more than a hundred at any one time).

the accounts of many other Bolshevik wives will also be employed to address the issue of depth.

The novelty of this thesis is in the synthesis and the focus of the account. While it cannot rely upon any sources that are not currently publicly accessible[43], it does incorporate a significant number of diverse, new and obscure sources[44] in order to present a thick tapestry of Kremlin life. There is yet to be any sociological study of Bolshevik wives, their circumstances, roles and influences, much less any long-term studies of Bolshevik elite culture which include any substantial focus on the families and partners of top Bolsheviks. Historically, we lack a solid understanding of the most significant confidantes and partners of key Bolshevik figures, in the realm of women's history we lack a key understanding of the motivations and private approach to the *zhenskii vopros* of the Bolshevik elite and in sociological terms there is still much about the nature of Soviet elite *byt*, or 'everyday culture', that eludes us. This thesis, through its ethnographic approach to Bolshevik wives in the period from the establishment of the Russian social-democratic movement to the death of Stalin, will attempt to inform all of these gaps in the current landscape of Soviet history while at the same time, in and of itself, providing a chronicle of four fascinating and influential lives.

[43] Aside from especially sensitive documents – such as those incorporated into the Russian Presidential Archive from Stalin's private archive – of the known classified documentation on the area being studied there are only the NKVD records of Anna Larina-Bukharin and Polina Zhemchuzhina which might be thought to contain any substantial amount of new material. At the time of writing, these records are held by Russia's FSB and only made available to relatives of the repressed. The author was unsuccessful in gaining access to Zhemchuzhina's file.

[44] This is a particular reference to Voroshilova's papers (with her diaries and autobiography yet to be examined as documents in their own right), the two 2005 biographies of Molotov and the wealth of new private reminiscences that have been produced for Russian television audiences.

Chapter One
The Origins of Bolshevik Elite Society

In tracing the development of Bolshevik elite society, particularly its evolution under Stalin, a first step is to evaluate its genealogy. For citizens of the Soviet Union, a questionable class background might have served as a distinct barrier to advancement, whilst being found guilty of petit-bourgeois attitudes and behaviours was most certainly a serious matter. Yet to what extent was the background and attitude of those who came to be the Bolshevik elite itself questionable and to what extent can the changes to the elite in the decades after revolution be traced back to pre-revolutionary tendencies and mentalities? Before a more particular analysis of the internal and external changes that elite Bolshevik wives and the Kremlin society underwent in the 1930s and 1940s, it is therefore necessary to begin by not only revealing the context and composition of the elite, but also to have some understanding of the attitudes and intellectual backgrounds not only of specific members of elite society, but also of socialism as an ideology. For it is in relation to the position of socialism towards women, family and society that the success of the Kremlin elite can be judged on its own terms, and it is from knowledge of Kremlin elite beginnings that the kernels of any such systemic failures of the Kremlin elite can be assessed.

This chapter, therefore, is charged with fulfilling three roles – first to provide an analysis of the theoretical background of socialist thought in the arena of women, the family and society, second to situate such an ideational profile in terms of Russian society and culture at the beginning of the 20th century and third to thus explore the early history of Kremlin society in its embryonic, pre-revolutionary phase. Chapter two will then complete the picture of pre-Stalinist Bolshevik elite society by documenting the lives of women and families from their establishment in Moscow after the revolution through to the coming to power of Stalin.

Socialist Thought on Women, Marriage and the Family

In attempting to establish some form of archetype by which the 'success' of Bolshevik elite society might be examined a first and fundamental issue is the ambiguous and disparate nature of the 19th Century socialist thinkers' narrative on women, marriage and family. There are two very practical reasons for the lack of a unified position by early socialists on the women question. The first is that, unlike the Bolshevik elite that form the basis of this thesis, writers such as Marx, Bebel and Fourier were not united by time and place and most importantly had no strong pragmatic drive to adopt a discrete and unified position as Party members might. The second is that, distanced from the implementation of a socialist society and without being burdened by the task of forming concrete social policy and institutions as would spring up in the Soviet Union, early socialist figures were free to pursue a more utopian and dreamlike approach to how women might operate in a hypothetical future society[1]. Overriding both of these issues, however, was the nature of the early socialist struggle and its target audience: the focus of incitement to violence for early revolutionary socialists and their successors was primarily the urban working-class *male* demographic and the focus of their revolution was class and not sex, the factory and not the hearth.

As Vladimir Lenin was to put it, women in pre-revolutionary Russia were at once twice oppressed – not only by the ruling classes, but also by the patriarchal nature of society[2]. Implicit in every revolutionary's understanding of the coming of socialism was that *both* these yokes would be removed from the necks of the new socialist woman, but just as well understood was the fact that the demolition of patriarchy and any move towards equality of the sexes would, relatively speaking, mean alienating the core male constituency to which socialists were attempting to appeal. Thus it was with a somewhat contradictory mixture of utopianism (dreams of

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1 Indeed, a superb example of the 'pipe dream' element of some 19th Century figures can be seen directly in the incorporation of dreams into Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?* upon which more will be said later.

2 Lenin wrote, as part of the International Women's Day supplement to *Pravda* of 8th March, 1921: "For under capitalism the female half of the human race is doubly oppressed. The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that, even in the most democratic of the bourgeois republics, they remain, firstly, deprived of some rights because the law does not give them equality with men; and secondly—and this is the main thing—they remain in 'household bondage', they continue to be 'household slaves', for they are overburdened with the drudgery of the most squalid, backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the family household." (translation by Yuri Sdobnikov).

equality and liberation in a future society without serious analysis of the social effects of mooted social changes), disinterest (a lack of deep consideration of 'the woman question' which was seen as a side issue that might remove focus from the task of class revolution) and caution (a realisation that the promotion of sexual antagonisms might seriously undermine said revolution) that socialist thinkers approached prescriptive questions of women and family.

Given the disparate nature of socialist approaches to the woman question in the 19th Century it would be imprudent to document a panoply of positions here. Rather, what is important from the point of view of understanding the ideational heritage of the Bolshevik elite is to consider some of the major influences upon early 20th Century Russian (and, in particular, Russian Social Democrat) thought on issues of women and the family. In confining an investigation to major Russian influences on the woman question a number of key figures emerge. A first, encapsulating the 'Marxist' approach to the woman question, is Frederick Engels, a man who wrote more extensively on issues both of the origin and future of the family than his revolutionary companion Marx and who established much of the ideological framework upon which the Bolshevik elite were to situate their response to women's social policy. A second, August Bebel, was a German social democrat whose most famous work, *Women Under Socialism*, considered even more specific and practical issues than Engels had discussed, including, for instance, the position of socialism towards abortion and women in working life. Finally, as both a direct influence upon figures such as Lenin as well as a key *Russian* voice on the place of women in socialist society, the journalist and utopian socialist Nikolai Chernyshevsky is an important figure for his imaginings on the position for women in future society as well as for the reception of his work within the Russian-speaking world. Illuminating the positions of all three of these men as influences on the Bolshevik conception of the *zhenskii vopros* will, when combined with an analysis of the social environment of 19th Century women in Russian society, not only provide a background to further discussions of the Bolshevik position of women and marriage but also serve to situate a discussions of the lives of Bolshevik women in the pre-revolutionary period later in this chapter in an appropriate conceptual and historical context.

Three Influential Socialist Positions

In descriptive terms at least, Frederick Engels set about documenting the theoretical underpinnings of the bourgeois family structure and hence in a way identifying the problem that was to be called the *zhenskii vopros* in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (first published in 1884). In a pseudo-anthropological account of the origins of society it was Engels' contention that the "world historical defeat of the female sex"[3] had occurred through the overthrow of mother-based lineage that had accompanied the transition of human society from nomadic to settled communities. The catalyst for this loss of power of the female sex was the accumulation of wealth that cultivation and property rights allowed: creating very powerful males in the community who might use their influence to secure a birthright based on themselves and their sons.

Since then according to Engels the commodification of marriage – in terms of the ability of powerful men to essentially buy wives and also more broadly to secure a father-based inheritance of accrued wealth – had arisen through a system of property ownership based on the family structure still existing contemporary to his life, the 'solution' to the question of the equality of women was thus the selfsame solution to the question of class antagonisms: the destruction of the system of private property (which might then naturally destroy the 'family' in its present sense).

Once this key is resolved (once a socialist society is achieved), Engels tells us we should expect that the family will cease to be the economic unit of society, private housekeeping will be transformed into social industry, the care and education of children (illegitimate or not) will become a public affair and society will see a gradual growth of unrestrained sexual intercourse, a loss of shame, the shrivelling of prostitution and the rebirth of individual sex-love. He does not see socialism as resulting in 'free love' or ending the notion of 'family', however. On the contrary, Engels believes that while unions between men and women should be readily dissoluble that "sexual love is by its nature exclusive" and therefore 'individual marriage' will still continue to exist[4] but now be based upon love rather than property rights.

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3 Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 37

4 For this section see Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Sydney, Current Book Distributers, 1942), Chapter 2[IV]. He does not at this point provide detailed reasoning behind the belief that 'natural' sexual behaviour would be monogamous, although he does insist that women are monogamous by nature and that the conditions that give rise

The publication of August Bebel's *Women under Socialism* (1879) predated Engels' *Origin of the Family* by five years, but has a more prescriptive focus to the question of women. Bebel expounds particularly in his final section "Women in the Future" how he expects future society to function:

> The woman of future society is socially and economically independent; she is no longer subject to even a vestige of dominion and exploitation; she is free, the peer of man, mistress of her lot. Her education is the same as that of man, with such exceptions as the difference of sex and sexual functions demand. Living under natural conditions, she is able to unfold and exercise her mental powers and faculties. She chooses her occupation on such field as corresponds with her wishes, inclinations and natural abilities, and she works under conditions identical with man's... In the choice of love, she is, like man, free and unhampered. She woos or is wooed, and closes the bond from no considerations other than her own inclinations. This bond is a private contract, celebrated without the intervention of any functionary... If incompatibility, disenchantment, or repulsion set in between two persons that have come together, morality commands that the unnatural, and therefore immoral, bond be dissolved.[5]

A central pillar of Bebel's almost libertarian approach to women's future role, as the above quote illustrates, is the idea that a socialist society will reassert the 'natural order' of society that has been in Marx's words "degraded" and in Engels' "inverted". Both Engels and Bebel identify the Middle Ages[6] particularly as a time where natural forces flourished before 'private property began to rule society', but less specifically theirs is a call for a 'return to nature' almost in the spirit of Rousseau. This point has ramifications, in turn, for their thoughts on the role of women in childbirth and child-rearing: both areas of life that were always 'naturally' the preserve of women.

In the area of childbirth, Bebel considers that although abortion has been commonly practised throughout history, the continued high rates of abortion when he was writing was "a public calamity" and that artificial abortion was a "dangerous

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to the 'individual marriage' would include preventing men from exploiting previous circumstances that allowed readily for adultery.

5 A. Bebel, *Women Under Socialism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 343-44.

6 This is partly based on a somewhat utopian assessment of the 'Age of Chivalry' as actually being a time of 'free love' and a lack of stultifying social inhibitions.

practice" that was a product only of women being forced into uncomfortable positions by the structure of bourgeois society and its artificial mores. From this position it follows that he considered artificial abortion to be unnecessary in a hypothetical socialist society.

If Bebel's approach is to be considered revolutionary[7], perhaps a section that detracts from it from a modern perspective is that, in natural terms, he does not think that women's faculties are the equal of men's:

> Woman is by nature more impulsive than man; she reflects less than he; she has more abnegation, is naiver, and hence is governed by stronger passions, as revealed by the truly heroic self-sacrifice with which she protects her child, or cares for relatives and nurses them in sickness.[8]

Bebel does not mention specifically, therefore, how future children are to be raised and does not take on the practical challenge of defining how domestic work and child-rearing might be conducted in the future. His general approach suggests, however, that while he wishes to significantly broaden women's horizons, he still sees their lives as more naturally connected with a responsibility to give birth to and raise children and does not believe that even when woman's potential is completely realised she might be as politically active and powerful as her male colleagues.

Engels and Bebel both took if not a theoretical then a 'scientific' attitude to the *zhenskii vopros*. Yet perhaps an even more influential (yet much more romantic) portrait of women in society was offered by the early revolutionary Nikolai Chernyshevsky. In Chernyshevsky's only novel, *What Is To Be Done?* (*Chto delat'?*, written during his incarceration in Peter and Paul Fortress in 1862) he writes a seemingly paradoxical 'utopian manual' for building a communalist or small socialist society and chooses 'new people' to fill it. His narrative describes the liberation of the novel's female protagonist, Vera, from her restrictive upbringing through a union with a young revolutionary named Lopukhov who marries her not under the terms of 'bourgeois monogamy' but rather as a sacrificial service. This sacrificial and platonic love is later complemented in the novel by Vera's second marriage to a man with whom she finds 'free sex-love' in Engels' terms. The novel is punctuated at times by

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[7] It was certainly progressive, but reflects quite a standard approach to women on the part of Social-Democrats of his age.

[8] Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, p. 121.

Vera's dreams of a glorious future socialist society of glass and aluminium[9], but the situation of Vera and Lopukhov as they create an urban commune is still related in a straightforward manner. The narrative, written by the journalist Chernyshevsky during his term of imprisonment in Petersburg's Peter and Paul Fortress[10] and only published in Russia in one abridged version in 1863[11] before being banned until 1905, switches abruptly between the central plot, details of communal administration (which make the novel appear like an accountant's ledger at times – the aim being to demonstrate how communal living might indeed not only be feasible but save money) and the emotional journey of Vera.

In narrating life in a commune, Chernyshevsky does not, of course, give details as to what an entire socialist society might look like. Whether or not, for instance, domestic work would become public as Engels suggests is not noted explicitly, nor is whether the sort of partnership that Vera and Alexander (her second husband) enjoy would be ubiquitous, but by the general nature of these 'new people'[12] we have the impression that any new society based upon their principles would see common ownership of what had hitherto been private duties: from cooking to cleaning to child-rearing. The importance of Chernyshevsky is not so much that he had a coherent ideological position, a scientific view of future socialist society or even a Bolshevik view (he had none of these), but that his work is both a vivid manifestation of the position of many socialists on the woman question and also that by its dissemination served to popularise such concepts[13]. Amongst those who were influenced by it perhaps none is more notable than Lenin who read it fives times in one summer and claimed it had 'reshaped him'. Lenin's own views of revolutionary asceticism and his

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9 As an aside, the choice of aluminium as a construction material for a 'dream society' very much roots Chernyshevky's work in the period from the mid 1950s to mid 1960s when aluminium was just starting to be produced commercially due to new advances in the metal's extraction. Prior to the invention of the Hall-Héroult process, however, aluminium was more valuable than gold, with Napoleon III said to have had a set of aluminium serviceware reserved for only his most honoured guests.

10 A location that was to see many revolutionaries and writers, including Gorky, Bakunin, Dostoyevsky, Kropotkin and Lenin's elder brother, Alexander Ulyanov, incarcerated over the years in some of the more squalid and trying conditions of the entire Tsarist prison system.

11 In the famous *Sovremmenik* (Contemporary) magazine, issues 3, 4 & 5 of that year.

12 For such is the subtitle of the novel: *What is To Be Done?: Tales of New People* (*iz rasskazov o novikh liudiakh*).

13 In a similar manner to the way the 'Decembrist wives' were popularised by Pushkin and Nekrasov.

attitude towards the role of women are no doubt two issues that were influenced strongly by Chernyshevsky's work[14].

Russian Society and Women

Of course much of the shaping of the 'woman question' not only in socialist circles, but also in Russian society at large came as a result of broad social changes and not simply as a result of theses handed down from on high by the likes of Chernyshevsky, Bebel and Engels. In terms of the liberalisation of Russian society, much of this social shift came under the rule of Tsar Alexander II.

Alexander's reign had started during the Crimean War – a conflict that in its prosecution as possibly the earliest instance of 'modern warfare' showed up some of the deficiencies in the far-from-modernised Russian state. The poor state of Russian infrastructure, held back by an economy based in large part on serfdom was one area seen by the ruling elite as needing urgent revision. Perhaps as important for women particularly were the new roles the female sex played in this modern conflict. For although famous nurses such as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale worked for the enemy, some 160 Russian nurses had also volunteered their services at the front[15]. A surgeon that had worked with them, Nikolai Pirogov, was moved by their service to consider a great resource in the Russian empire was being wasted and pushed for greater education for women such that they might more ably fulfil their duty to the motherland. Alexander II was unsurprisingly enamoured of this idea and approved an 1858 proposal to establish secondary schools for girls in his empire. By 1883 this move had resulted in three- and six-year schools for girls in Russia catering for some 50000 students – students now qualified for work as teachers and tutors. In terms of tertiary education, by the end of the 1850s some more progressive institutions – such as St Petersburg University – were allowing women to attend lectures and in 1867 one woman who had taken advantage of this opportunity, Nadezhda Suslova, had gone on

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[14] Frank opines that *What Is To Be Done?* "far more than Marx's Capital, supplied the emotional dynamic that eventually went to make the Russian Revolution" (J. Frank, "N.G. Chernyshevksy: A Russian Utopia", *Southern Review* 3 [1968], p. 68), making the work, according to Martin Amis, "the most influential novel of all time" (as discussed in his *Koba The Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million*, New York: Hyperion, 2002). Lenin, in homage to Chernyshevsky was later to use the same title (in Russian, *Chto delat'*) for his own revolutionary manifesto.

[15] B.A. Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 69.

to graduate as a Doctor of Medicine in Zurich, marking a first for women in European universities[16].

To make Suslova's achievement even more notable she herself was not of noble stock, but rather was the daughter of a serf. Alexander II's most significant reform had indeed been the abolition of serfdom in February, 1861. While the emancipatory effect of the tsar's proclamation was limited[17], socially it had a tremendous long-term impact. The increased freedom of the peasantry and their need to supplement peasant incomes combined with the beginning of the Russian industrial revolution, was to see cities like St Petersburg grow by over 200% in the 25 years prior to revolution[18], this exodus from the countryside to urban areas beginning in the emancipation period. Together with the urbanisation of the peasantry, Russia's proletariat therefore grew considerably (although was nevertheless only, pre-revolution, ever a single figure percentage of the population[19]) and the removal of so many former serfs from their feudal backwaters promised the opportunity of social enlightenment to Russia's most populous class.

Whilst the authorities frequently attempted to apply brakes to the rapid urbanisation and education of women that their policies had encouraged and conservatives such as Education Minister Dmitri Tolstoy tried to prevent women receiving university education, by the time of the birth of the first Bolshevik elite women, early pioneers had already forged potential paths for a new generation to negotiate as free, educated and even radicalised women. By the time Krupskaya married Lenin a peculiarly Russo-socialist archetype of the revolutionary wife had

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16 For this section see Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 70.

17 While former serfs became self-sufficient, their property was mortgaged by an intergenerational 49-year loan payable to the state and by one estimate, 42% of serfs received land insufficient to support their families. See N.V. Riasonovsky, *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 414 for the 42% figure.

18 M. Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881-1924* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 24.

19 Maurice Dobb states of the pre-revolutionary period that "less than 15 per cent. of the population lived in towns, and less than 10 per cent. derived their livelihood from industry" (*Soviet Economic Development Since 1917*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1972, p. 36), describing Leningrad and Moscow as "industrial islands" (*Soviet Economic Development*, p. 36). Nevertheless it is clear despite these low numbers just how many had come from the countryside and indeed still had links with it. Dobbs states: "According to an investigation in 1910, as many as two third of the factory workers of Petersburg, the capital, retained nominal ownership of some village land, and nerly a fifth of them returned to the village every summer." (*Soviet Economic Development*, p. 36). Michael Lynch (*Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881-1924*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992) gives more general figures based on the 1897 Russian census showing the population at that time were four per cent working class (*Reaction and Revolutions*, p. 10), but also notes that in the period from 1881 to 1914 the populations of both Moscow and Petersburg doubled to, respectively, 1.7 and 2.2 million (*Reaction and Revolutions*, p. 24).

been established and it is worthwhile understanding in more detail just what her characteristics were and how they had evolved.

Radical Role-Models for Women

Historically, perhaps the most prominent duty of a revolutionary wife (quite naturally given the need for a 'united front' of both sexes against the ruling elite) was to be faithful to her revolutionary partner. Although this should hardly be an unanticipated role assigned to women in a male-dominated society, the importance of faithfulness towards a revolutionary husband was certainly strengthened from the outset by the history of the Decembrist movement. When the Decembrists, a group of St Petersburg army officers who staged an abortive coup against Nicholas I in 1825 in favour of the introduction of a constitution, were sent into exile for their seditious behaviour there was no obligation for their wives to travel with them. Yet women such as Maria Volkonsky, Yekaterina Trubetskaya and Natalya Fonvizina did just that and became almost cult figures in the Russian intelligentsia for their actions. As Karen Rosenberg explains: "The images of once-privileged ladies washing floors, mending their husbands' linen and eating only kasha and black bread - for the first time in their lives - became a model of strength and self-abnegation for a later generation of more militant Russian women."[20] Amongst other works, these women's virtues were extolled by Pushkin in 'Eugene Onegin' and other shorter poems and by Nekrasov in his famous 'Russian Women', which takes the Decembrists' wives as its subject[21].

Again, considering the patriarchal nature of 19th Century Russian society, another required characteristic of the female socialist revolutionary that perhaps should go without saying was that she was to fight for the rights of all workers and not pursue an agenda that targeted in essence simply alleviating the plight of women. This meant, by definition, that a socialist woman was not to be a 'feminist' – her pursuit of revolutionary causes and the rights of workers to control the means of production was not to be diluted by a need to undertake reforms simply to redress the 'balance of repression' between working men and women. Not only would this make

[20] K. Rosenberg, "To Irkutsk With Love" (review of Christine Sutherland's *The Story of Maria Volkonsky and the Decembrist Exiles*), *The New York Times*, February 5th, 1984.

[21] The main female protagonist of 'Eugene Onegin', Tatiana Larina, is said to be based upon Natalya Fonvizina, while Pushkin makes numerous references to Maria Volkonsky in his works, also writing 'A Dedication' solely to her.

her guilty of 'reformism', but from a practical point of view resulted in serious dispute.

Russia's industrial revolution had brought about high unemployment and low wages with little labour regulation to prevent serious injury and overwork. With factory owners always wishing to improve production and lower costs, employing women workers – who were considered less prone to industrial action[22] and would work for lower pay[23] – was seen as an obvious path forward. A large percentage, if not a majority, of new employees in Russia's industrial heartland during the first decade of the 20th Century were, as a result, women[24] and the fact that this left many men unemployed was the cause of much internal division. Somewhat paradoxically therefore, the 'protection of women' through labour laws introduced at the turn of the century might have be seen on one level as a win for 'worker's rights' but actually also had the effect of addressing men's concerns about women taking their jobs[25].

The final definitive requirement of a female revolutionary was that she indeed was *revolutionary*. This was of course a characteristic to be expected in men as well, but certainly had consequences for women in revolution. Organisations like the Russian Women's Mutual Philanthropic Society (founded 1893) and the Russian Society for the Protection of Women (1900) with wealthy patrons ('gentry feminists') that performed charity work, together with political organisations like the Women's Equal Rights Union and the Women's Progressive Party (both founded in 1905) which promoted universal suffrage (under the existing system) were kept at a distance

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22 This is not, of course, to say that women were uninvolved in industrial action – according to Kollontai they led, for instance, the strike at Orekhovo-Zuyevo in 1885 that marked a watershed in mass industrial action in Russia and led to the passing of labour regulations by the government later that year.

23 Vera Bilshai, for instance, notes that even by 1913 in the manufacturing industry women's wages were only about half men's (V. Bilshai, *Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR*, Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo Politicheskoi Literaturi, 1956, p. 58).

24 It is possible to state this by a comparison of the total Petersburg workforce with the percentage of women claimed to be within the workforce. On women's participation at this time see particularly W.Z. Goldman*, Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*, pp. 9-10, H. Troyat *Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 92 and Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 95 (and chapter five in general).

25 That is Tsarist regulations on women's (and children's) working hours, pay and conditions had the effect of actually lowering the women-hours and earning capacity of the female sex and therefore necessarily raising the amount of labour available for men. This meant that in many cases it was against women's interests to campaign for their own 'protection' through such regulations, for by doing so they would only be restricting their earning capacity. Given the low per-hour pay typical of the factory environment at this time, not being able to work as many hours a week was a serious economic issue that faced many women.

by the more militant Bolshevik and Menshevik socialists[26]. Options for strikes or concessions that might obviate revolutionary zeal on the part of workers in favour of soft-core reforms were well and truly discouraged by Social-Democrat organisations while activities such as providing education or child-care for the sake of alleviating women's conditions alone were not part of the militant socialist creed. Where such actions were undertaken the benefit was thought to be the possibility of disseminating propaganda through education or building up emotional capital through assistance.

Thus for an early Bolshevik woman such as Nadezhda Krupskaya there was a form of guidebook in place, should she wish to follow it, a guidebook formed partly on the basis of 'scientific' socialist thinking about the status of women and their role in a new society, specifically the need to place above all other goals (such as sexual equality) the achievement of a victory for the proletariat, but also a guidebook informed by more historical-romantic notions of life as a revolutionary woman – from the inspiring story of the far-from-socialist Decembrist wives to the dreamlike portrait of Chernyshevsky's Vera[27].

As an examination of the lives of Bolshevik wives and the evolution of their role in Soviet life is undertaken in this and future chapters it is worthwhile to keep the prescriptive accounts of women's intended place and roles in a 'new society' in mind in order to evaluate just how well the Soviet Union under Stalin achieved the goals that had been set for it as an example of a 'socialist state' which had supposedly twice liberated the female sex, both from patriarchy and from class oppression. In simplified terms, a number of key characteristics of a 'socialist woman' can be set out now: she should be independent from her spouse, she should marry out of love, she should enjoy equality in the workplace, she should be sexually free although not promiscuous, she should no longer be burdened by the yoke of the hearth and her decisions in political terms should carry as much weight as a man's.

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[26] Both political organisations were considered 'bourgeois' in character, being founded and operated by middle and upper-middle class patrons, although the Equal Rights Union was still quite militant in its early years although more closely aligned with the Kadets (Constitutional Democrats). The Women's Progressive Party was anti-socialist, its leader Dr Maria Pokrovskaia considering strikes as being harmful to female interests most of all and considering that the socialist parties "like other political parties, were led by men, this only perpetuating male control and female passivity". See R. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 202.

[27] For more on the general development of feminism in tsarist Russia, see Edmondson's *Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984) which examines women's rights movements of the time.

The Pre-Revolutionary History of Kremlin Society

Before the establishment of the Kremlin community in 1918, there was no Bolshevik elite that was comparatively homogenous in terms of way of life, living conditions and indeed attitudes. The socialist community was fragmented – not only through the bitter factional struggles that had accompanied the emergence of the Bolshevik Party, but also necessarily by the radical and conspiratorial nature of pre-revolutionary struggle. Exiled in England, suppressed in Siberia and underground in Ukraine, what was to become 'Kremlin society' involved a very diverse group with different social backgrounds, different mentalities, different lifestyles and different goals.

To discuss the beginnings of the Bolshevik social elite, therefore, it is necessary to focus to some extent on individuals, for there is no homogenous group to be examined. In later chapters that discuss Soviet elite society under Stalin it will be possible to provide a more specific comparison of Bolshevik women as workers, ideologues and members of society, but for an examination of Bolshevik elite 'proto-history', the stark contrast between experiences together with the relatively small number of Bolshevik wives involved in revolutionary circles makes it more sensible to focus on the lives of key individuals rather than undertake any sort of examination of group conditions.

For reasons of the availability of materials, their active revolutionary roles, their considerable participation in life after the Revolution and their contrasting pre-revolutionary lives (one more firmly tied with the revolutionary movement abroad and one that remained in the Russian Empire) this evaluation of pre-revolutionary women will focus particularly upon the lives of two noteworthy wives: Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya and Yekaterina Davidovna Voroshilova. In particular, early pre-Revolutionary lives for these women will be evaluated according to four categories – their early influences, the nature of their involvement in revolutionary work with their husbands, the nature of their marriages and the division of labour within revolutionary partnerships and finally the work of Bolshevik elite women in their own right in this pre-revolutionary period.

Early Influences

In class terms, Nadezhda Krupskaya was the daughter of a member of the Russian Cadet Corps and a member of the hereditary nobility. Her mother, Yelizaveta, was amongst the more independent women of her day, having been educated in one of the

early secondary schools opened under Alexander II before finding work as a governess prior to her marriage. Nadezhda's father, Konstantin, had been stationed in the Russian section of partitioned Poland, taking some time off to pursue a law degree in St Petersburg. It was to be Poland where the young Krupskaya was to spend her early years, however, and where a kernel of anti-tsarist, anti-capitalist feeling was to take root in her.

When still young, Krupskaya's father was removed from his post and prosecuted by the authorities on charges related to his perceived sympathy with Polish nationalists in the region under his care. Krupskaya writes about this period in her autobiography under the heading 'How I Came To Hate the Aristocracy'[28]. With the family needing to find work, they moved back to Russia. Her father now out of the government service, he took work as a factory inspector, which gave the young Krupskaya the opportunity to develop an enmity towards another group of the tsarist elite – its factory owners. From her father, Krupskaya learned of the abuses of workers and their exploitation in the factories of Russia's industrial revolution and her sympathy towards the working classes was no doubt strengthened by her association with workers' families and her recreation times spent with their children[29].

If Krupskaya's autobiography is to be believed, the most vivid impressions from her childhood were of a distinct realisation of class antagonism, marginalisation and oppression and an early hatred of the Russian Empire with its suppression of Polish freedom, landowners with their dominance over the peasantry and factory owners with the harsh conditions of their workers. Indeed, where the poor community that a writer like Gorky grew up in might have formed a man with a nostalgia for a simple peasant's lifestyle and practices, the development of Krupskaya on a faultline of the Russian class system – constantly moving between noble and peasant society, from play with the children of poor workers to audiences with their bourgeois bosses – seems to have made her all the more willing to view society as the result of class struggle and to perceive injustices everywhere.

Krupskaya's 'education by impressions' was thus highly conducive to creating a young revolutionary, but her more structured education was also of a similar vein. While based in Pskov region following her father's work, Krupskaya was to meet her first 'teacher' – Timofeika – an eighteen-year-old woman who read her students

[28] Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* vol. 1, p. 10.
[29] Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* vol. 1, p. 13.

Nekrasov and told them many 'bad stories' about landowners. As if these stories needed any confirmation for the headstrong Krupskaya, her impressions were confirmed when a local landowner invited Krupskaya and her classmates to tea, having the bedraggled servants serve the family dogs before Krupskaya and company[30].

Krupskaya's final early teachers were the books she read as a child with such voracious appetite. Her favourite poet was Nekrasov and she would read and re-read his 'Red-nosed Frost' and 'Russian Women' which were her favourites. Russian Women was a hymn to the Decembrists and McNeal comments that "the adult Krupskaya was to praise Nekrasov again and again, quoting him with greater warmth than Marx"[31]. Whilst she had certainly read Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* in her youth (before meeting Lenin), her other great literary love besides Nekrasov was Lev Tolstoy – a writer devoted to promoting the idea of the spiritual superiority of the simple peasant – a progressive, but certainly not a Marxist.

Judging from Krupskaya's early influences then, even while it is remembered that she wrote of her early life from the position as a Bolshevik 'first lady', she was certainly positioned more prominently than most of her contemporaries to become a radical. And her sex was no barrier to participation in radical circles – despite the fact that the great majority of revolutionaries were men, there was still a hard-core group of women involved in the profession, represented indeed in the fact that 21 of 43 life sentences for terrorist and revolutionary activities in the 1880s were handed down to women[32]. However at a time before the establishment of the Russian Social-Democratic Party and with her strongest influences being Tolstoy and Nekrasov, it perhaps would have been less surprising for Krupskaya to become a member of People's Will, a Tolstoyan devotee or a *Narodnik*.

In the early 1880s, Kruspskaya returned with her father to St Petersburg and was enrolled in a *gymnasium* (grammar school). Her father died, however, in 1883, obliging Krupskaya and her mother to tutor students from their home to make ends meet. Krupskaya's school was quite progressive. She attended with, amongst others, the principal's daughter – a future wife to the reformist Peter Struve, and made friends

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30 For 'Timofeika' see Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* vol. 1, p. 12. Details of Krupskaya's tea with a factory owner, her father's persecution, her first teacher and her playing with the factory workers' children are all to be found in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* vol. 1, pp. 10-16.

31 McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 16.

32 See p. 155 of R.H. McNeal "Women in the Russian Radical Movement", *Journal of Social History* 5, pp. 143-63.

with two sisters whose mother was reputedly a member of The People's Will. They were responsible for lending her more radical literature. Another *odnoklassnik*'s brother had been exiled for belonging the The People's Will, while yet another was to become involved in progressive, if not revolutionary, politics by marrying the liberal economist Tugan-Baranovsky.

By the time Krupskaya graduated in the late 1880s, she had been tutoring privately for several years and was still strongly drawn to the views of Tolstoy (whose works, indeed, she received as a graduation gift) particularly from a pedagogical perspective. It was his essay "Luxuries and Labour" that was to inspire her asceticism more than Chernyshevsky's novel had. In 1887 she wrote to Tolstoy requesting work in correcting manuscripts for the great author's venture to release good cheap editions of world classics for the masses and received back a copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo* which she dutifully corrected and returned.

Seemingly unsatisfied with simple tutoring and becoming ever more disillusioned with the practical consequences of the Tolstoyan approach to reform, the young Krupskaya decided to take the opportunity to further her education and find out about more practical ways of changing the society about her. She was aided in this search by the increasing, but still limited, opportunities available to women.

In 1878, philanthropic Bestuzhev courses[33] had been opened for women in Russia, and while many – including her contemporary Kollontai – still found it necessary to move abroad to pursue their education[34], Krupskaya enrolled in the Autumn of 1889 at Petersburg university in the physical-mathematical faculty, sitting in also on history lectures[35], although judging from her notebooks of the time[36], much of this study was centred around botany and the sketching of plant life. While she had certainly shown ability in academic life (receiving straight 5s upon graduation from school[37]), Krupskaya never demonstrated a particular fondness for institutionalised

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[33] Later officially consolidated into the 'Bestuzhev Higher Education School for Women' and then, following the revolution, included in the Women's School at the St Petersburg [Petrograd] State University.

[34] In 1889, two thirds of the women enrolled at the Sorbonne were from Russia (Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, p. 30) – a testament both to the demand for women's education under the tsar, but also to its scarcity.

[35] See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 26.

[36] RGASPI, *f.* 12, *op*. 1, *d*. 3.

[37] A mark of '5' being equivalent to an 'A' in the Western system. Her future husband, in contrast, was awarded 5s and 5+s by no less a man than Aleksandr Kerensky (R. Service, *Lenin*, p. 60), while Stalin generally received an average mark of 4 (See Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait*, chapter 2 *passim* and p. 31 in particular).

education (somewhat ironic given her later occupation) and dropped out of university before the year was over.

Krupskaya's continued involvement in higher education might not have resulted in much formal tuition, but it did put her in touch with many of the more radical elements of the student population. The less regimented circles of Petersburg – havens of dissent and free thought in the tsarist empire, which had been populated by everyone from the Decembrists, to Dostoyevsky, from Chernyshevsky to Herzen[38] to Lenin's elder brother convicted for his role in the assassination of the tsar some eight years earlier – were more inviting for her with their emphasis on direct action. And while the circles of Dostoyevsky's day had been inclined to discuss liberal reforms, and those around the 1870s had been more dominated by *Narodnik* and nihilist thought, by the 1890s recognisably more socialist *kruzhki* were becoming more common. Krupskaya found herself invited to one such group in late 1889, and by the early months of 1890 had retired to the country with a host of Marxist tracts including *Capital*. Returning home she studied Engels' *Anti-Dühring* in German, but also read the much more accessible *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* at the time.

It is unclear just to what extent Krupskaya understood and internalised these works – she was never wont to refer to theoretical matters, especially concerning economics. She was apparently more affected by Marx's depiction of harsh working conditions in book three of *Capital*, than by his theoretical framework (ie. Marxism), however, although the process of reading the book as a whole was later described by her as like drinking 'living water'.

While Krupskaya thus devoted herself for a brief period to studying the theory of Marxism, her private reading and public devotions always reflected a woman who was fundamentally more practical than theoretical, yet more romantic than scientific. Perhaps through the influences of the 'To The People' movement and Tolstoy, she still regarded education as the primary tool of the revolutionary and wished to participate in it herself. Despite her acquaintance with Marxism, she never abandoned her love for the works of Nekrasov and Tolstoy – both of whom had a much more romanticised and spiritualised view of Russia and the poor. Even as she had retired to the countryside to study *Capital*, Krupskaya filled her notebook with idyllic, perhaps

[38] Writers of *Chto delat'* (What Is To Be Done?) and *Kto vinovat?* (Who Is To Blame?) respectively.

even clichéd bourgeois, sketches: the contented wanderer, the countryside cottage, a poor peasant girl and her child and the rather more middle class setting of a young girl inside with her puppy[39].

Krupskaya's romanticism by no means engulfed her practical character, however. After concluding her study of Marxist literature and her sortie into university learning, in 1891 she found work at a large factory school in the poorer industrial suburbs of outer Petersburg. The school's full title was literally the 'Men's Sunday School of the Porcelain Parish Guardianship' (*Muzhskaia voskresnaia shkola farforovskago prikhodskago popechitel'stva*) and was sponsored by the porcelain magnate Vagunin. Krupskaya worked here on Sundays and also two nights a week lecturing in arithmetic, history and Russian literature. Despite the presence of inspectors, armed with the knowledge that many such schools became the hotbeds of industrial unrest, Krupskaya managed to teach and agitate at the school for some five years and was quite professionally successful. She was elected to the principal's advisory committee and in 1893 became director of the school's evening sessions. A whole building full of teaching materials was made available to the factory workers at the school.

Krupskaya by the mid 1890s had thus been teaching and tutoring for a decade and had studied herself both formally at the only tertiary institution open to women in Russia and informally in one of the earliest Marxist circles in the imperial capital. Her outlook on life was progressive and as her experience grew, gravitated from Narodnik and Tolstoyan positions towards a more scientific – that is, Marxist – approach to socialism. She thus was, by the time she first met Lenin, already self-moulded into the model of a young revolutionary woman.

Krupskaya's early influences were thus attributable in large part to the liberal, educated and free-thinking nature of her parents and their circumstances, both of which conspired to raise Nadezhda Konstantinovna in their image – as an educated, radicalised young woman with a distinct appreciation of unresolved class antagonisms in her native land. For another Bolshevik elite wife – Yekaterina Davidovna Voroshilova – it was to be her exposure to the ethno-cultural problems of tsarist Russia that was to play a more substantial role in her conversion to a revolutionary.

[39] RGASPI, *f.* 12, *op.* 1, *d.* 3, *ll.* 3, 4, 15, 17, 18.

Yekaterina Davidovna Voroshilova was born Golda Gorbman in 1887, the daughter of Khana Ioynovna and David Leibovich, working-class Jewish parents in Odessa. Her father, a practising Jew, ran a grocer's shop in a fairly central location[40], which suffered somewhat from his willingness to continue selling on the Sabbath. Golda's early childhood was indeed marked early on by an understanding of just what it meant to be a part of Jewish society – ostracised, denied political rights and subject to different laws and rules and customs, both self-imposed and sanctioned by the tsar. With neither the will nor money of her parents to enrol her in school, for the first eight years she found herself on the streets all day instead of undergoing any sort of tuition. While her brother Aaron was enrolled at a local Jewish school, Gorbman's mother considered literacy was not necessary for a young girl.

With access to a kind-hearted woman who would school her at home for free, and then a beneficent family who could find Golda a place at a good local school, Gorbman's future was looking more full of opportunity. The Goldendakh family who were so kind to Gorbman had family on the wrong side of the law which led her to start to question: "I knew that in prison there were thieves and brigands, but the sister of my teacher could not have been like that. So why then were they in prison?"[41] The answer was that three of their number were Narodniks – part of an early Russian revolutionary movement aimed at bringing enlightenment (which ultimately meant desire for revolutionary change) to the peasantry and countryside.

At age ten, Gorbman was enrolled in a four-year professional academy through the goodwill of the Goldendakhs. At this time, four years of schooling was a rather standard amount for that minority section of society who were fortunate to receive tuition, but not amongst the top few per cent that were enrolled in *gymnasia* – given Gorbman's lowly birth, such schooling was more than she could have reasonably aspired to. Her technical college taught the basics of Russian, Yiddish, Russian history and arithmetic, while devoting afternoons to building up her skills in a profession: Gorbman was taught the skills required of a seamstress. Again at school, the young Gorbman was exposed to classmates who also had links to Russia's nascent revolutionary movement, but perhaps one of her greatest ideological influences at this

[40] On the corner of ul. Troitskaia and ul. Pushkinskaia, which is in the *Tsentral'nyi* region of Odessa, only two kilometres from the coast.

[41] Voroshilova's Autobiography (RGASPI, *f*. 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 432), p. 12. Page numbers of Voroshilova's autobiography referenced are as marked in the typewritten manuscript and do not quite correspond to the *list'ia* of RGASPI.

time was literature. As a young teenager, Gorbman was led through Griboedov, Gogol's *Revizor*, and pieces by Gorky by her literature teacher, who the class decided was in fact a revolutionary[42]. Although childhood gossip about teachers is seldom true, for once the students had a keen eye: Voroshilova was to meet her teacher by chance some two decades later in Petrograd at the Bolsheviks' 7th Party Congress in 1917[43]. In later years, the school hosted evenings attended by recent alumni with readings from other classics and these included readings of Nekrasov's "Russian Women" amongst others – one of the works that had so inspired Nadezhda Krupskaya. Voroshilova takes time to point out the female role models to whom she was exposed in her autobiography: "We especially studied female icons – Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Yelena (*On The Eve*) by Turgenev, Goncharov's Vera (*The Precipice*), the figures of Nekrasov's women and Ibsen's Nora (*A Doll's House*)"[44].

In taking some of these models to heart, Gorbman appears to have formed for herself a character somewhat more independent and forthright than that of many of the girls around her. By the time of graduation, she had already fought for her own educational opportunities, been exposed to a society quite distinct from the close-knit and religious corridors into which she had been born and by a young age found considerable reason to be distrustful of authority – from the chains that social conventions imposed on Anna Karenina, to the restrictions tsarist law imposed on her Jewish family, to the incompetence of the empire's bureaucracy as portrayed in *Revizor*, to the gaoling and persecution of family members of benefactors and friends, Gorbman had hardly been exposed to those things in life and in print that might have set the platform for years of quiet contemplation and work on behalf of Russia's 'little father', the tsar.

In 1902 then, at age 15, Gorbman finished her schooling and was guided into work at a women's dressmakers in Odessa. She initially received three roubles a month for this work, a pittance considering even the average child's wage was around five roubles at the time[45], though Voroshilova does not complain of this paltry wage in her memoirs and was soon earning the much more standard salary of 10-12 roubles a month. In 1903 she also decided to continue her education, enrolling in some limited night courses. Such tuition for workers was frequently sponsored by

[42] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 22.
[43] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 22.
[44] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 23.
[45] Troyat, *Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 88.

revolutionary groups (as in the example of the schools run by Lenin and Krupskaya in Petrograd), and in the crackdown on anti-tsarist forces in early 1905 Gorbman's night school was dissolved[46] along with thousands of others around Russia – providing yet another reason for an ever-extending antipathy towards the authorities to grow within her.

As Gorbman makes clear, by 1905 – the year she was to join the Social Democrats – she had already been exposed to revolutionary ideas and circles for the last few years. Even without a clear revolutionary mentor, the young Voroshilova could not escape the revolutionary spirit rising in Russia:

> "At the age of fifteen to sixteen it was difficult for me and my girlfriends at school to understand and interpret the struggle of the working class. But the end of school in 1902 coincided with the rise of the revolutionary movement in Russia when the workers came out to demonstrate with their economic and political demands, when protests and demonstrations of workers took place right throughout all southern Russia, when Odessa was enveloped by them"[47].

Gorbman had had limited exposure to revolutionary ideas through a classmate, whose brother had been arrested for possessing revolutionary materials, some of which were read by his sister to her girlfriends, but she had (unsurprisingly) neither read Plekhanov nor Lenin by early 1904 when, as "the result of the romantic mood of the semi-intelligent youth of that time"[48], Gorbman joined the Socialist Revolutionaries with her girlfriends[49]. With her brother having left to seek work in the more promising economic environment of Europe, Gorbman's new-found revolutionary tendencies served to now distance her also from her father with whom there was a falling out: he found her new ideological leanings unpalatably and unacceptably seditious.

With revolutionary tendencies little more nuanced than sympathy with the idea of 'death to authoritarianism', economic independence and a distancing from her family and Jewish background, Gorbman ushered in the year of Russia's first

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[46] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 27.
[47] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 29.
[48] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 29.
[49] Voroshilova lists her official involvement with 'other parties' on her private student card (RGASPI, *f*. 74, *op*. 1, *d*, 420, *l*. 4) as being with the SRs from 1905-1909, though she describes at least joining their 'circles' in her memoirs as beginning in late 1904 (Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 32).

revolution, 1905 in Odessa – the combination of place and year made famous by the events of the Battleship Potemkin, later dramatised by Eisenstein. The General Strike of that summer turned the city, in Voroshilova's words, into a 'military prison', and her two main revolutionary girlfriends were arrested. The search of one of their rooms, on 22 August 1905, turned up the mimeograph on which they had been printing pamphlets. A penultimate dispute with her parents occurred after the release of the Tsar's October Manifesto – a document that in Gorbman's view too easily convinced her gullible father that the tsar was capable of necessary reform and the revolutionaries unreasonable.

A more significant event for the population of Odessa – a city of approximately four hundred thousand residents, of whom over a third were Jewish – occurred in October, 1905, however in the form of a pogrom. It had the immediate effect of Gorbman 'bunkering down' with the Jewish community who fled from the streets and into their cellars to escape the rampage that killed some 500 people and ended only after the destruction of over 1600 Jewish-owned properties[50]. The pogrom's aftermath and interpretation was to be the final matter that drove Gorbman and her parents apart: David Gorbman considered that it had been brought about by overzealous anti-tsarist forces and their upsetting of the status quo, while his daughter considered the persecution of Jews as precisely an element of the tsarist order which pointed to the need to overthrow the establishment.

In December 1905 a true crackdown in Odessa began as the city came under a form of martial law and the Okrana continued to investigate revolutionary activities as part of an operation aimed at 'mopping up' dissent. Golda Gorbman, together with her revolutionary friends, decided the best course of action was to now leave the city for climes more hospitable, if not to their revolutionary activities, then at least to their freedom from prison. Gorbman moved to Nikolaev some time in 1906, though the move did not help her escape the tsarist authorities. On 2nd October, 1906 her residence was searched and a week later[51] she was taken to the police station and detained. Gorbman's main crime was to be in possession of revolutionary pamphlets:

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[50] For details on the pogrom see, for instance, Robert Weinberg, "The Pogrom of 1905 in Odessa: A Case Study" in John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza [eds.], *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 248-89.

[51] The span of one week between the date of the official search of Voroshilova's residence and her detention in custody is somewhat puzzling: whatever opportunities to flee from arrest that were given to Voroshilova by this period of time gap, however, appear to not have been taken up.

256 copies of "To All Workers" and 95 brochures with other titles[52]. Further raising suspicions, she had been living in Nikolaev under the forged passport of a 'Sara Osipovna Marshak', the name Gorbman initially gave to police. This passport had not actually been acquired for revolutionary purposes, but simply because she had left home from her estranged family without her own.

After being tried and sentenced to four days' house arrest by the court of the Nikolaev *Mir*, Gorbman was transferred back to Odessa where a more hefty, but still comparatively lenient, six months' prison (fortress) detention was imposed by the Odessa courts. Initially chastened upon her release by a wish to never be imprisoned again, Gorbman registered legally in Nikolaev, but was soon on the move again, acquiring another illegal passport in Odessa *en route* to Sevastopol and then Feodosia. There she acquired work as a seamstress despite a lack of relevant papers, reunited with an old revolutionary colleague from Odessa, and continued on with SR activities. By mid June, Gorbman was arrested again, following a search that uncovered more illegal pamphlets at her residence. Her police records of the time suggest a woman becoming increasingly canny about her activities: her date of birth changes in police records from 1886 to 1888[53], a false name is always initially given to police and where possible she refuses to cooperate. By her third arrest, the police protocol ends as follows: "I do not belong to a political party and was not occupied with this activity; the literature I have is legal and was obtained in bookshops in Odessa – which exactly, I do not remember. I have been here for approximately one month. I do not wish to answer your questions. Refused to sign the protocol in the presence of witnesses"[54].

Gorbman was now becoming a more hardened revolutionary, skilled in the obstruction of police inquiries and refusing to divulge information. This, of course, did not prevent her from being sentenced again and she and a female revolutionary companion were to be exiled to Archangelsk for a period of three years, beginning in November 1907. Despite the fact that one could consider this perhaps Gorbman's first serious sentence, aside from the geographical location of Archangelsk and her period

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[52] Voroshilova's typewritten autobiography puts this 'other title' total at 950 (Autobiography, p. 38), and it is not clear if this is simply a typographical error or something more sinister. The typewritten police documentation (RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *ll*. 1-5) refers several times to 95 brochures, however, which appears the more likely number.

[53] See RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l.* 1 as compared to *l*. 30ob. Voroshilova later gives her year of birth consistently as 1887.

[54] RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 30ob.

of exile, conditions were not to be nearly so wretched as they had been. Amongst other concessions, the prisoners of Archangelsk region were allotted a monthly stipend to get by on similar to that which Gorbman might have been earning had she been in full-time employment. In addition to this, Gorbman petitioned each year for permission to sit *gymnasium* exams in the region and was successful in such attempts – thus continuing what would be a lifelong commitment to pursuing self-improvement through education. As if conditions in Archangelsk could not be any more favourable for revolutionaries, this site for political exiles finally brought Gorbman in touch with Marxist literature and its agitators. Through a contact of her girlfriend, she came to know of Plekhanov's and Marx's works and the nature of dialectic materialism.

Whilst Voroshilova and Krupskaya came from very different backgrounds and though accounts of radicalisation are unique to each individual, there are nevertheless some key similarities between Voroshilova's and Krupskaya's stories. Both came from families that experienced some form of marginalisation, coming to see the authorities and system in place as corrupted and baleful. Both depended upon the early influence of teachers with 'dangerous political views' and witnessed the persecution of friends and colleagues who pursued anti-tsarist activity. Both were comparatively well educated and note their exposure to key 'liberal' (if not necessarily 'revolutionary') texts such as Nekrasov's poetry. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, both Krupskaya and Voroshilova were engaged in covert and illegal agitation before they came to study Marxism and show signs (as will be seen in later chapters) of never quite adopting Bolshevism as a distinct credo, instead often adopting notions more compatible with their liberal, pre-Marxist learnings. In both Krupskaya and Voroshilova's lives it was to become their meeting and partnership with their husbands that made the most radical transformation upon them, however.

Meeting Husbands, Evaluating Marriages

The 24-year-old Vladimir Ulyanov arrived in the empire's capital in August 1893, just as Krupskaya was assuming a senior role at the Sunday school, continuing to live and tutor on Stariy Nevsky Street with her mother and attend Marxist circle meetings. The young Lenin first met Krupskaya in February, 1894 during such a meeting at the house of Krupskaya's friend, Klasson, yet they did not pursue any sort of serious relationship. They did not meet again until the end of 1894, despite the fact that Lenin

had also on occasions given lectures on Marxism to industrial workers in those suburbs of Petersburg in which Krupskaya was based. Lenin called at her house a number of times over winter, although it is unclear that they discussed anything much at these meetings, which were entirely of a business nature. Other than these encounters, and a brief session of all the members of the circle on maintaining secrecy, they did not see each other for the first two years that Lenin was based in Petersburg.

By the time of their first regular meetings – as fellow members of the newly-formed radical 'Group of Social-Democrats' (the group's other famous figures including Krzhizhanovsky and Martov) – Krupskaya had abandoned her tutoring in favour of work as a copyist at the state railroad administration, a job that had some advantages for her revolutionary colleagues. The year was 1895, Krupskaya was now 26 years old and someone who had turned her back on bourgeois personal relations in favour of an ascetic existence as a professional revolutionary. Seemingly destined to be an 'old maid', a figure pitied by contemporary society (not that this was a concern to a true female revolutionary), her next 26 years were to find Krupskaya as 'first lady' in the world's first socialist state and a living model for the new socialist woman. The catalyst for this all was the arrest of the members of the Group of Social-Democrats.

The imprisonment of Lenin, for instance, might seriously have compromised his abilities to associate with fellow members and agitate for the cause of revolution if he could not maintain his links to the outside world. But if he were to take a 'fiancée'[55], Lenin would be able to boost the number of visitors he was allowed by one and also improve the group's revolutionary organization through having a reliable contact with the outside world. To take a false fiancée was not an especially difficult move for revolutionaries who, after all, disdained the bourgeois marriage process so saw no dilemma in falsifying such relationships. According to Anna Ilichna, Lenin's sister, Krupskaya proposed herself for such a position while Lenin was imprisoned, but Lenin turned her down precisely because she was too politically involved. This seems likely, as by the time Lenin was released from preliminary detention *en route* to exile, Krupskaya had herself been caught by the authorities, finding herself in prison in

[55] Indeed, according to one prisoner of the time, Ivanov-Razumnik, at least one of the inmates had three 'fiancées' visit him at once.

August 1896[56] after continuing her work of disseminating political pamphlets whilst Ilyich was detained.

When, then, in February 1897 Lenin was released from prison, a little bit fatter and a little bit further through the preparation of his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Krupskaya was already behind bars. They had not met since 1895, had never been any sort of 'couple' and if Anna Ilichna's account of her brother at this time is to be believed, Krupskaya would not have even been Lenin's first choice as a wife[57]. Circumstances were changing, however, from Lenin's initial refusal to countenance Krupskaya as a 'fiancée'. They were now both serving time and Lenin was to be exiled to Siberia for a term of three years. The young revolutionary, who had made use of the services of his sister and mother and others like Krupskaya, could not count upon their immediate help in exile, and would require someone to help him dictate, revise and edit the texts of his pamphlets and revolutionary propaganda. In short, he needed a secretary.

According to Elena Stasova's memory of an account given by Krupskaya to her shortly before Lenin's widow passed away, it was Lenin and not Krupskaya that had brought up the issue of a 'fiancée'. Nevertheless, it was not until Krupskaya was first finding out the details of her place of exile and Lenin had already been based in Shushenskoe[58] for a few months that the idea was once more firmly upon the table. According to Drizdo[59], Lenin had declared his 'chemical love' (in McNeal's terms, playing on the use of milk letters) for Krupskaya through an earlier missive delivered from prison, but even as late as December 10, 1897, the issue of Krupskaya as a fiancée remained unconfirmed as Lenin makes clear in his letter to his mother[60]. By January 8th of the next year, however, Lenin was writing to the authorities requesting that he be joined in exile by his fiancée Krupskaya[61], and by the time of the first surviving letter of Krupskaya to Lenin's mother of February 15th[62], Krupskaya

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56 Indeed, the tsarist authorities didn't manage to ascertain that Lenin and Krupskaya were 'professionally linked' at the time of her arrest, but would surely have done so if she was listed as his fiancée.

57 There is reason to suspect that at least on a superficial level he found her colleague Apollinaria Yakubova more attractive. See, for example, Service, *Lenin*, p. 114.

58 Shushenskoe was a small Siberian village, some 400 km from the regional capital Krasnoyarsk.

59 Vera Drizdo as cited in McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 53.

60 There was however an understanding amongst Lenin, his mother and sister that Krupskaya would most probably follow him into exile. See Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. XXXVII, p. 142.

61 Which, drolly, might lead Krupskaya to be considered as Russia's first mail-order bride.

62 The tenor of this letter implies that a correspondence between the two had already been in progress for some months and notes specifically a letter already sent to Anna Ilichna on February 9th.

thought it possible that her exile to Ufa province might be transferred to 'Shushye' and after applying to this effect received back an affirmative response from the authorities dated March 10, 1898.

The approval for the transfer came together with the similar approval for the transfer of Zinaida Nevzorova[63] and also with an attached mandatory condition – that the parties involved actually make good their betrothal upon arrival. Lenin proposed the condition be accepted[64], to which Krupskaya reportedly replied: "*Nu, chto zh, zhenoi kak zhenoi'*"[65] ("Well, if it's to be as a wife, then as a wife it will be"). Krupskaya undertook the arduous journey to exile in Siberia with her mother-in-law in May and was married to Lenin in the required Orthodox Church service on July 10th, 1898.

In one context, therefore, it seems easy to classify the marriage and ongoing relationship of Krupskaya and Lenin as one founded entirely on convenience and not on love, a marriage founded on practicalities and dictated by circumstances. Lenin's future affair with Inessa Armand, their perpetual childlessness and indeed Krupskaya's ongoing insistence that the couple were never in love to the exclusion of their devotion to revolutionary tasks might all be put forward as evidence that there was little meaning attached to the relationship. Yet, in the context of their union this would be a false position. Both Krupskaya and Lenin had renounced the bourgeois notion of marriage when they became revolutionaries. Both too had privately abandoned the pursuit of 'individual sex love' as it detracted too much from their pursuit of revolution. Krupskaya had been brought up as a girl admiring the spirit of the Decembrists and their portrayal by Nekrasov, while Lenin was transformed by the text of *What Is To Be Done?* and also guided by the eponymous hero in Turgenev's short story *Andrei Kolosov* – a man who is considered 'exceptional' for loving without emotion or sentimentality. Thus then it is not unreasonable to ascribe a degree of romance to the circumstances of the union of Lenin and Krupskaya. One was living out the life of a new breed of Decembrist wives, following her husband into exile,

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63 The future wife of Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, about whom more will be discussed in the following pages.

64 He writes to his mother on May 10, 1898: "N.K. has been confronted with a tragi-comic condition—she must get married *immediately* or back to Ufa! Since I am not at all disposed to allow that, we have already begun "bothering" the authorities (mainly for identification papers, without which we cannot get married), so that we shall be able to marry before the Fast of St. Peter." Lenin, *Collected Works*, XXXVII, pp.171-172.

65 This is according to the account of Vera Drizdo, Krupskaya's future secretary.

while the other had put petty sentimentalism aside like a Lopukhov or Kolosov and united with his partner for the sake of a 'greater cause'.

The Krzhizhanovskys

To throw another complicating factor into the equation, remembering that the Krzhizhanovskys shared a similar marriage story to Lenin and Krupskaya, it is interesting to compare the two married couples' relationships.

Gleb Krzizhanovsky had met Zinaida Nevzorova, a teacher at the same Petersburg Sunday school as Krupskaya, in the early 1890s[66]. A conspiratorial group of Social Democrats met at the Petersburg apartment of Nevzorova and her sister to hear Lenin speak to them and this was the first time Krzhizhanovsky and Lenin were to meet[67]. By education, Krzhizhanovsky and his future wife had similar backgrounds – at the age of 22 he became a graduate of the Chemistry Department of Petersburg's Technological School[68], while in the same year Zinaida graduated from the Chemistry Department of the Bestuzhev Higher School for Women, moving to Nizhny Novgorod to seek work. Gleb followed her there, seemingly for a combination of revolutionary and employment reasons, rather than out of love[69].

Zinaida was thus no stranger to the revolutionary movement when she met her future husband and the police files on her bear testament to this fact. They noted that her father had been a government official banished back in the 1860s[70], and that she had been involved with "extremely undesirable people in Petersburg", attempting to continue her conspiratorial ways in Nizhny Novgorod by "trying to buy gelatine suitable for operating a hectograph"[71]. She became more closely surveilled than Krupskaya, or even Krzizhanovsky with even one her students being a police informant[72]. When Nevzorova returned again to Petersburg she was blacklisted from teaching as a result of her police record (at the same time, no such ban was enacted against Krupskaya) and included along with Lenin and Krzhizhanovsky as members

66 V. Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1985), p. 54.
67 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 57.
68 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 59.
69 See Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, pp. 60-61.
70 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 61.
71 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 66.
72 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 67.

of the anti-government group requiring arrest[73]. While Zinaida was not arrested at the same time as Lenin and Krzhizhanovsky, she was still, therefore, an integral part of the Social Democrats' movement in Petersburg – indeed she was responsible for taking charge of their funds[74].

When Krzhizhanovsky had already been exiled to Minusinsk he gained word that Zinaida had also been arrested and was due to be exiled and suggested at this point she report as his fiancée so that the group might stay together[75]. In the case of the Krzhizhanovskys, however, their marriage was not purely one of convenience as it had been with Lenin and Krupskaya – not only had the pair spent time together socially and politically prior to their exile, but there seems little doubt that Gleb Krzhizhanovsky had already developed a special affection for Nevzorova. As his biographer explains:

> "When she agreed to join him in exile Gleb went out of his mind with happiness. He wandered in the snow-covered fields, his heart bursting with indescribable emotions, and sang snatches of odd tunes to the birch trees."[76]

Gleb and Zinaida spent much of their work time in Minusinsk working together to study and correct a translation of Marx's Capital[77]. While Zinaida was thus certainly politically active and had been almost as important to the organisation in Petersburg as her husband, she did nevertheless act as a homemaker in many regards – adopting, for instance, the role of a female host when guests came to stay[78].

There are, therefore, significant similarities and differences in the relationships of Lenin/Krupskaya and the Krzhizhanovskys and perhaps this can be seen no more markedly than by comparing their correspondence in the early years. Letters, as a medium generally sent from one address to another, are not a particularly common form of communication between husbands and wives of this era (or of other eras, for that matter) on account of the fact that they were rarely separated by great distances.

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73 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 89.
74 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 131. Another indication of the seriousness of Nevzorova's involvement in anti-capitalist circles is the fact that she apparently kept these funds at home, thinking that to put them in the bank would be unMarxist (p. 131).
75 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 132.
76 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 132. Kartsev's biography is unsourced, although from its content it is clear that it relies in part upon archival sources (such as those to now be found in RGASPI), but also upon oral accounts by both Krzhizhanovsky and his wife.
77 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, pp. 140-141.
78 Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovsky*, p. 141.

This was certainly the case for the two couples in Siberian exile, living in the same house as their spouse. Lenin's preserved correspondence with Krupskaya is severely limited[79], but when fragments survive they are quite business-like. The first known letter from Lenin to Krupskaya begins: "For a long time I have been trying to get around to writing you [*tebe*] about affairs [*delakh*], but all sorts of circumstances have intervened. In the turmoil here I live rather well…", before going on to read as a 'purely political document' in the words of Krupskaya's biographer[80]. Krzhizhanovsky's correspondence is considerably more vibrant, however. In their archived epistles, dating from 1902 to 1915[81], Gleb Maximilianovich has any number of names for his spouse, including 'My Precious Friend', 'Darling Bunny!!' and 'Darling Bunnykins!', 'Darling Brighteyes!'[82] and several 'darlings' followed by diminutive forms of the name Zinaida. On a number of letters and envelopes the future head of Gosplan has drawn an animal that can be assumed to be his bunny-wife, the three 'fingers' on each of her outstretched hands reaching towards the sun. A simple comparison of newlywed correspondence, therefore can at least bring the conclusion that Lenin and Krupskaya had a less 'tender' relationship than many of their colleagues, even those that had married into revolution.

Gorbman, the future Voroshilova, had a different experience of marriage again to that of those seemingly 'forced into it' through the circumstances of internal exile. She was to meet her husband while already in internal exile in Archangelsk, not long after her first acquaintance with Bolshevik-style revolutionary ideology. Voroshilov, a worker from the Donbass region, agitator amongst Lugansk working class, already an escapee from the tsarist exile system and attendee at the Stockholm and London Social Democrat Party congresses (where he had met Lenin) met his future wife in December 1909, and they were married the next year.

Their marriage, however, was not formalised which meant that come Gorbman's release from exile in late 1910 she was still officially a single Jewess,

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79 Lenin's collected works contain only 5 documents from 1919, while after Lenin's death, Krupskaya retained only one telegram from him in her possession (McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 84).

80 For McNeal's translation of the letter and his characterisation of its further contents as 'purely' political', see *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 85.

81 Krzhizhanovsky's letters to his wife are in RGASPI, *f.* 355 *op.* 1 *d.* 114, while his wife's letters back are in RGASPI, *f.* 355 *op.* 1 *d.* 115.

82 In the original Russian: 'Dragotsennaia moia druzhok', 'Milyi krolik'', 'Milyi krolishik' and 'Milyi yasnoglazik''.

denied the right to stay outside the Pale of Settlement in Archangel province. Parting from Voroshilov, therefore, she travelled south by train back to her parents and siblings in the Ukraine. There her father lay dying and her family was fed largely through the earnings of her sister Ida, whom Voroshilova anachronistically observes: "worked from morning until late into the nights sewing for the daughters of the kulaks of surrounding villages"[83]. Meanwhile, Voroshilov – with whom Gorbman had been keeping contact through infrequent letters – became silent for months, before turning up back in Archangel prison. Eventually, some two years and pages of autobiographical material later, Kliment Yefremovich was released from prison and from White Sea exile and travelled south to meet his wife and live with her in freedom for the first time in the Summer of 1912.

The Revolutionary Marriage and Division of Labor

Since in pre-revolutionary times there was no liberation of the working class from the yoke of capitalist oppression (let alone any serious promotion of gender equality) and men like Voroshilov and Lenin were seen as the partner more capable of changing this, it seemed to naturally fall therefore to wives to support their husbands in their radical pursuits rather than to act as equals within a marriage, even though this position was inconsistent with socialist principles. Somewhat ironically, therefore, the pre-revolutionary Marxist marriage tended to result in very similar gender roles to those of the system it wished to triumph over. To make matters more ironic still, while the future was to be partnerships formed on love alone, in contrast to the bourgeois marriage of the 19th Century, many revolutionary marriages as we have seen were formed largely on the basis of every consideration but the affective.

The newly-married Lenin and Krupskaya essentially divided their log hut in Shushenskoe with Lenin in one room and Krupskaya and her mother in the remaining section. During their working hours, Krupskaya would either study Marxist literature[84], take down dictations of Lenin's works or write letters – mainly back to

[83] Voroshilova's Autobiography, p. 66.

[84] Curiously enough, Krupskaya notes *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* as being the first two works she and Lenin studied together (N. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, London: Panther Books, 1970, p. 34). One must question whether these foundational works were revisited by Krupskaya partly out of some belief of Lenin that his wife was not sufficiently *au fait* with the material to be found in them.

her husband's family. Lenin in turn would engage himself in study or dictation or even provide legal advice to the locals[85].

While Krupskaya played the role of secretary to the revolutionary, there was little danger of her becoming a 'domestic slave' in this arrangement. Not only had she brought her mother with her to Siberia[86], but this revolutionary couple had taken in someone who was, to all intents and purposes, a servant – described by a perhaps more objectionable euphemism in the translation of Krupskaya's memoirs. As she narrates:

> In October a girl-help appeared on the scene. This was thirteen-year-old Pasha, scraggy, with pointed elbows. She soon picked up the whole gamut of household duties. I taught her to read and write, and she adorned the walls with my mother's instructions: 'never, never, spill the tea'. She also kept a diary, where such entries were inscribed as: 'Oscar Alexandrovich and Prominsky called. They sang a "sing". I also sang'[87].

As much as the subtext of such an account suggests that the couple took advantage of a young girl and had Lenin's mother-in-law chastising her into performing as a 'proper servant' (and not being clumsy), it could just as well be said in their defence that this servant received employment and education by Lenin and Krupskaya. Interviewed following the revolution, the servant recalled only that Lenin stumbled over her in the dark and that the family had taught her to wait on their table[88]. According to Soviet mythology, at any rate, Lenin was always a lover of

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85 He was, after all, a former student of St Petersburg University's juridical faculty.

86 There is no explanation in any of the sources either as to why Krupskaya 'invited' her mother to Shushenskoe, nor why her mother accepted such a proposal. As they had lived together alone in Petersburg for over a decade since her father died, as Krupskaya was their sole child and her mother had had some health complaints (Krupskaya writes of her being treated for pleurisy in early 1898), presumably it was seen as the most sensible option for all when the young Krupskaya was ordered into exile.

87 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 36. Robert Service talks of a fifteen-year-old servant having been employed by Lenin for the coming of his fiancée and future mother-in-law (Service, *Lenin*, p. 118), although this clearly conflicts with Krupskaya's published account. Service's reference for this whole section of text is RGASPI *f.* 12*, op.* 2*, d. 34*, *l.* 13. McNeal gives the servant's full name as Pasha Yashchenko and puts her pay at two and a half roubles a month, plus boots (*Bride of the Revolution*, p. 74). To put this in perspective, Troyat states of wages at this time that a young girl under 15 years working in a Moscow factory might expect a monthly salary of 5 roubles (Troyat, *Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 88), so the wages of Lenin's servant seem neither miserly nor extravagant for a provincial girl with food and board provided. Oscar Alexandrovich and Prominsky were two workers also exiled to the same village.

88 This is McNeal's account – *Bride of the Revolution,* p. 74.

children and quick to joke or play with them, such that presumably the servant girl could have chosen no finer couple to sell her labour to than Lenin and Krupskaya.

The kitchen at Shushenskoe was primarily staffed by Lenin's mother-in-law and their servant. It was not until the couple were in exile abroad in Munich, Krupskaya without her mother to cook for her for the first time[89], that Lenin's wife became responsible for all meals. As she puts it: "I decided to put Vladimir Ilyich on home-cooked food". Krupskaya does not give any indication of the extent in her memoirs of her culinary skills, while Soviet folklore somewhat euphemistically proclaimed she could cook 'twenty different types of omelette'. Lenin was less respectful than either Krupskaya or folklore: he told their landlady they had 'roasts every day', referring to the fact that Krupskaya constantly scorched their oatmeal[90]. Krupskaya was hardly alone amongst revolutionary women in her lack of skill in the kitchen, however: Vera Zasulich[91] described that when English ladies asked her how long she cooked her meat she had replied: "If I am hungry I cook it ten minutes; if I am not hungry, about three hours."[92] These pre-revolutionary women, whilst often forced to play a complementary role to more powerful men around them, certainly saw their place as being outside the kitchen and the nursery and did not see anything particularly embarrassing in not having great culinary skills.

As for the nursery though, Krupskaya and Lenin were both disappointed from the first year of marriage that they could not control their own means of production. While Krupskaya took great delight in later years in working in the field of pedagogics she was never to have children, despite later admitting that she had very much wanted them. As she writes to Lenin's mother in 1899: "As far as my health is

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89 This was not to last for long. Yelizaveta Krupskaya quickly joined the couple again in Munich, then returned to Petersburg again towards the end of the Munich months, later again joining Krupskaya and Lenin in London in mid 1902.

90 M. Pearson, *The Sealed Train* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), p. 42.

91 It is worth reflecting that Zasulich, born some three decades before Krupskaya and her husband, had co-founded the Emancipation of Labour group and been pre-eminent in Social-Democrat circles on her own terms. Where Krupskaya and the Bolshevik wives of this thesis found their fame and position through marriage, 'self-made' women – like Zasulich, Armand, Kollontai, Luxemburg and Zetkin – were to become a rarer and rarer breed amongst the Party's top theoreticians after the revolution. Indeed, one has only to look at the list of prominent *Iskra* agents in Russia at the time to appreciate how many women were involved in the cause. Of twelve main *Iskra* representatives cited by Krupskaya and still living under the watchful eyes of the *Okhrana*, five were women: Zinaida Krzhizhanovskaya (Snail), Maria Ulyanova (the young bear – Lenin's sister), Lydia Knippovich (little uncle), Lyubov Radchenko (who continued to work for *Iskra*, even after her husband gave up such work), and Yelena Stasova (with the less than flattering codename 'the Residue').

92 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 53.

concerned, I am quite well but as far as concerns the arrival of a little bird – there the situation is, unfortunately, bad; somehow no little bird wants to come."[93]

The division of labour in the early married life of the Voroshilovs is much less clear than that of Lenin and Krupskaya. Voroshilov, once freed, commenced revolutionary work at a factory in Alchevsk while Gorbman (whose own voice and work recedes strongly towards the end of her narrative) makes it unclear what her duties and work actually were at this time, other than listing her employment in later documents as being 'various work' from 1910 to 1915[94]. In December, 1912 Voroshilov was again arrested and kept in Lugansk prison without the right to meet with his wife for the next six months. Upon his release from prison matters were still complicated, for husband and wife were still in an unrecognised union and as such Gorbman was not free to travel with him beyond the Pale of Settlement into exile. Given a choice between life apart and conversion, Gorbman chose to become Russian Orthodox (changing her name to Yekaterina Davidovna) and was then married in an official Orthodox ceremony in November, 1913. When Voroshilov's period of exile finished in 1914, the couple returned to the Donbass region, which is where Voroshilova's autobiography ends.

As a text, Voroshilova's autobiography is an interesting one. One might wish for her to have instead spent time analysing her post-revolutionary years, save for the fact that from the time of the beginning of her relationship with Voroshilov, Yekaterina Davidovna seems to find it difficult to talk much of her own life, or even of her husband's in any objective, deep manner. The young Voroshilova is allowed to have rich relatives, is permitted to have been naïve enough to have joined the SRs, may admit to having never read Lenin before her exile – but such options are not available to Voroshilov the revolutionary or Voroshilov the husband, whose status must be preserved as an eternal Marxist-Leninist in writings.

What is bizarre about Voroshilova's notes about her first years with her husband is the lack of any discussion of the passions that motivated them or drew them together: Voroshilova does not mention the word love or the notion of falling in love, she does not refer to Voroshilov as arousing revolutionary convictions within her, of him being devoted to her, or standing out from the crowd physically or in terms of personality. One might even say that there is a deliberate omission of talk of love,

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[93] McNeal's translation, *Bride of the Revolution* p. 72. Lenin, *PSS*, LV, pp. 409-410 (original).
[94] RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 10ob.

commitment and the personal life of Voroshilova and her husband in the autobiography because such things were seen to be incompatible with the notion of the revolutionary marriage and of Voroshilov as being fully committed to the working classes and not to 'family'. Voroshilova is more than happy to dwell on the comradely relationships of her husband at the time, to explain at times negatives words and attitudes of others towards him, but never paints herself in a 'wifely' light in relationship to him. Not being with Voroshilov during his exile is 'difficult', but not 'lonely' for Voroshilova, while her decision to convert is painted as entirely rational, rather than motivated by loving sacrifice and commitment.

In these respects, Voroshilova's autobiography continues in the tradition of texts such as Krupskaya's (and to a lesser extent, Ordzhonikidze's) in portraying a union unmotivated by bourgeois notions of love (or even by the revolutionary passion of works like *What Is To Be Done?*) but rather rationally entered into by both parties for the sake of revolutionary prudence, where although the wife has been independently active in revolutionary circles prior to her marriage, marriage and revolution see her role quickly converted to the sustaining and legitimisation of her husband's political legacy. It is somewhat of an extraordinary achievement that this process was ongoing for Voroshilov for almost five decades after her marriage to Kliment Yefremovich. In her pre-Great War autobiography she touches upon some of the early sacrifices she made for the union – her travelling to be with him and her conversion – but it is in Voroshilova's diaries of the post-Great Patriotic War period that Voroshilova's role as a subservient even doting wife and mother is most noticeable and this will be discussed further in later chapters[95].

Women's Own Revolutionary Work

While primarily functioning almost as a private secretary to her husband, Lenin, Krupskaya did herself pursue a number of personal projects. Whilst still in internal exile, Krupskaya began writing her first individual tract entitled 'The Woman

[95] Again, following on from discussion of Soviet diaries in the introduction, it is notable that many Soviet diaries – particularly of the 'elite' – contain similar elements to Voroshilova's (ie. a lack of criticality and a focus on official events as witnessed from a 'correct Soviet' perspective, with a lack of detail about personal and family life. It is often interesting, therefore, to compare letters between family members with diaries as the two often complement each other in their approaches (that is, letters can often not fail to provide the information about family and relationships that may be excluded from diaries).

Worker'[96]. It is an interesting, if not important work and illustrates well two main points – that Krupskaya's pre-marital revolutionary romanticism appears to have been tempered somewhat by Lenin's more 'scientific' outlook by 1899, and that from the very earliest days of female involvement the woman's question appears to have been a question given over for women to indulge in, seemingly not considered important enough to be the focus of a great work by a distinguished Russian revolutionary[97].

As if to confirm Krupskaya had not abandoned her influences completely, the tract begins with a quote from Nekrasov, but her tone is decidedly Marxist. In subsequent sections, Krupskaya focuses on the woman as a member of the working classes, the place of the woman worker in the family and in the raising of children. Her target audience appears a poorly educated one, unsurprisingly, and Krupskaya takes her time to explain simple terms to them. She also steps outside 'strict Marxism' at times, taking swipes at husbands and male workers as a group (and not prioritizing, therefore, the class nature of the oppression of women over the gender divide). But in conclusion, Krupskaya makes clear there is only one route for the working woman to resolve her problems – through solidarity with the revolutionary and with her male colleagues: "Political struggle – this is the path by which workers can obtain an actual improvement in their positions. In the struggle for the upholding of better working conditions, for political freedom and for a better future, working women strive hand in hand with male workers."[98]

While Krupskaya took dictation and wrote letters for the most part at Shushenskoe, it was not really until their period of European exile that Lenin – now involved in a larger Russian émigré community – came to draw upon his wife's administrative talents more fully. Based in Munich and now with the support of Axelrod and Plekhanov, the revolutionaries abroad planned to begin publication of a new revolutionary newspaper *Iskra*[99] and develop a more secretive revolutionary

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[96] Somewhat of a pleonasm in the original Russian; *Zhenshchina-Rabotnitsa* literally translates as 'Woman - female worker'. The brochure, too subversive to be published directly in Russia, was smuggled abroad by Lenin and published by *Iskra* in February 1901. See Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie Sochineniia.* vol. 1 pp. 71 – 102.

[97] That is, the role of women in society was not seen as a serious discussion point for male revolutionaries but a side issue that was best dealt with by women who themselves were more likely to be marginalised as a result – not being regarded as able to give authoritative statements on areas of policy outside 'women's issues'.

[98] Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie Sochineniia.* vol. 1, p. 102.

[99] Its name being a reference to the Decembrists, who said to Pushkin that the spark (*iskra*) of their revolt would "kindle a flame". See chapter three on women and work for a more detailed examination of this period.

community that would not be so plagued either by internal division or by *Okhrana* surveillance[100], with Krupskaya responsible for liaison with Russian agents.

When, despite their best efforts, contacts in Russia began to dry up, however, the supply of money to the exiled revolutionaries from the motherland also became a more important issue. Lenin could no longer rely upon financial assistance from his mother's pension and by January 1917 was complaining that his nerves were no good[101]. Krupskaya once again bought horsemeat rather than chicken or beef to feed the couple[102]. She also decided to embark on a *Pedagogical Encyclopedia* at this stage, a departure from purely Marxist work designed to raise funds, although finding publishers in war-racked Russia was still a very difficult task.

That Krupskaya was attempting such a work suggests two things, however: one, that she had turned her attention to pedagogy and now considered herself some sort of authority in the area (despite having never taught children and having not taught in a school setting regularly for some two decades) and secondly that she did not foresee the coming revolutions of 1917. She and her husband indeed scarcely believed early news reports about the tsar's abdication in February (March, new style), but when they were confirmed, preparations were begun in earnest to return from exile to the country now run by a *de facto* partnership of the Provisional Government of Prince Lvov and the Soviets of 'workers and soldiers' deputies'. Krupskaya suggested that she remain behind to work through various administrative issues[103] (such as the safe packaging of the exiles' archive[104] and the securing of her mother's ashes for repatriation). Lenin was to have none of it, however, and they both boarded the now famous 'sealed' train[105] from Zürich station through Germany, and on through Scandinavia to their homeland. On the train were some thirty-two various 'socialists

[100] Indeed, Lenin and Martov had both been picked up again by the tsar's police in their short time in Petersburg, between internal and external exile and were extremely mindful of surveillance of the Social Democrats as a result.
[101] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 235.
[102] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 236.
[103] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 256.
[104] It was this same archive of documents, somewhat bizarrely, that was to be the chief reason for Bukharin's trip to Europe in 1936 accompanied by his wife – his final journey abroad.
[105] A somewhat metaphorical 'sealed train', that in fact encompassed days of travel by unsealed trains on different lines and carriages along with a steamer journey.

and anarchists'[106], including the Zinovievs, Armand, Karl Radek[107] and Grigory Sokolnikov amongst the more orthodox Bolshevik figures.

Arriving back in Russia, Krupskaya was urged by Ludmila Stal to make some comments at Finland Station agitating 'the working woman', but all words had left her[108] (at least this is what she claims – more likely Krupskaya simply felt not up to the task of giving a rousing speech, not having any particular oratorical skills or practice). Her husband instead gave a speech at the station, which he developed the following day in his famous April Theses. A hearsay account of Krupskaya's reaction to Lenin's speech at the station on the night of April 3, 1917 has her scared by the violence of Lenin's call for revolution, exclaiming: "it seems that Ilyich is out of his mind"[109].

There was little time now for long conversations about revolution between husband and wife, however, as while they still took some time to walk around Petrograd, both were ensconced in revolutionary activities, although for Krupskaya, a return to Russia saw a downgrading of her duties. With the exiled Bolsheviks now united with their Russian counterparts, there was no longer a call for multiple secretarial positions and in the allocation of positions following Lenin's return, Yelena Stasova formally undertook the role of Party secretary, continuing duties that she had been involved in during the exiles' absence. McNeal suggests that Lenin's failure to secure this position for his wife meant a loss of face for Krupskaya and notes that she was never fond of Stasova[110] and did not think her as suitable a candidate for the role. Krupskaya in her memoirs plays down any such idea but still states that being involved in a minor role in the Secretariat 'bored her' without any 'definite duties'[111] and she decided to give up her role there in favour of educational work in the Vyborg district.

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[106] As British telegrams about the train ride termed them. Importantly, the passengers on the journey back to Russia were many and varied, consisting of quite a few that were almost hostile to Lenin ideologically. See Chapter 5 of Pearson's *The Sealed Train*.

[107] Who did not travel the whole way to Russia.

[108] Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 295.

[109] Memoirs of George Denicke, as cited in McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 171 and described by McNeal as "plausible", not least because Lenin had been withdrawn on the trip back from Switzerland and had not elucidated much of this April program to his wife. The theses were, of course, looked upon with shock by many more famous Bolsheviks, such as Kamenev and Zinoviev, so it would be no great surprise that they did not enjoy the immediate approval of Krupskaya.

[110] See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, pp. 169-171.

[111] Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 299.

Husband and wife met infrequently and did not always live together during this inter-revolutionary period. Krupskaya devoted herself to educational matters, first again as a teacher and later, after being successfully elected to the city Duma as a representative of Vyborg district, as the head of the city's new public education section. The Duma, elected under the authority of the Provisional Government, was certainly not a revolutionary body, and Krupskaya now contented herself with improving educational facilities, establishing playgrounds for Petrograd's children and work-time classes for its adults under this bourgeois democratic authority. As McNeal points out, Krupskaya comes across in much of the panegyric literature depicting this time as a sort of social worker-cum-"weepy sentimentalist" and as such as the "psychological opposite of Lenin"[112]. It is worth noting that even by the revolution, Krupskaya was far from the stubborn, ruthless and dogmatic figure her husband had become: she also spent the inter-revolutionary days of 1917 as a chairperson of the Vyborg branch of the "Committee for Relief of Soldier's Wives" – a cause that hardly had resonance with the ideals of 'defeatism' – taking over the post from Nina Struve, her school friend and husband of Peter, a man whose ideals themselves had little connection with Lenin's.

In terms of her pre-revolutionary working life therefore, Krupskaya's professional life largely revolved around her husband's or at least was forced to play a subservient or secondary role to her the professional life of Lenin. Not only was she a capable worker when called to be, but from the point of view of maintaining power and influence within Bolshevik organizations, facilitating Krupskaya's involvement in key administrative areas allowed Lenin to keep key tasks 'within the family'. When the circumstances allowed it, however (or indeed, when through lack of funds they promoted it), Krupskaya proved keen to pursue her passion for pedagogy, an area in which she proved not to share the same Bolshevik ruthlessness as her husband. While Yekaterina Voroshilova did not appear to have either the same drive to pursue her own passions or indeed the administrative importance to the Bolshevik cause that Krupskaya exhibited her early working life, like Krupskaya's, also was one of support and subservience to the work of her husband.

[112] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 176.

Other Lives

While this chapter has been mainly concerned with documenting 'Bolshevik marriage', and in particular the pre-revolutionary situations of Voroshilova and Krupskaya, as was mentioned earlier, early Bolshevik society was far from homogenous in geographic or even ideological terms. For this reason, as an introduction to the state of post-revolutionary Bolshevik society it is worth surveying some notable and often exceptional marriages from the period prior to the Russian Revolution.

The young Trotsky, for instance, had married a young revolutionary, Aleksandra Sokolovskaya, and lived in prison and exile with her from 1899 to 1902. Although the couple appeared close and had two daughters in this time (Nina in 1901 and Zina the following year), their exile ended differently to Lenin and Krupskaya: Trotsky escaped alone to Europe and his wife (who had endorsed the escape) ended up separating from him in marriage and in geographical terms. The couple continued a friendship, but the marriage was no more and their children, who remained in Russia, were to be brought up by Trotsky's parents[113]. It is worth comparing this situation to that of Lenin and Krupskaya if only to illustrate just how easily couples might fall apart in the maelstrom of internal and external exile: Lenin and Krupskaya certainly displayed some commitment to remain together despite the strains that exile, the *Okhrana* and even Inessa Armand placed on their relationship.

A year after escaping abroad, Trotsky met Natalya Sedova, the woman that was to become his next wife, at a Parisian art exhibition. They appear to have enjoyed their life in the French capital[114] and the couple travelled on European city to European city much like most revolutionaries, Trotsky having two more children – Lev and Sergei – during this period. Krupskaya's account of life in exile (written in 1924 and published two years later in 1926) makes no mention of Sedova and this is somewhat strange because she was also involved in the organization of *Iskra* and the

[113] This was, however, to prove no salvation against their eventual repression.

[114] Contemporary sources are weak, but Sedova fondly reminisces about their first years together in her letter of September 3rd, 1933 to Trotsky when she was again in Paris for health reasons. There is no extant correspondence of the Trotskys available prior to the 1930s. Trotsky's correspondence, including the letter cited above, can be found in the Trotsky Archive of Houghton Library at Harvard University.

couple lived in London together during the same period in 1903 as Lenin and Krupskaya[115].

Also in internal and then European exile was Anatoly Lunacharsky and his wife Anna Aleksandrovna. Lunacharsky had been arrested in 1899 as a member of the Moscow Social-Democrats and exiled East. There he met Aleksandr Bogdanov[116] and his sister Anna whom Lunacharsky married in 1902. Lunacharskaya travelled around in European exile with her husband, including to Capri where she had a falling out with Gorky's wife. She was, like her husband, a dynamic and literary-minded figure and a writer. Her satirical work *Gorod probuzhdaetsya* ('The City Awakes') was published in Moscow in the late 1920s, while an earlier, and quite bland work – *Uchitel'nitsa* ('The Teacher', or perhaps more appropriately translated as 'The Governess' given the text) – remains typed and unpublished in the archives[117]. Like the wives of Lenin, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Trotsky, Anna Lunacharskaya was bound to her husband by revolution and involved with him in revolutionary work.

Settling down in Geneva, Krupskaya and Lenin were eventually joined by colleagues who had also been arrested in Russia or otherwise found it necessary to flee. Another prominent couple in this setting was Grigory Zinoviev and his wife Zlata Lilina[118] (Zina Zinovieva). Lilina, now pregnant with the couple's first child, Stepan, had been a long time supporter of the Marxist cause, having first met Lenin

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[115] While by the time of publication Krupskaya might have had serious political reasons for not mentioning her connections to Trotsky, at the time of writing in 1924 there is reason to suspect that Trotsky was a revolutionary figure with which she was closer than most (see, for instance, Lih and others' account of the Eastman Affair – a matter that will be discussed in more detail later (Lars Lih, Oleg Naumov and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin's Letters to Molotov,* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 18-24).

[116] Bogdanov has been a thus far unnamed participant in many of the internal Bolshevik wranglings mentioned already in connection with Krupskaya. The main initial source of contention between Bogdanov and Lenin was in their approach to the Duma, newly established after the 1905 Revolution. Bogdanov, Gorky and Lunacharsky favoured complete withdrawal from it, becoming known as *otzovists* (recallists) as a result. These three major thinkers were all lecturers at a revolutionary school on the isle of Capri (later moving to Bologna), for which Lenin's Longjumeau school was to be a rival, although Lenin had largely 'defeated' *otzovism* and reclaimed some control in the party following the 1909 Paris congress at which he was given control over the new organ *Proletarii*.

[117] Lunacharsky's second wife also has a text in the archives, while his first wife went on to be involved in the Commissariat of Enlightenment. For the text of *Uchitel'nitsa*, see RGASPI *f.* 142, *op.* 1*, d.* 848.

[118] Lilina was involved in the publication of *Leningradskaia Pravda* as well as of the pamphlet *Soldaty Tyla* about women's work during and after the war.

some 6 years earlier at a Bern café where Ilyich was giving a speech[119]. She had joined the Party in 1902 and was to work as an editor for *Rabotnitsa* magazine in later pre-revolutionary years. Like Krupskaya, Lilina had joined the cause and quickly married into it and by the end of the 20th Century's first decade, both couples were living in the village of Longjumeau near Paris and enjoying daylong bicycle rides together through the countryside with their husbands.

Lilina, born Zlata Bernshtein, was to become known for her strong views and domineering personality in the post-revolution years. Gorkiy's wife described her as 'the conqueror'[120] for her unswerving position on the issue of polytechnical education (she was a member of the collegium of the Commissariat for Enlightenement in 1919 when the debate on technical education was at its height and supported the broad measures of Lunacharsky) and despite her unpopularity, she kept her position after Zinoviev's fall from grace, though she was eventually expelled from the party along with her husband in December, 1927. Her brother, Ilya Ionov was to become the head of Leningrad's state publishing house.

Another famous sister and wife, born Olga Bronshtein, was soon to follow the Zinovievs into exile with her husband. Her brother, Trotsky, remained in Petersburg, but her husband, Lev Kamenev saw the need to flee to Europe. United with the Kamenevs, the Zinovievs now preferred more leisurely pursuits, much to the annoyance of the more active Lenin who now dubbed his group of walkers (including his wife, but now no longer the Zinovievs) 'the hikers party' (alternately the 'anti cinemaists' party) or, mindful of the heritage of the Kamenevs and Zinovievs, the 'anti-Semitic' party.

Olga Kameneva was, like Zina Zinovieva and Nadezhda Krupskaya, to become part of the Commissariat of the Enlightenment after the revolution, first as the head of its theatrical department (1918 - July 1919) and later as head of the Moscow's artistic-educational sub department. Being head of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) from its establishment in 1925 until her removal in early 1928[121], Kameneva held a prominent position amongst the Bolshevik

[119] Pearson, *The Sealed Train*, p. 91.
[120] S. Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, p. 46.
[121] Fitzpatrick (*The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, p. 304) puts the date of her removal at 1929, though she was removed in February 1928 following a Rabkrin report that found her work unsatisfactory (L. Stern, "The All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and

'intellectual elite' and enjoyed the company of many prominent Russian artists. She desired to be a 'first lady' of the country according to Zalesskii, built around herself a 'literary salon' and was considered by contemporaries as 'self-satisfied and narrow-minded'[122]. Following her work in VOKS, Kameneva held the post of President in the 'Friend of Children' society and even survived the downfall of her husband initially, being eventually shot on 3rd October, 1941 on Beria's orders in Medvedev Forest, Orel[123].

That time was, however, still almost two world wars away from the comparatively young couples ensconced in émigré Paris of 1909. In Paris, Lenin and Krupskaya became part of an extended four-person family, consisting of the revolutionary couple, Lenin's sister Maria, and Krupskaya's mother Yelizaveta, but a fifth column that might put this arrangement in jeopardy quickly emerged, going by the name of Inessa Armand. The details of Armand's pre-revolutionary life need to be discussed at this point, both because she was a revolutionary woman in her own right, but also because her relationship with Lenin and Krupskaya has important ramifications for any understanding of the complexities of Bolshevik pre-revolutionary marriages.

Inessa Armand

Inessa Fyodorovna Armand had been born in Paris to a mother, formerly a resident of Moscow, and a father who worked in the French theatre. She was brought up in Moscow by her aunt and grandmother following her parents' split, and by age 17 was actively pursuing the man who was to become her first husband – Alexander Armand – from a rich family which owned several estates around the Pushkino area[124]. Born with an international background, Inessa also benefited educationally from the formative influences of her governess aunt and socially from the rich cultural life that her husband enjoyed. By 1893, a year Krupskaya was struggling to make ends meet, living with her mother in Petersburg and developing as a Russian socialist, Armand was developing her life as a Russian socialite, attending the plays, operas and ballets of Moscow, becoming part of the 'artistic avant-garde set' and spending nights in the

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French Intellectuals, 1925-29" in *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 25, no.1, 1999, p. 104).

[122] Entry in K. Zalesskii, *Imperiia Stalina* (Moscow: Veche, 2000), p. 209.

[123] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 348.

[124] M. Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress: The Life of Inessa Armand* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 7.

family's city house if she and her husband could not make it back to their country residence[125].

Armand was also exposed to the seamier side of Russia's premier city, however. Her husband, Alexander, toured the poorest areas of Moscow with his wife in tow as a member of the Moscow Region Zemstvo and the sight of the homelessness, starvation and poverty of Moscow's slums seem to have inspired the young Armand to take some action typical of the 'bourgeois charity' of the day – first by adopting a child from the area and then by starting a school for local peasants and Armand family employees[126].

Ten years into her marriage, the twenty-nine year old Inessa had not grown distant from her husband, but had nevertheless formed an attachment to his younger brother, the eighteen-year-old Vladimir. Alexander, her husband, was surprisingly accepting of Inessa's shift of affection and brought up their three children as Inessa and Volodya eloped to the Neopolitan coast. Inessa returned to Moscow with Vladimir, pregnant with his child but then left again, this time for Switzerland with her children but without her new love, perhaps in an attempt to distance both brothers from the quite unseemly situation and to give her time to think about her future. It was here in the mountains near Lausanne and Montreaux that she started reading *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* – the opus that Lenin had penned with his wife's assistance while in Shushenkoye exile – and she also attended a lecture by the Bolshevik Anatoly Lunacharsky at this time[127].

Returning to Russia, Armand reunited with her young lover, who had also pledged support for the Social Democrats in her absence, and established police surveillance over himself in the process. Armand moved out for a time, living with her children and an SR at another Moscow address to avoid police scrutiny. She participated in protests during the heady days of the Moscow uprising of early 1905, and following the assassination of the governor-general of Moscow, Grand-Duke Sergei, her residence was raided by the police in the early hours of the morning. SR literature of her tenant was found, her revolutionary activities were known of in some

[125] Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress*, pp. 13-14.
[126] Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress*, pp. 14-15.
[127] Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress*, pp. 27-28.

limited manner by the *Okhrana* and the young woman and mother of four was taken into police custody as a potential terrorist[128].

Armand was charged under Article 126 of the criminal code for belonging to an organization seeking 'the overthrow of the existing social order' and placed in solitary confinement for a time, finally being released from prison some five months later. Inessa had found prison a drain on her health, but her lover Volodya had contracted tuberculosis when confined and once freed the couple departed for abroad as a form of convalescence. Armand had not halted her revolutionary activities, however, and upon her return she was soon arrested again and now sentenced to three years exile in Russia's Far North. Inessa escaped her exile, travelling south hidden amongst a group of Polish émigrés back to Moscow, where she was forced to live a life of seclusion, being, after all, a fugitive from the law. Meanwhile, her Volodya (who had initially accompanied Inessa into exile, but could not stand the severe cold), had been living abroad once more, his health failing.

By January 1909, news reached Inessa Armand that Vladimir Armand's health had taken a turn for the worse and she decided to go to him. She arrived at his Nice clinic in time to spend two weeks with her beloved before his death. Devastated by his passing, she first returned to her children and husband but then found it easier to grieve alone, choosing to reside in Paris[129].

All this – Moscow's high society and working class protests, incarceration in its prisons and residence in its manors, exile, escape, two loves, four children and *de facto* 'widowhood' – had come within Armand's first thirty five years. It is worth keeping this background in mind, as too frequently sources have a tendency to present Armand as an attractive and promiscuous young woman who offered Lenin with the opportunity for a meaningless love affair[130]. Such a portrayal could not be further from the truth. Now Armand found herself a single, cultured and revolutionary

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[128] See Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress*, pp. 30-36 for a description of Armand's early revolutionary life up until the time of her arrest. For a similar narrative account of this time see also V. Sokolov, *Liubov' vozhdia* (Moscow: AST-Press, 2004), pp. 57-62.

[129] For an extended biographical account of Armand in these years see Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress*, Chapters 3-5 (pp. 37-80). Alternatively, Sokolov devotes the entire first chapter of his account of Krupskaya and Armand to their lives before meeting (*Liubov' Vozdia*, pp. 4-89).

[130] The solid biography of Lenin by Robert Service, for instance, almost falls into this position: he introduces Armand in the context of Krupskaya's poor looks and thyroid condition, calls her marriage "a sham after sleeping with her brother-in-law" without dwelling on the passion with which she pursued both loves, notes only briefly that she had 'been involved in revolutionary activity and exiled' and proceeds to present her as a beautiful and uninhibited woman who could not but have tempted Lenin (see Service, *Lenin*, pp. 197-198).

woman frequenting the cafes of Paris' émigré district. And it was here that Lenin found her.

The relationship of Armand and Lenin was a complicated affair and it is no wonder, particularly with the Soviet wish to downplay any suggestion of an extra-marital non-platonic love for Lenin[131], that it has not been until recently that any strong account of her life has been published. Their connection was quite longstanding and tumultuous. Though a brief meeting at a Paris café in 1909 seemingly left a mark on both, they did not hear from each other until late the following year when Armand's request for tickets to the Eighth Congress of the Socialist International was personally dealt with by Lenin who wrote to the organisers. Inessa attended the Congress in Copenhagen at which Lenin spoke, with Krupskaya strangely absent, but it was not until both returned to Paris that any sort of relationship began. And when a relationship began, it began slowly. As Armand later wrote to Lenin:

> At that time I was terribly scared of you. The desire existed to see you, but it seemed better to drop dead on the spot than to come into your presence; and when for some reason you popped into N[adezhda]. K[onstantinovna].'s room, I instantly lost control and behaved like a fool. Only in Longjumeau and in the following Autumn in connection with translations and so on did I somewhat get used to you…[132]

As this suggests, some of Armand's first meetings with Lenin were somewhat chance encounters, Lenin interrupting Armand and Krupskaya in his wife's bedroom. Whatever attracted Lenin to Armand, however, it was Inessa's services as a translator and administrator that made her attractive to the Party. Lenin in late 1910 was still reeling from the blow a united Social-Democrat Central Committee had dealt him in Paris, with close factional friends including Zinoviev voting to close down his Bolshevik centre and suspend publication of the monthly journal, *Proletarii*, that had been under his control. Lenin's response was, somewhat predictably, to begin proselytising again with a fresh school and Armand was chosen to organise this new scheme, renting buildings in the outer Parisian town of Longjumeau for the purpose.

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[131] On this point, Service cannot help suggesting that some of the few photographs of Armand published in the Soviet Union might have been carefully selected and retouched to render her less of a *femme fatale* figure (Service, *Lenin*, p. 197).

[132] RGASPI, *f.* 127, *op. 1*, *d.* 161. Service's translation.

The school, with Lenin, Zinoviev and Armand as teachers and a young Sergo Ordzhonikidze as one of only eighteen students began in the Summer of 1911 and while it was not entirely successful, it saw Lenin and Krupskaya living in the same village as the Armands (Inessa was now joined again by her children) and spending a lot of time together. Despite this, Krupskaya only notes Inessa's presence twice in her account of the Longjumeau days and only in relation to her Party work[133].

By the time of the return of Krupskaya, Lenin and Armand to Paris, it appears an affair had begun in earnest. Krupskaya moved out of Lenin's bedroom to sleep with her mother, while Armand took up an apartment next door on the Rue Marie-Rose. Charles Rappoport saw Armand and Lenin in a Parisian café and claimed that Lenin could not keep his "Mongolian eyes off this little Frenchwoman", while Kollontai later related that it was at this time that Krupskaya had offered a formal split with the philandering Lenin. Whether it was out of duty to Krupskaya, a political wish to maintain a functional domestic life or even due to the somewhat flighty nature of his affair, Lenin apparently declined his wife's offer, although he did not decline to continue seeing Inessa Armand. And nor did Krupskaya.

Krupskaya and Armand were not united by the close bond that had kept the *ménage à trois* of Inessa and the Armand brothers amicable, and on first sight it is difficult to see how Krupskaya tolerated her 'rival' for Lenin's love, much less enjoyed her company. But through some combination of circumstances they did come to not only to tolerate but also to like each other.

A first reason for this may well have centred around Armand's children. Armand did not project vulnerability, but was nevertheless a young-looking single woman with four young children to bring up and Lenin and Krupskaya were both disappointed parents themselves with a great love for the company of children. After Armand's early death in 1920, Krupskaya (and Lenin) all but adopted their daughter Varvara. Krupskaya wrote to her as *ty*, addressed her as 'my beloved daughter'[134] and had regular catch-up chats with her even after Lenin's passing in 1924. Nadezhda Konstantinovna also maintained a correpondence with Inessa's younger daughter.

Much as there was some sense of extended family with the Zinovievs and their young Styopka (whom Lenin doted on), it seems the childless couple also found

[133] See Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, Chapter 13 (pp. 187-239). Armand is mentioned as renting a flat in Longjumeau on p. 191 and as living in Paris on p. 196.
[134] Krupskaia, *Pedagogicheskie Sochineniia* vol. XI, p. 247.

enjoyment in the company of Inessa Armand's children. Armand herself also found approval from the fastidious Yelizaveta Krupskaya, with whom she shared an awareness of Russian noble life and its 'finer points' that her own daughter increasingly lacked ever since marrying the revolutionary Lenin who conducted himself more like a *muzhik* than the hereditary noble he was. There is indeed some evidence that Lenin at one stage planned to send his mother-in-law to stay with his mistress, such was their bond[135].

While children and family played their part, that the love triangle of Krupskaya, Armand and Lenin remained amicable was also due to the unique nature of early revolutionary marriages. Keeping in mind the fictional life of Chernyshevky's Vera Pavlovna (who first married Lopukhov, gaining her freedom, and later married Kirsanov for love), the circumstances of their engagement, their business-like life as a couple and the fourteen years that had passed since their marriage, it is not hard to imagine that the now forty-three-year-old Krupskaya did not begrudge her husband his passion for the charming Armand. Even more easy to accept is that the woman who had spent her entire adult life studying and living for revolution was not simply now to abandon her greatest link to revolutionary life and success and either turn back to teaching and supporting her mother, or else living in a perpetually challenging role in the Party as 'Lenin's former wife'. Once Krupskaya had thus made her decision to be accommodating of Lenin's indiscretions the most sensible course of action was indeed to make the most of the situation, and to the extent that Armand was an intelligent and captivating woman, their friendship is not exceptionally odd.

'Non-revolutionary' marriages

There were also, particularly prior to 1917, a number of Bolshevik couples whose marriages were not centred upon a mutual commitment to revolution. Of those couples in European exile, perhaps the most prominent of these was the Bukharins – Nikolai Ivanovich and his wife Nadezhda Mikhailovna Lukina. In his very political biography of Bukharin, Stephen Cohen does not mention Lukina, while in later writings he merely notes of this time that she had travelled abroad with Bukharin in

[135] Krupskaya confirms that her mother was friendly with Armand in her memoirs, while Lenin wrote to his own mother in 1912 at a time when Armand was holidaying in Arcachon: "Y[elizaveta].V[asilievna]. thinks of going to Russia, but I do not expect she will. We are thinking of sending her to friends of ours in Arcachon in the south of France." Lenin, *Collected Works*, XXXVII, p. 473.

1911 as his wife[136]. Krupskaya, for her part, writes without mention of Bukharin's wife: she describes a young and cheeky Bukharin in Cracow, a painter who would visit the mountains near Zakopane for inspiration and who carried a canvas bag full of 'splendid' German paintings on his shoulder[137]. Lukina, who was divorced from Bukharin in the early 1920s, had been a childhood friend and cousin of Bukharin and they grew up together in the Zamoskvorech'e area of Moscow. She was not 'involved' in the revolutionary movement as such, but was also far from alienated by Bukharin's views, considering their decade spent together in exile and revolution. Bukharin wrote from prison of his childhood and of hers too in his autobiographical novel *Vremena* and his account is an endearing one[138].

Bukharin had spent some months in his early years abroad working with another exile and helping him to write a work of the nationalities question, commissioned by Lenin. This man, Iosif Dzhugashvili (Stalin), had also gotten married in his twenties to a 'non-revolutionary'. Ketevan Svanidze, a seamstress and sister to his friend Aleksandr from the seminary, had attracted the young Bolshevik's eye and they were married soon after meeting, on July 16, 1906. Nine months less two days later, their only son, Yakov, was born and less than two years after they were married Keke (her diminutive name) was already dead, succumbing to tuberculosis. The marriage appears to have been happy, but revolutionary life had clearly taken its toll again – the embryonic Yakov Dzughashvili had already been in detention under remand for two and a half months by the time of his birth, while his father left for London when he

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[136] See the Afterword to N. Bukharin, *How It All Began* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[137] Why Bukharin should have been carrying a bag full of portraits or indeed where he acquired the funds for their purchase is not made clear. Bukharin was based in Vienna and not Cracow, however, so never lived with the 'Lenin set' at this time and perhaps only journeyed from Vienna alone. Lukina suffered a progressive spinal illness that saw her health deteriorate from her childhood and perhaps her mobility was an issue that prevented her from always travelling with Bukharin. See Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 224 for Krupskaya's short notes on Bukharin in Cracow.

[138] *Vremena*, only discovered in the archives following the collapse of the Soviet Union was finally published first in Russian and then in English (as *How It All Began*) in the 1990s. Nikolai Petrov, the novel's central character represents Bukharin himself, while Nadezhda Lukina is 'Manya Yablochkin'. While the novel breaks off during the events of 1905, when Yablochkin was still an adolescent, the reader is given the picture of Lukina as a thoughtful and slightly naïve girl who looked up to her brother and to Bukharin who were both a couple of years older and getting involved in a revolutionary movement which the younger Lukina did not completely comprehend, mainly because her cousin and brother withheld details from her on account of her age. This sense of Lukina as very much a 'devotee' or 'admirer' of Bukharin, as opposed to a 'partner in marriage' seems to find resonance also in Bukharin's marriage to Anna Larina, which will be explored in the next chapter.

was but one month old[139]. After his wife's death, with Stalin's devotion to revolution and his arrest in 1908, the young Yakov was given over to the care of Stalin's in-laws.

A life of revolution for these Bolsheviks was clearly a life of sacrifice, and this is reflected in their relationships. In circumstances of arrest, imprisonment and exile it was difficult to maintain a coterie of long-term friends or to form lasting attachments with members of revolutionary society. For such ideologues as Lenin and Zinoviev it was as difficult to maintain any great affection for someone whose mind was not also occupied with thoughts of revolution. Just as the tsarist surveillance and crackdown on the Social Democrats had steered the Party towards a more tight-knit and conspiratorial makeup (that is, Bolshevism), the demands upon revolutionary relationships had also tempered them and created strong and lasting bonds between husbands and wives who remained together.

The combined devotion of these revolutionary wives towards the cause, together with the influence that they were granted through their relationship with their spouse was to make the 'revolutionary wife' almost synonymous at times with the 'revolutionary woman' in these early years of the 20th Century. This was by no means always to be the case, but by the outbreak of the Great War, not only were many of the administrative functions of the nascent Bolshevik party controlled by individuals like Zinovieva and Krupskaya, but much of the Russian women's movement was also controlled by revolutionary wives. When the journal *Rabotnitsa* ('Working Woman') – the first serious and continuous attempt by the Bolshevik party to appeal to women and put forward a platform for them – was published for the first time in March 1914, its editorial board was as follows: Ludmila Stal (a Ukrainian journalist), Yelena Rozmirovich (Bosh's sister), Konkordiia Samoilova (Samoilov's wife), Inessa Armand (Lenin's 'lover'), Anna Yelizarova (Lenin's sister) and Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin's wife). Of those contributing from abroad was also Zlata Lilina (Zinoviev's wife). This list of relatives should not be seen as an indication that figures like Lenin, Samoilov and Zinoviev controlled the journal (the editors were very much left to their own devices and this is reflected in the content of *Rabotnitsa*, which is at times quite radical), but it does demonstrate just how strong the position of 'wives' was in the

[139] Very little is known about Stalin's first wife. For details on Ketevan Svanidze's arrest, see Kun, *The Unknown Stalin*, p. 342. See also Service, *Stalin*, pp. 64-65. Both sources also note that Stalin moved to Baku following his return from London, only returning to Tbilisi (where his wife and son lived) on learning of the critical nature of his wife's illness.

early revolutionary movement and just how close the Bolshevik revolutionary family was, right from its inception. Challenges to the role of wives and revolutionary women within the Bolshevik organization were to arise most notably in the 1920s however as the revolutionary elite came to gather in Moscow. These early post-revolutionary years, presaging the Kremlin social elite under Stalin, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two
Bolshevik Elite Society in the Years of Revolution

The heady days around the October Revolution and then the Russian Civil War were to give birth to a second form of revolutionary marriage, with more identifiable features than the pre-revolutionary marriage discussed in the previous chapter, but nevertheless still without the level of homogeneity that was to be seen in Bolshevik elite society under Stalin. Having discussed the theoretical background and practical birth of the Bolshevik marriage in chapter one, this chapter will briefly explore the nature of revolutionary marriage in the early years of the RSFSR and Soviet Union as a backdrop to examining its development and consolidation in later years. Following from a discussion of the lives of elite women in the revolutionary period the foundations of women's policy and women's position in early Soviet society will also be discussed, providing a context for future chapters that will consider more specific areas not only of wives' activities, but of the average Russian woman's experience, from the end of the 1920s through to the death of Stalin.

The marriages of Lenin, Krzhizhanovsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others as discussed in the previous chapter had occurred in the context of internal exile and the need for a revolutionary companion to struggle through decades of factional squabbling and émigré life. The revolutionary marriages of figures such as Ordzhonikidze, Stalin and Beria were made in very different circumstances, however. On the one hand, the country was at war and commitments had to be made on a very *ad hoc* basis and on the other, the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and the passing of the Family Law Act in October of the following year had legitimised *de facto* marriage and given equal rights to children born outside wedlock (not that socialists had ever felt particularly constrained by the official marriage laws). It was in this concoction of the relaxed social mores common to war and the more relaxed attitude of the state to formal marriage that many marriages of the Bolshevik elite took place.

Stalin's marriage to his second wife certainly occurred in this climate. By Nadezhda Allilueva's account, the 17 year old was already living in Petrograd as Stalin's wife after the October Revolution and then followed him to the Caucasus and the civil war's Southern Front soon after its outbreak[1]. There was no ceremony to speak of and nor is it clear at what point Allilueva became Stalin's wife.

Beria's wife, Nino Gegechkori was also 17 when she 'married' her husband. As her son Sergo relates, his mother had first met Beria when he was imprisoned along with her uncle Sasha. They did not see any more of each other until Ordzhonikidze's Red Army forces had entered Menshevik-governed Georgia in 1921 at which point Beria started wooing his future wife in earnest. As Sergo Beria relates:

> My father courted her by inventing every imaginable pretext to call and see her at Sasha's. My mother adored music and he eventually noticed this. Not being himself a musician, he pestered a friend, who was, to teach him to play a waltz by Chopin. After a few months he was able to sit down at the piano and perform before my fascinated mother the waltz that he had so laboriously learnt. One day he took her aside and said, right out: 'Listen, you're leading a boring life here. Marry me. I work in the Cheka but I have big plans. I want to become a specialist in the oil industry…' And my mother agreed. My great-uncle Sasha opposed the marriage, considering that she was too young for it. So, without saying anything, but with the complicity of one of her cousins who helped her pack, my mother eloped along with my father…[2]

The circumstances of the elopement – where 'Uncle Sasha', the orphaned Nino Gegechkori's guardian and by this time Minister of Internal Affairs in Bolshevik Tbilisi, complained to Beria's Cheka superior: 'you send me bandits who carry off young girls!' and where the couple had trouble registering their (non-church) marriage – led to later rumours that Beria had kidnapped his future wife and forced her into marriage. Nino Beria denies this, but still paints a less rosy picture of the whole matter than her son: one day, Beria approached her on her way home from school, sat her down on a bench and told her, quite out of the blue that he wanted to

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1 Service, *Stalin*, p. 167-168.
2 S. Beria, *Beria: Inside Stalin's Kremlin* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2001), p. 5.

marry her. She considered it and agreed, surmising that "it was better to have one's own family than to live in someone's elses."[3]

Ordzhonikidze's marriage had been somewhat more romantic. Exiled to Siberia in 1916, the young Ordzhonikidze found himself somewhat in demand in his new home. Where Lenin's lawyerly skills were not of major value to the local community in Shushenskoe, Ordzhonikidze had graduated from the Tiflis *Fel'dsher* School[4] in 1905 and found work in exile tending to the needs of locals and the surrounding Yakut native people in the village of Pokrovskoye. Here he met Zina, a young 16-year-old schoolteacher, while on the other hand his future wife was confronted with a "lean and well-proportioned Caucasian", a rare sight indeed in the Siberian wilderness, mistaken by some children for a 'gypsy'[5]. Ordzhonikidze, his knowledge and his care for children and the native Yakut, apparently impressed the young Zinaida. By January 1917, he proposed to take her to Yakutsk (the nearest major town, some 90 kilometres away) for a meeting of revolutionaries and she accepted.

When the February Revolution came, Ordzhonikidze spent more and more time in Yakutsk and other major regional centres as a member of the Bolsheviks' Yakutsk Regional Committee, but continued an epistolary relationship with Zina. By May, revolutionary exiles from the region were being shipped to the city of Irkutsk[6], and the boat on which Ordzhonikidze was carried had a two-hour stopover in the village of Pokrovskoye where Zina still lived with her mother. Zina said hurried goodbyes, her mother cried and she boarded the boat to begin a weeks-long journey with Ordzhonikidze and his 'close revolutionary family' to Irkutsk and then after a stop on to Petrograd where they arrived in late June, 1917. By Zina's account, her early days in Petersburg were marked by spending hours in queues for bread, eggs and butter and

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3 This section is from Amy Knight's narrative of the events of Beria's proposal (Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 25), with the quotations taken from a Russian translation of an interview Nino Beria gave originally in Georgian, published in T. Koridze, "Ia nikogda ne vmeshivalas' v dela Lavrentiia", *Komsomol'skoe znamia,* 30th September, 1990.

4 Tiflis being the pre-revolutionary name for Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. *Fel'dsher* is not easily translatable into English, but is somewhat equivalent to the post of a country doctor or highly trained nurse – a medical worker who lacked formal graduate qualifications.

5 Narrative details are from Zinaida Ordzhonikidze's account in *Put' Bolshevika* (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literaturi, 1967), pp. 150-157.

6 The situation is not made exactly clear by Zina Ordzhonikidze (pp. 167-168 of *Put' Bolshevika*). She notes that Ordzhonikidze left behind a 'strong Bolshevik organisation', but it is not apparent whether the boat to Irkutsk was organised by the Bolsheviks in defiance of a collapsing tsarist administration or whether the exiles had now been granted freedom.

then cooking for Sergo and his comrades, who were busying themselves with *mitingi*[7].

What is extraordinary about Zina Ordzhonikidze's account is that she makes no mention of any embarrassment or opprobrium as a result of her 'elopement'. She was a 17 year old living with her mother – presumably a woman who did not know life outside her village, but was well acquainted with the god-fearing and conservative nature of community life – who left with the thirty-year-old Ordzhonikidze almost on the spur of the moment and set up house in pre-revolutionary Petrograd with him, seemingly without any suggestion that they should get officially married, nor any indication that they registered their union. This young woman, with little life experience and only two shelves of books by means of education had been plucked from the wilderness of Siberia to the queues and turmoil of Petrograd's July days, but makes no mention of any distress or homesickness in her memoirs.

Of course it can be pointed out that Zina Ordzhonikidze was writing her memoirs in the years following her husband's death and certainly 'cleaning up' some sections of her text to preserve and embellish Ordzhonikidze's legacy. Her forays into the presence of kulaks in pre-revolutionary Siberia and her concern for the plight of the Yakut people, for instance, are two examples of the projection of ideas that the young Zina Ordzhonikidze must only have learned later back onto her adolescent years. Yet Ordzhonikidze's wife has no reason to deny just how great a journey she was undertaking in 1917 and just how 'progressive' her relationship with her husband was for the time.

Comparing the pre-revolutionary marriages of figures such as Lenin, Kamenev and Zinoviev to the revolutionary marriages of the younger generation of Beria, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, clear patterns do emerge despite the relatively small sample being discussed. Where 'exile' marriages involved relatively 'balanced' power relationships, husbands and wives of similar ages and long-term commitments in exile, the years of revolution saw an increase in imbalanced marriages (with husbands twice the age of wives and exerting more power over their young spouses) and unions that were more impulsive (quite an achievement, when compared to the circumstances of Lenin and Krupskaya's marriage, for instance). While such a shift from pre-

[7] The Russian '*miting*', derived from the English 'meeting', in the context of the time and circumstances about which Ordzhonikidze is writing, has overtones suggesting a political or protest-based gathering, an illegal demonstration or subversive get-together.

revolutionary to post-revolutionary unions could be rationalised on 'social Darwinist' grounds[8], the same link cannot be made for marriages that occurred when the Bolsheviks were still to resume full power. Nevertheless, as the revolution came to the cities and then metastasised (as Solzhenitsyn would have it), the marriage dynamic – particularly in terms of the ages of spouses – certainly shifted. To take the four Bolsheviks hitherto discussed that married twice, once before the revolution and once afterwards, Lunacharsky was to marry a woman 19 years younger than his first wife, Stalin a girl 16 years younger, Zinoviev a woman 17 years younger and Bukharin a woman almost 25 years younger. This is to leave out, for the moment, the post-revolutionary dalliances of Budyonny, which will be discussed in future chapters.

Experienced 'wives of internal and external exile' were to increasingly give way in the following decades to a newer generation of revolutionary Bolshevik wives. For the foreseeable future, however, and during Lenin's 1920s it was still the old guard of women like Krupskaya and Zinovieva which led the Soviet women's movement in its early years and much of that leadership came in the form of one Soviet institution: the Commissariat of Enlightenment[9]. Krupskaya for her part took up the post of Deputy Commissar of this new government body.

While the Commissariat was initially stationed in Petrograd, by March 1918 the fledgling Bolshevik government had decided to move its capital to Moscow and government officials, including Lenin and Krupskaya, first moved to occupy the Hotel National (others took rooms in the Metropole) and then later into the Kremlin where Lenin and Krupskaya took up a corner apartment on the third floor of the Senate Building. The Kremlin itself had not been in a worse state since Napoleon's retreat from Moscow over a century earlier and the Senate Building proved to be one of its few habitable areas for the time being. Their lodgings were still far from luxurious however – two flights of stairs were somewhat of a challenge for the fifty-year-olds, and McNeal notes that the space available to the revolution's first couple in

[8] That is, it is not hard to see the increased attraction a young woman might have for pursuing a union with a man of considerable political power as many of the elite were to hold from 1918 onwards and likewise it is not difficult to expect these men to take advantage of their increased attractiveness in this respect.

[9] More time will be spent discussing the commissariat and the work of other Bolshevik wives within it in the next chapter.

the Kremlin may well have been less than that they enjoyed in Shushenskoe as the 'tsar's convicts'[10].

Neither Krupskaya nor Lenin spent considerable time in their apartment, however – there was too much work to be done. Natalya Rykova relates how at this time her father, as Lenin's deputy in Sovnarkom, would only come back to his apartment during the day to set his alarm clock for 5 or 10 minutes time, collapse on the sofa and enjoy the briefest of naps[11] and it's unlikely Sovnarkom's chairperson enjoyed any more rest than this. The couple did, at least, have help. Apart from cooks in a communal Kremlin dining room and a maid, from June 1919 onwards Krupskaya had a personal secretary – the young Vera Drizdo. This was no indulgence on the part of Soviet Russia's first lady, however: as well as working late hours as the Deputy Commissar for Enlightenment, giving speeches to Party congresses and attending Comintern and Supreme Soviet meetings, Krupskaya was churning out articles on pedagogy at a rate of knots. The majority of her ten volume, over seven thousand page *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* (Pedagogical Essays) was written during the 1920s. Drizdo relates that it was only through cunning that Krupskaya could be tricked into not turning up for the Commissariat's regular *subbotniki*[12].

By December, 1918 Krupskaya's health was starting to suffer, possibly as a result of her considerable workload, and she left the Kremlin for two months to be treated for her thyroid condition, Grave's Disease, at a park in the Sokolniki District[13]. Service considers this departure from their Kremlin apartment as a sign of a chill in her marriage to Lenin brought on in part by an incident in August, 1918 where one of the first visitors to the bedside of Lenin after he was shot by Fanny Kaplan (the injury that was to lead to his rapid deterioration of health from 1921 onwards), was Inessa Armand. The argument is less than convincing (there is no documentary evidence of any cooling), although Service uses it to explain a trip by Krupskaya on a propaganda campaign down the Volga the following year as a form of 'escapade'.

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10 McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 185.

11 N. Rykova, *Big Parents* episode. For a discussion of work habits and schedules during this period in Sovnarkom see T.H. Rigby's *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

12 The *subbotnik* was a peculiarly Soviet invention, an officially non-compulsory and unpaid 'working Saturday' which could be devoted to housekeeping tasks, from administration to cleaning. In practice, ordinary workers who did not attend were not well considered and the working weekend became almost mandatory in later years. See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 192 for Drizdo's account.

13 See Service, *Lenin*, pp. 379-380 for this section.

Vyacheslav Nikonov, the grandson of Molotov who accompanied Krupskaya on the 'expedition' rejects Service's thesis, pointing out that Krupskaya herself claimed Lenin had organised the trip[14].

Krupskaya's *agitprop* boat journey on the *Red Star* steamer from Nizhniy Novgorod to Perm saw her make thirty-four speeches down the banks of the Volga as the ship navigated through territory either newly captured by the Reds or still partially in White hands. In oppressive summer conditions, Krupskaya lectured to up to six thousand soldiers at a time on the glories of the socialist future and the focus of Bolshevik policy – in particular, as Lenin had instructed, the promise of 'bread'[15]. Her medical problems developed once more and Lenin sent several telegrams, remonstrating with Molotov and urging that his wife's health be taken into account: the *de facto* head of the new Soviet state was spending his time negotiating for the safe passage of his wife home to Moscow, hardly the actions of a couple in a marriage on the rocks.

The key danger to the longevity of Krupskaya's marriage to Lenin by 1919 appears to have thus been their deteriorating health. As Krupskaya's condition continued to worsen steadily (but not significantly, meaning that her writing activities were to continue unabated for another two decades), Lenin was to suffer minor heart attacks, insomnia and headaches in the coming months so debilitating that he was ordered to rest for a month in mid 1921 by the Politburo[16]. Apart from being slowly poisoned by Kaplan's lead bullet still lodged in him, the stress of long working days led Lenin to be diagnosed with neurasthenia[17] and finally to suffer a massive stroke on 25 May, 1922.

In general, therefore, while pre-revolutionary relationships were marked by long periods of conspiracy, with wives like Krzhizhanovskaya and Krupskaya as revolutionary helpmeets, revolutionary relationships were constructed on a basis very similar to the revolution itself – that is to say, hurriedly and with a lack of long-term surety. There were opportunities to be seized in social affairs as well as political affairs and spur-of-the-moment decisions had to be undertaken. Thus, as was related

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14 Nikonov, *Molotov: molodost'*, p. 458.

15 See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 190 and Nikonov, *Molotov: molodost'*, pp. 459-472 for details of the expedition.

16 Service, *Lenin*, p. 436.

17 A very common illness amongst the Bolshevik elite (partly perhaps due to the willingness of Kremlin physicians to ascribe sicknesses to it as a 'catch all'), popularly known as chronic stress or nervous exhaustion.

in the previous chapter, Ordzhonikidze 'picked up' his life partner in more ways than one as his boat sailed up the Yenisei out of Siberian exile, Beria proposed to his wife and almost eloped with her in the chaos of the revolutionary Caucasus. Meanwhile, Stalin took the young Nadezhda Allilueva as his young bride just prior to embarking on a civil war campaign, while even the Voroshilovs, married for some five years already, found themselves moving throughout European Russia with Yekaterina Davidovna taking on work as it came, following her husband as he followed the vicissitudes of the bloody internecine conflict.

After the decisive battles of the Civil War ended, a new dynamic emerged in nascent Soviet society. The revolutionary figure was no longer a fugitive in his own country, nor a Russian exile abroad. Where the image of a figure like Lenin in the 1890s or Ordzhonikidze during the Great War, might have been more likely to appeal to a very progressive-minded woman, the 'capital' that a member of the Bolshevik elite brought to a potential match by the early 1920s was far more substantial. At the time where the living space of the average Muscovite was extremely limited (to the point that accommodation is a common theme in much 1920s Russian literature[18]), a man like Bukharin lived in circumstances that might even have been accepted by Bulgakov's Professor Preobrazhensky. At this time, a member of the Bolshevik elite could not only enjoy comparatively good accommodation, but also stable employment, food privileges and access to 'Moscow high society'. As had historically been the case in Russia and so many other countries, those that had hitherto been marginalised or (rightfully) considered subversive could become heroes with the help of power and privilege.

It would be wrong to say that the Bolshevik elite as a group were decadent at this time and also false to assert that single Bolsheviks took deliberate advantage of their new-found appeal to prospective mates, yet the very real change of power relations that took place between 1917 and 1924 ensured that the Bolshevik marriage and Bolshevik relationships would evolve rapidly in this time. These hectic years were very often, therefore, a time when Bolshevik families were broken and made again.

One example of an extra-marital dalliance of this period appears in the form of a letter sent to Lev Kamenev in August, 1920. The letter, preserved in the RGASPI

[18] Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* particularly evoke the housing crisis ongoing in Civil War and NEP Moscow.

archives, notes its author only as 'Riva', but it is clear from reading the pre-revolutionary script that she had an intimate relationship with the man she describes as her "closest, dearest, only" 'Levushka'. This Riva lived with Kamenev for a time (seemingly in Kharkhiv) and was involved in revolutionary circles. She lost touch with Lev Borisovich in the war and only found out through mutual acquaintances that he had survived and made it back to Moscow. Kamenev appears to have spurned this one time lover and not wanted to re-establish contact with her. Yet despite this context, Riva's letter has a quite strange tenor to it. She writes in part:

> "I want to be with you, but I do not know how this might be: I do not know if you want it too, I do not know where you are, finally I do not know in what circumstances I might find myself *en route* to Moscow. If I were sure that I was, as before, your own close Riva, I would search you out today and complete my studies there, so that I could work at my speciality, while if it seems that our paths have diverged and it fell to me to arrange my own life alone, then I would need to finish university…"[19]

The entire letter is constructed with paragraphs of this dual nature – on the one hand it can be read as a love letter, finally establishing contact with a lost love, but on the other it is full of implicit requests of Kamenev: that he establish contact, that he tell her what his situation is, notes on what she will do if Kamenev replies one way or the other and finally the request that he dispatches either someone to assist her to make her way to the capital with her family, or alternatively some 'sort of written assistance' to aid her in her travels.

As a whole, the letter reinforces three points about the nature of relationships and the Bolshevik elite at the start of the 1920s: that they took place in a time of instability and non-permanency, that the civil war divided wives from husbands and provided opportunities for affairs that were, at least in Kamenev's case, taken up, and finally that Russia's new elite were people in positions of power to whom requests might be made and from whom favours might be sought.

In the course of the first few years of 1920s, many revolutionaries went even further than Kamenev in their pursuit of 'free love'. Karl Radek, a Central Committee and Comintern member and journalist started an affair with Larissa Reisner, the Bolshevik's first female commissar, in 1923, nearly destroying his marriage in the

[19] RGASPI, *f*. 323, *op*. 1, *d*. 116, *ll*. 4 – 7ob.

process[20]. In the same year, the pre-revolutionary wife of Marshal Budyonny shot herself in unclear circumstances[21] and he remarried a young singer not 12 months later. Both Kamenev and Zinoviev were to start families with wives outside the Kremlin walls, while Zinoviev and Lunacharsky both officially remarried.

If many revolutionary men found the new opportunities available to them in relationships appealing, the same was true also for some Bolshevik wives. Yekaterina Kalinina had married Mikhail Kalinin at the end of the 19th Century when he was still a lathe operator in St Petersburg. She had accompanied him to Siberian exile with their children in 1916, and following the revolution had moved in to the same Kremlin apartment that Kalinin shared with the Trotskys and their children.

Kalinina lived a life much like that of Krupskaya, with whom she was friends. She helped to organise kindergartens, undertook a nursing course and even joined Kamenev and Lunacharsky upon the agitprop train *October Revolution* in 1919 as its chief administrator (so very similar to Krupskaya's role aboard the *Red Star*). Back in Moscow, she adopted two more children[22] and took up a position as the deputy director of a weaving mill. Yet in 1924, Kalinina essentially abandoned her children to the care of a nanny, embarking on a literacy drive to the Caucasus with a female colleague. Her reasoning for this sudden departure gives a key insight into the nature of Bolshevik relationships at the time and the dynamic between husbands and wives. According to Vasilieva, she wrote to her husband the following to explain her flight:

> "I wasn't a real person in Moscow. I was a false figure in that society that I belonged to only through you. It was a dishonest situation. A couple of people were sincere with me, but with the rest it was all lies and pretence and it disgusted me. Because I belonged to the top rank I couldn't speak and think as I wanted, like ordinary officials. I was told this to my face by fellow Communists in the top and middle ranks. What happens to the ideals we worked for if we divide up the Party into ranks, and even into

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[20] For the story of Reisner, who had been shunted off to Kabul in 1921 as the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan (much as Kollontai was to be 'disposed of' politically through her appointment as the ambassador to Sweden), see Cathy Porter's biography *Larissa Reisner*. Details of Radek's relationship with Reisner are unclear and little appears in Porter's biography concerning them, though she does date the beginning of an affair to 1923, and notes in particular an eyewitness account of the Radeks' strained marriage at the time (*Larissa Reisner*, p. 166).

[21] Budyonny told his daughter that it had been an accident involving a firearm that had caused her death, and that the couple had drifted apart (see Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives* [English version], pp. 93-94).

[22] Vasilieva terms them 'Civil War' children, and thus this is the only explicit instance of adoption 'outside' revolutionary circles by Bolshevik elite families at the time.

> classes? You can't make wheat bread from rye – if they want to sort people into groups they can leave me out. I don't need cars and privileges, and I don't need false respect – all that stops people from seeing me as I really am, just a plain ordinary weaver."[23]

Thus in the figure of Kalinina, we see a woman stifled by the lack of independence that her relationship with her husband brings her. As a Bolshevik wife and thus, for the first time, as a figure of authority, she finds it difficult to reconcile her role as a 'member of the elite' through her husband to her actual belief system.

It is not so much that Kalinina renounces the privilege and lack of true freedom to speak that befell so many of the top-ranked Bolsheviks that is remarkable – it seems many felt both stifled by the 'rules of Party democracy' that were in place and guilty at the perquisites bestowed on higher officials – but the apparent alienation of her beliefs with from of her husband is a key motif that is reflected in so many marriages of the Bolshevik elite[24].

In outlining the life of Krupskaya, time and again it would emerge that while Nadezhda Konstantinovna had very similar beliefs to her husband, her 'sentimental' nature and 'moral foundations' were never completely changed by her marriage to Lenin: she supported the provisional government's programmes of assistance to children, for instance, because her belief in education overcame her husband's antipathy towards the state apparatus. With the Kalinins we find a similar process ongoing: while there is little doubt that both husband and wife spent years together in revolution and held very similar beliefs[25], Yekaterina Ivanovna (Iogonovna) appears

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[23] Vasilieva provides no reference for this letter, noting it only as 'a letter to her husband from Altai'. It is to be found in Vasilieva, p. 120 [English] in translation and p. 246 [Russian] in the original.

[24] Apart from Krupskaya's more bourgeois values as discussed in the previous chapter, this values gap is also seen, for instance, in the account of Aino Kuusinen who was quickly disillusioned with her life in Moscow, the lives of the Litvinovs who drifted apart and even perhaps in the final years of Nadezhda Allilueva's life. Allilueva's journey through famine-ravaged Russia soon before her suicide and a theorised resultant disenchantment with the Soviet state has been put forward as a possible contributing factor to her death by writers such as Montefiore and Vasilieva.

[25] For details of Kalinina's life, see Chapter 10 ('The President's Wife') of Larissa Vasilieva's *Kremlin Wives*. Yekaterina Ioganovna had moved to Petersburg as a young woman and been involved in the 1905 strike movement before she met Mikhail Kalinin, hiding from police with the help of a Bolshevik accomplice. After the revolution Kalinina continued to demonstrate her commitment to the cause – she was involved in organising schools and kindergartens, enrolled in a nursing course and accompanied her husband on the *October Revolution agitprop* train around the country as its chief administrator (Vasilieva, p. 118). Later she was promoted to her home town's district executive committee, adopted two war orphans and was appointed deputy director to a weaving mill – in short, Yekaterina Kalinina had a distinguished Bolshevik public service record.

to have maintained a less 'scientific' and more 'idealistic' view of socialism, given her continued commitment to the same 'sentimental' causes as Krupskaya.

The most obvious reason for such differences between husband and wife lies in the fact that whereas figures like Lenin and Kalinin were involved in the machinations of the personalised and cutthroat world of Bolshevik politics, their wives were one degree further distanced from the pragmatism, cynicism and opportunism that are often the mainstays of Bolshevism and all *realpolitik*. It would be wrong to think of either Krupskaya or Kalinina as 'romantic' or 'naïve' when it came to Soviet politics – both assumed high positions within the state apparatus and had a greater knowledge of the nature of Soviet political life than most of the male colleagues with whom they worked on a daily basis – but nevertheless, their relationship to politics in general was less cordial than that their husbands enjoyed. The overall distance between the political outlooks of husbands and wives is for the most part nuanced and perhaps even solely explainable in terms of more generalised socially (or even perhaps biologically?) rooted differences in the approaches of men and women to politics.

Although Yekaterina Kalinina's issues with her work and life in Moscow were far from resolved (and were to arise again in the 1930s, as will be noted during later discussion of the Terror), she nevertheless returned to her husband and family later in 1924.

The early 1920s marked the acme of relaxed attitudes towards marriage and relationships within the Bolshevik elite, emerging as they did out of the chaos of revolution and preceding the consolidation of the state and its social norms that was to occur in the 1930s. While such mores were to continue through the decade and into the 1930s until the social conservatism of Stalinism finally began to eat away at them, they were born in the revolution of 1917 and enabled by the conspiracy of circumstances brought on through the privilege distributed to members of the Bolshevik elite and the hardships and uncertainty of the Civil War period. What this early period in the history of the Bolshevik social elite bears witness to, however, are three basic principles already at play in Bolshevik elite relationships by the advent of Stalinism. The first is that women's roles were very much subservient to men right from the very beginning of Bolshevik society. The second is that the composition of the group of Bolshevik wives whilst more radicalised than society in general was still quite conservative in many respects: not only did wives not have the revolutionary resumes of their husbands in the great majority of cases, but their pursuits were very

often indicative of more petit-bourgeois attitudes whether they be in terms of providing a very conventional home life and family (taking on roles as cooks and mothers) or in terms of engaging in less radical politics (such as Krupskaya's cooperation with non-revolutionary elements in Petrograd in the development of facilities for children). Thirdly and finally, while Bolshevik wives could and did wield power, it was of a largely *ad hoc* nature: they had neither a powerbase nor any great degree of political influence. These three aspects of Bolshevik wives' lives and roles were only to become more pronounced with the consolidation of the Soviet Union in the decades after revolution.

While the revolution presented certain opportunities to the wives of top Bolsheviks, for ordinary Soviet citizens it had very pronounced, but different, effects. Women were more likely to be at odds with a radical, militant and industry-centred atheist state than their male counterparts – while the Orthodox church was run by males it was to be rural women in particular who proved most unreceptive to the godless ways of Communism and while women were becoming more and more involved in industry, the proletariat – and particularly its authority figures – were still heavily dominated by men. On the other hand, the coming of a government which notionally believed in equal treatment of the sexes promised many improvements for ordinary women in the former Russian empire. The comparative development of Bolshevik elite society and the mainstream Soviet community will be explored in more depth in chapter six, but for the present it is useful to say a few words about how women and society greeted the transition from tsarism to Bolshevism and indeed what the first policies of the state towards women consisted of in practice.

The general position of the party towards women in its first decade was one of mobilisation and cautious experimentation. Because of the drain that revolution, the Great War and the ongoing civil war placed upon communities a key short-term goal of the Bolsheviks upon assuming power was not only to conclude a swift end to conflict but also to take emergency measures in order to redress the savage economic impact that war had dealt production. While the conclusion of peace meant a serious division in Party ranks between the left, who could not excuse the Brest Treaty (including amongst them Aleksandra Kollontai, who suffered politically for her opposition to the move) and the Party's right, there was no serious divide as to one of

the easiest methods of reinvigorating the new Soviet workforce: an introduction of new workers to factories.

In the period from 1917 to 1920 Russian industry had lost thirty per cent of its workforce and forty per cent of its men[26] and it was thus obvious from what group in society new workers might emerge. Yet despite the availability of women to fill such places, the elite had reservations. Women were after all considered to be more politically suspect and drafting new women workers with unknown class backgrounds into the labour force presented difficulties. There was thus an instrumental and somewhat confused approach to women's employment in the first years of the Bolshevik state: women might be used as a ready 'resource' to be exploited, plugging gaps in production during war while men were mobilised, but their positions, due to their 'questionable political consciousness' as a sex were far from secure. Thus, while by 1918 women's participation rates in industry were at an all time high in Russia (up to 45 percent of the workforce, from a figure of 31.4 percent in 1913[27]), individual women frequently found themselves being laid off by 1921 as men returned to their old jobs from the civil war fronts – over one quarter of the civil war workforce became unemployed in this way according to one commentator[28]. Unfortunately for women, their status as 'less preferred' workers – both because of their comparatively lower skill levels, but also because of political prejudice – was to continue throughout the 1920s: by 1930, women made up 55 percent of Russia's unemployed[29].

On the employment mobilisation front then, Soviet policy towards women was hardly of a positive nature: not only was the Soviet approach an instrumental one that might treat women as a resource, but the strong resistance of the Party towards potentially 'compromising' its workforce with the introduction of unenlightened elements conspired to keep women's labour opportunities suppressed. In terms of enlightenment, however, the Party was active during the 1920s in attempting to mobilise women politically. Its main body in this respect was the ZhenOtdel: a department attached to local party organizations and charged with enlightening women.

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[26] Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 7.
[27] Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 10.
[28] See O.I. Shkaratan, *Problemy sotsial'noi struktury rabochego klassa SSSR* (Moscow: Izd-vo Mysl', 1970), p. 247.
[29] GARF, *f*. 6983, *op*. 1, *d*. 159, *l*. 343ob.

The ZhenOtdel was tasked both with preparing individual women for public life – through a months-long training course for delegates – but more importantly for liberating ordinary Russian women from the yoke of their old lives. Its very establishment had been somewhat of a coup for Aleksandra Kollontai who had first assembled a 1918 women's conference in wartorn Moscow which in turn had submitted for Party approval the idea of women's departments attached to local Party committees. Like many Soviet institutions and policy changes aimed at women, the ZhenOtdel was ambiguous in both its aims and effects. On the one hand it was a department run largely by women and for women that might advance causes such as childcare and women's employment, agitating to the central Party on behalf of its delegates. On the other it was a method by which the Party might impress its standards, promulgate its policy and disseminate its propaganda amongst 'less trustworthy' elements of society. What cannot be discounted, however, is the good intentions of many *delegatki* in the ZhenOtdel (a position assumed by many Bolshevik elite wives) who did provide services for women and push for changes to sexist institutional and domestic arrangements through *byt* reform. One women from Siberia reported her experiences as a delegate and the changes it brought to her life in the following terms:

> Since 1920 I have been working at a refrigeration plant in Barnaul. The work here is not as it is in the villages – it's eight hours. I began to attend meetings where I came to understand the whys and wherefores [*chto i k chemu*].
>
> In October 1925 I was chosen as a *delegatka* and in December at the plant a *likbez*[30] school was opened. I started to go there to learn to read and write. At first it was very difficult for me, but by graduation I all the same could write my own surname. And now I can make out parts of [*razbirat'sia*] books and newspapers and think I will go on to study more.[31]

While the workers in ZhenOtdel units across the country helped establish literacy drives and hygiene workshops for women, it is clear in the pages of *Rabotnitsa* just how much official state changes in policy might also alleviate women's problems and how comparatively simply legal changes brought in by the

[30] *likbez* stands for '*likvidatsiia bezgramotnosti*' or 'liquidation of illiteracy'. The schools were part of a prominent Soviet campaign of the 1920s aimed at full literacy of those aged 8 to 50.

[31] Letter of Comrade Chudova, *Rabotnitsa* 14 (July 1926), p. 13.

new Bolshevik government served to liberate some women in very immediate terms. As another writer to *Rabotnitsa* notes:

> Previously I was a slave to my husband and could not do anything without his permission. I worked at the factory not even knowing how much I earned, for he received my pay.
>
> My husband was a terrible drunkard and card player, drinking and gambling away all the money. I got married to him at age sixteen and already had a child within the year. After two years I had another. Altogether I had seven children, though only three survived. We lived in terrible want. My drunk husband mocked me and the little children.
>
> But Soviet power opened the eyes of women. I became a delegate. But when I arrived home from a meeting, my husband wouldn't let me in the house, blocking the gate by standing a clock up against it.
>
> I joined the Party and then said to myself: enough of slavery! I divorced my husband. And now I live as a free citizen. My little girl has joined the Komsomol.[32]

In sources like that above it can thus be seen that although Soviet policies involving women were often compromised or enacted because of an instrumental rather than supportive approach towards them, nevertheless many changes to the status quo provided very real and welcome relief to those that had previously been oppressed. While the mobilisation of women into the ZhenOtdel and workforce proved extremely flawed, therefore, the 1920s for mainstream Russian women were still a time of greatly increased opportunity as they had been for Bolshevik elite wives. As the letter above alludes to, the Soviet state had, amongst other measures, made divorce a viable option for either party in a marriage, provided for the civil registration of marriage and even brought in world-leading alimony legislation: October 1918 family law legislation provided that maintenance might be payable both to divorcees and their children by their former spouse at a rate to be determined by the courts[33]. Other earlier legislation, enacted soon after the successful October Revolution, upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work and outlawed dangerous work for women and children. Finally, as a recognition of women's roles as mothers,

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[32] Letter of Comrade Fomicheva, *Rabotnitsa* 14 (July 1926), p. 13.

[33] Schlesinger's *The Family in the USSR* contains not only the text of this legislation but also extracts from discussions amongst male and female comrades of the draft laws.

progress was also made in terms of Soviet maternity policy in the early years. On the same day as the Bolshevik state's provisions providing for more accessible divorce for couples, Aleksandra Kollontai, as the Commissar for Social Welfare, announced the construction of a department to reorganise children's homes, assist pregnant woment and reduce infant mortality. The department's first decree was that nursing mothers should work no more than four days in a week, that their place of work should provide opportunities for them to breastfeed and, furthermore, that a highly progressive goal of sixteen weeks' paid maternity leave should be looked upon as a goal for all women[34].

As with pre-revolutionary goals of eliminating family, instituting communal living and taking the burden of domestic work off women, Kollontai's new decree proved to be more wishful than practical, but again illustrates the contradictory nature of policy making and policy implementation of the time: if women were seen as a 'resource' to be exploited by the Soviet political elite they might still enjoy some advantages from the concomitant changes in policy, whilst many more well-intentioned ideas that were truly concerned with liberating women and alleviating their large work burden often failed to have any long-lasting or serious effect.

Thus for the average Russian woman, as with her Bolshevik elite sister, the years of early revolution were a case of limited, but nevertheless real, steps towards the liberation of women. Perhaps most concerning of all, however, was that early central policy towards women showed few signs of being genuinely concerned with their welfare, instead being preoccupied with what women as a group could provide for the state. As such, the existence of the ZhenOtdel provided an important and singular institutional setting for women to help address their own needs as a sex and, as will be seen in the following chapters, its dissolution in 1930 was to have serious repercussions for the further development of women's policy in the Soviet Union.

Having thus built up a portrait both of the historical-theoretical background of the ideal Socialist woman, having traced the actual history of Bolshevik women through the heady days from the formation of the Party to the end of Civil War and consolidation of Bolshevik power and having briefly examined the Soviet political and institutional framework behind early women's policy encapsulated in the actions

[34] C. Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai*, p. 297.

of Soviet women's departments, a point has been arrived at from which it is possible to map the evolution of Bolshevik elite women and their society from somewhat unstable beginnings in the mid 1920s through to the death of Stalin in 1953.

The following chapters will explore that societal change in a thematic sense. While chapter three will focus on Bolshevik elite women at work, chapter four will explore their attitudes towards Soviet life and their place in it. Chapter five will focus on the evolution of family and everyday life in the elite leading into a concluding chapter which will once more draw upon the pre-revolutionary aspirations and theoretical underpinnings of a socialist attitude towards women to evaluate the success of the Soviet experiment under Stalin as it pertained to the life of the Bolshevik elite and in particular the women within it.

Chapter Three
Bolshevik Elite Women and Work

One of the most substantial demographic shifts worldwide in the course of the 20th Century, a foundation for modern welfare policies and the feminist movement, a catalyst for labour reform and the modern state, was the transition of women from the domestic sphere into the 'public workforce' and thus the 'visible economy'. No state more than the Soviet Union made greater advances in the area of women's participation in what had hitherto been 'male life' either: by Stalin's death the proportion of female workers in the USSR economy was at 47%[1], while high tertiary education rates for young women, combined with the high male death toll of the Great Patriotic War augured well for women's continued high-profile involvement in the Soviet economy[2].

Yet there is one place in particular that this profound shift in social practices in the Soviet Union is not particularly evident, and that is amongst the upper echelons of Soviet Society. The 'power elite' – that group of the hundred or so most influential political figures in the USSR: Commissars, generals, heads of government and Politburo members – saw amongst their membership no significant strides in women in the workforce during the first 50 years of the Bolshevik Party. Where revolutionary figures like Krupskaya and Kollontai, Armand and Voroshilova played significant roles in their pre-Soviet struggles with the authorities, by the time they *were* the authorities they had been divested of much power. Krupskaya was a very different 'first lady' to Allilueva who, in turn, was more politically active than her successor, post-Stalin, Nina Khrushcheva.

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1 See Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, p. 166 for the raw figure. Some decade earlier the figure was much higher due to the Great Patriotic War. By means of comparison the percentage of workers in the USA who are women is 46% according to the US Department of Labor and not projected to reach 47% until 2014 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, 2006). In 1950 the percentage of women in the US workforce was approximately half this (see, for instance, R.E. Kutscher "Historical trends, 1950-92, and current uncertainties - The American work force, 1992-2005" in *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1993).

2 See chapter six for further discussion of the changing face of women's involvement in Soviet social and economic life in this period.

While there were certainly positive aspects of official Soviet policies towards women as discussed in the previous chapter (for example, the provision of maternity leave and crèches, the increase in women's participation in the paid workforce and the establishment of the ZhenOtdel), the fact that the Kremlin elite privately displayed a less progressive policy towards the women in their own community is significant. That the elite failed to open itself up to female membership and women in leadership positions and that Bolshevik wives had their authority undermined suggests not only that the elite were not themselves in agreement with the policies they had developed, but also that through in the area of women in work the experiences of the elite were diverging from those of the Soviet people at large. This divergence (which will be examined in greater detail in terms of elite *byt* in chapters five and six) ultimately created a Bolshevik elite so distanced from the average new Soviet person as to make the appellation of the term 'new class' (as Djilas put it) to the Party's top cadres appropriate.

This chapter sets out to trace the evolution of women's work in the Soviet elite and to compare the experience of elite Soviet women both with the ideological expectations of Soviet society about women and also the practical circumstances of USSR society at large. After exploring Communist and Bolshevik viewpoints on the role of women in the capitalist workforce and how this might change under Communism, the lives of individual working elite women will be detailed, thus making it possible to trace the development of working women within the elite and to examine just how and why relatively regressive attitudes to women and work prevailed amongst the upper echelons of the Bolshevik elite.

Socialist Viewpoints on Women and Work

When Engels wrote his watershed *Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844-45 at the age of twenty four, women made up approximately thirty per cent of the workforce in the factories of England and Russia[3] and enjoyed wages often less

[3] The 1855 figure for 'women in Russian factories' was 33%, rising to 77% in the textile industry (Troyat, *Daily Life under the Last Tsar*, p. 92), while in England the figures Engels gives are "in the cotton factories, 56¼ per cent; in the woolen mills, 69½ per cent; in the silk mills 70½ per cent; in the flax-spinning mills 70½ per cent of all operatives are of the female sex (F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, London: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 165).

than half those of their male peers[4]. Unsurprisingly, the lower remuneration rates for women, combined with the perception that as a sex they were less likely to participate in industrial action led to ever-burgeoning participation rates for women in the industrial economies of Russia and Western Europe through the 19th century. This upward movement in participation was tempered only by charitable, mainly upper class, concerns about the effect of harsh working conditions on women and children and less charitable, more practical, concerns about the potential for this influx of women to take over men's jobs on the part of the male working classes. Thus there was an unhealthy alliance when it came to attitudes towards women in the workforce permeating much of the 19th century debate on the woman question – while many in the middle classes foresaw serious social effects of having women thrust into low-paid jobs in the mainstream workforce, working males and early unionists were concerned at factory owners' willingness to use the 'fairer sex' as a source of cheap labour. Socialist ideologues such as Marx and Engels, therefore, with their sympathies both for sexual equality but also for the interests of the working classes, had a somewhat mixed message on the status of women in the workforce.

Marx, for his part, supported campaigns for parity of pay for women, stating that revolutions were impossible without the female half of the population and noting that "social progress may be measured precisely by the social position of the fair sex (plain ones included)"[5]. He also considered that the employment of women and children in the workforce as it stood was leading to 'physical deterioration' and 'moral degradation', however[6]. Engels was more forthcoming with a characterization of the effect of women's labour:

> "The employment of women at once breaks up the family; for when the wife spends twelve of thirteen hours every day in the mill, and the husband works the same length of time there or elsewhere, what becomes of the children? They grow up like wild weeds; they are put out to nurse for a

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4 For example, comparative wages in Manchester cotton mills, 1933 were more than double for men over 21 as compared to their female counterparts (Douglas Galbi, "Economic Change and Sex Discrimination in the Early English Cotton Factories", March 1994. Online paper available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=239564>).

5 Letter to Ludwig Kugelmann from London, 12th December 1868. K. Marx, *Letters to Dr. Kugelmann*, London: Martin Lawrence, 1941.

6 Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, chapter 15, section 3A, p. 520, 522.

> shilling or eighteenpence a week, and how they are treated may be imagined."[7]

While the characterisation of women's role in the labour market of the time was one that focussed upon the harm of long hours and to the family unit caused by female employment, in more general, even utopian, terms the socialist position was that it was only through equality with men in the long term that women would be freed from their position of subjugation in both the domestic and industrial spheres. As Bebel expounded in his *Women under Socialism*:

> "The woman of future society is socially and economically independent; she is no longer subject to even a vestige of dominion and exploitation; she is free, the peer of man, mistress of her lot… She chooses her occupation on such field as corresponds with her wishes, inclinations and natural abilities, and she works under conditions identical with man's"[8]

Broadly speaking, the material historical conditions under which the early Bolshevik party operated differed little from those discussed by mid 19th century Marxists, while the theoretical position on the roles for women in the workforce of any future society deviated little in the minds of the mainstream RSDRP community from those outlined by August Bebel. Yet, as will be seen, the history of women in the Soviet workforce, and particularly the history of Bolshevik elite women is very much distinct from an ideal path that might have been traced by a socialist of the pre-revolutionary period. To examine why this was the case, an investigation must first be undertaken of the role of revolutionary women such as Voroshilova and Krupskaya in the period prior to revolution.

Nadezhda Krupskaya

A cursory glance at the working history of Nadezhda Krupskaya before the revolution might have her role simplified as that of a helpmeet to Lenin. While prior to meeting Lenin, Krupskaya had worked both as a tutor and as a teacher to workers on Petrograd's south side, after her marriage, she ceased to earn independent income and travelled to exile in Siberia with her husband, spending most of her working life either performing domestic duties or taking dictation for him. Yet despite the fact that

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7 Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England*, p. 165.
8 Bebel, *Women under Socialism*, p. 343.

Krupskaya played a subservient and supporting role to Lenin in the pre-revolutionary years, she nevertheless played a vital role in coordinating the nascent Bolshevik movement. Her management of *Iskra* contacts within Russia and couriers into it actually made the dissemination of revolutionary materials more dependent upon Lenin's wife than Lenin himself, for while Lenin could produce Social Democrat pamphlets it was only through a network of agents that they could be brought to the attention of the general public.

When the most difficult period of operations abroad abruptly ended with the collapse of Russia's Romanov dynasty at the time of the February Revolution, however, the crucial role of Krupskaya as a co-conspirator and organiser became less vital, as was seen in the previous chapter. Circumstances of internal exile had created with them a great benefit to having a comrade-in-arms as a partner as revolutionary couples like the Krzhizhanovskys and Lenin and Krupskaya discovered. Indeed right from their time of imprisonment in Petersburg gaols, the revolutionary movement would set up 'fiancées' for men inside who might get around strict admittance requirements and ferry information and materials to those in custody. With once-exiled Bolsheviks like Kamenev and Zinoviev, Lenin and Lunacharsky back inside Russia and with the transfer of power to the Provisional Government bringing about a somewhat relaxed attitude to internal security and the monitoring of socialist groups' activities, it was no longer necessary for wives and family to work alongside their husbands in conspiratorial settings. As has been seen from the previous chapter, this did not however mean that there was a lack of work for Krupskaya when she and her husband returned to Russia following the February Revolution. Rather, although Krupskaya had much work upon her reacquaintance with Petrograd, her role in the Party organisation was less significant from 1917 onwards thanks to the availability of more members to accomplish vital administrative tasks (such as Stasova, who as has been seen, took over the role of Party Secretary at this time).

Of course at the same time as Bolshevik society was reorganising itself due to the merging of its administration in exile with the Russia-based sections of the Bolshevik movement, a far greater and more broad demographic shift was occurring for working women in the Russian empire. Zinoviev's wife, Zlata Lilina, a writer for the newspaper *Rabotnitsa* was more aware of this fact than most, writing a pamphlet on women's work at this time entitled *Soldiers of the Home Front (Soldaty Tyla)*. According to factory inspectors, percentages of women working in Russian factories

had risen from 25% in 1900, to 31% in 1908 and 45% by 1912[9]. This steady and significant pre-war trend however was converted into an extreme shift from male to female factory workers when the Great War broke out in August, 1914. The textile industry saw rates of female participation rise from 52.1% to 74% in the space of 18 months of war, while the metal industry saw rates of women's participation rise some 300-400% by the end of 1915 in Petersburg and its environs[10].

Revolutionary women's participation in the factory movement obviously did not parallel that of the average Russian woman at the time, especially considering the Bolsheviks were amongst one of very few extremist groups that did not broadly support the Russian war effort. By July, 1917, the Bolshevik's anti-war stance was receiving greater support considering the protracted war and the disastrous nature of the recent Galician offensive. Prince Lvov was brought down by the withdrawal of Kadet support and with the change of Russia' prime minister, the destabilising political cocktail erupted in violence, known now as Petrograd's 'July Days'. Lenin resisted the entreaties of union leaders to push for revolution during the period of July strikes, but the serious demonstrations and disorder that gripped Petrograd especially resulted in a serious reaction to the destabilising, treasonous, Bolshevik movement on behalf of Lvov's successor Aleksandr Kerensky. Lenin was accused of supporting the Germans and warrants were issued for the arrest of him and others. The *modus operandi* of many Bolsheviks therefore moved back to a more conspiratorial setting.

Lenin was forced into hiding, first at the Petrograd apartment of the family of the revolutionary Sergei Alliluev, and later to Helsinki. While at the Alliluevs he ran into Stalin again, who was himself to take up residence in this comfortable house, maintained as it was by the daughters of Sergei. The youngest of them, Nadya (then 16), returned from her term at school at the end of the summer of 1917 and became somewhat of a favourite of Stalin (then almost 40), who was to marry her the following year. For a brief time, therefore, the role of some Bolshevik women was once again that of keeping wanted dissidents safe and secure and allowing them to continue their activities. In this capacity it was another Bolshevik woman named Fofanova who hid Lenin upon his return from Finland while Krupskaya, while she saw her husband only infrequently during this time, still helped escort him through

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[9] Z. Lilina, *Soldaty Tyla* (Petrograd: Izdanie Petrogradskago Sov. Rab. i Krasn.-Arm. Dep., c. 1917), p. 16.

[10] Lilina, *Soldaty Tyla*, p. 16.

the Vyborg district and also worked as a courier for his documents, so that he might keep his head down[11]. Krupskaya's direct revolutionary work to precipitate revolutionary was modest to non-existent: her account of activities in October, 1917 is confused, but establishes she raised no motions and neither did she attend any key meetings. As McNeal states: "Krupskaya had been a spectator of the Bolshevik revolution, and not one with a very choice seat at that"[12].

Wives on the Civil War Front

While the revolutionary coup quickly saw Bolshevik power descend over Russia's two major cities, the war in the countryside was, however, far from won by the end of 1917. As Stalin married his second wife, Nadezhda Allilueva, the Bolsheviks were engaged in a fight for Russia's heartland. In two very different Russias – the nascent Bolshevik state with its Moscow government and the equivocal countryside with its military encampments and frontlines – two very different sets of duties emerged for Bolshevik wives. For wives with husbands attached to military posts (such as Stalin, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze) their accompaniment of their partners at the front line dictated that they either serve as a personal secretary – as Allilueva did at this time – or in some role related to the military needs of the Red Army. Voroshilova, for instance, lists her activities from the revolution to the end of the civil war as follows:

Table 1 - Voroshilova's stated wartime employment record[13]

Start Date	End Date	Position	Place of Work
5.1917	4.1918	Technical Secretary	RSDRP(b) Town Committee, Lugansk
4.1918	8.1918	*Evacuated*	(Likhaya) Tsaritsyn
8.1918	11.1918	Manager of Orphanages	City Department for Social Security, Tsaritsyn
6.1919	7.1919	Worker, Department for the Defence of Motherhood and Infancy	People's Commissariat for Social Security, Kiev

[11] See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, pp. 179-181.
[12] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 182.
[13] RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 40.

11.1919	2.1920	Manager, Bureau for Victims of Counter-Revolution	City Department for Society Security, Moscow
3.1920	3.1921	Manager, Party Secretariat of PolitDept, Assistant to Military Commissar of Sanitation, 1st Cavalry Army	1st Cavalry Army
3.1921	12.1921	Manager	Provincial Department of Social Security, Yekaterinoslav

There are a few obvious points to be made about this record, which is not atypical for Bolshevik wives on campaign. A first is that in the space of four years, Voroshilova held six different posts (excluding her period in evacuation and her dual role in 1920). This is because, as can be recognized by her location, even when not attached directly to the military units that Kliment Voroshilov commanded, the places where Voroshilova felt able to work were strongly constricted by her husband's whereabouts. Voroshilova was technical secretary to the Lugansk committee at the time of her husband holding position of secretary to the Lugansk Soviet and Duma and she worked for the People's Commissariat for Social Security in Kiev while Voroshilov was People's Commissar for Internal Affairs for Ukraine. A second point to make is that Voroshilova's positions sound somewhat significant – this one-time seamstress and governess before the revolution was thrust into managerial positions following November, 1917 – as a technical secretary, bureau head or department manager. It is no major supposition to conclude, therefore, that such elevated positions were connected with the prominence of Voroshilova's husband in the upper echelons of the Bolshevik movement. Finally, it is notable that whilst Voroshilova had significant-sounding positions, all her work is connected with what might be considered 'women's affairs' such as children, welfare, hygiene and motherhood. These three factors – the tendency for Bolshevik wives to only commit to work to the extent that it is compatible with their husband's position, the propensity for Bolshevik wives to be given post-revolutionary responsibilities considerably above those expected of them or demonstrated by them in a pre-war environment, and the frequency with which wives were allotted gender-based roles in 'women's areas' of

society – remain as constant considerations throughout the first decades of the Soviet state.

It is of no surprise, therefore, that for the other set of Bolshevik wives on the home front, employment opportunities played out in a similar manner as they had for Yekaterina Voroshilova. For those like Krupskaya and Zinovieva who had husbands staying in St Petersburg and Moscow to administer their new state, one of the most obvious choices for positions for such women was the newly founded Commissariat of Enlightenment.

The wide-ranging Commissariat of Enlightenment was to take over the roles of the former Ministry of Public Education, the Provisional Government's State Education Committee as well as the upkeep of theatres and historical buildings, the dissemination of literature and the general supervision of the artistic community. It was headed by the self-confessed '*intelligent*' amongst Bolsheviks, Anatoly Lunacharsky, right from the last days of October, 1917. Lunacharsky was asked to put forward names to be approved by Sovnarkom for the new collegium, and tendered the following list: Nadezhda Krupskaya, Vera Menzhinskaya, Ludmila Menzhinskaya, Viktor Pozner, Dora Lazurkina, Dmitri Leshchenko, Fyodor Kalinin, Pavel Lebedev-Polyansky, Vera Bonch-Bruevich and I.B. Rogalsky. Not only was the collegium evenly divided between men and women, therefore, but four of the ten names put forward were relatives of other revolutionaries. Fyodor Kalinin was the brother of Mikhail, the Menzhinskayas were the sisters of Vyacheslav Menzhinsky and Krupskaya was Lenin's wife.

These choices reflect three facts about the circumstances of the Bolshevik Party in late 1917. The most obvious is that the Party was still a condensed and tight-knit group and very often a family affair. It has already been noted how the revolutionary in exile could not operate on his own and subversive activities very often required the support of wives and family members[14]. A second salient point is that as the conspiratorial Bolsheviks had been forced to work underground for the previous decades with no detailed paths of recruitment nor comprehensive records of members, faced with the challenge of finding capable (and most importantly, loyal) workers in the new government, a most rational solution was to turn to those that could be trusted

[14] Thus, for example, Lenin relied upon Krupskaya abroad for administrative support and at home for assistance as a guide and courier

through the ties of family. Thirdly, and most importantly from the perspective of an examination of women's roles in the Party, at a time when women made up only some 7 percent of all party members[15], they occupied almost half of the major posts in the Commissariat of Enlightenment.

This disproportionality can partly be explained by the fact that education was indeed a popular profession amongst pre-revolutionary women and the choice of occupation for a majority of female graduates[16], but it is also that the education department was an area in which women could be employed with little risk of granting the fairer sex any significant influence. For a Party concerned with the Brest Peace and the securing of the Russian countryside against White forces, teaching methods, museum admissions and technical education were not yet seriously on the agenda. Even the choice of the reliable but ideologically-suspect[17] Lunacharsky as Commissar suggests this fact.

To some extent though, any short-term decisions about the employment of either women as a whole in the Soviet Union or, much more specifically, the employment of top Bolshevik wives, was always to be strongly dictated by circumstances. The very real threat to the early Bolshevik state from German forces dictated a need to continue the mobilisation of women into heavy industry, while the continuing battle for the Russian countryside meant that the turbulent times were to continue on into the early 1920s and that any opportunities for tackling tough social issues in a practical manner – such as a re-evaluation of the woman question – was not high on the Soviet government's agenda[18]. Despite this lack of prioritisation, a number of early laws such as the lifting of a blanket ban on women's abortion (to allow it in cases of medical necessity) and the mandating of alimony payments, did come into being in these early years. The feasibility of making more radical reforms, including moving hitherto domestic matters – such as cooking, cleaning and child-

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[15] This can only be an estimate. Lapidus notes, however, that 6% of respondents to a survey at August, 1917's Sixth Party Congress were women, while the first full census of the Party in 1922 showed an 8% female membership (Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, p. 39).

[16] A choice made often because of the difficulties for women to break into other professions. See Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p. 173.

[17] At least in the mind of some of his Bolshevik peers. Lunacharsky's interest in religion and specifically its compatibility with Marxism together with his association with Bogdanov (he had also married Bogdanov's sister) made Lenin wary of him, providing him the nickname 'God-seeker'.

[18] This is not to say that no progress was made at this time. There were two congresses of women Communists in 1918 and 1921, while the Party's IXth Congress in 1920 also discussed the role of women in some degree of detail. None of these episodes instituted serious practical changes, however.

rearing – onto the shoulders of the status apparatus was also examined, but most such endeavours were found to be profoundly impractical[19]. Despite the fact that many radical ideas for reforming the workplace from communal child-rearing to outsourcing cooking to communal canteens were not adopted, the situation for women workers in the Soviet Union during the 1920s did shift, and women's activism was itself promoted by the formation of women's departments (*ZhenOtdeli*) attached to local Party organizations, a change decreed by the Party in September 1919 following the efforts of many women, most notably Aleksandra Kollontai[20].

Molotov and Zhemchuzhina

Zhemchuzhina and Molotov met in the revolutionary summer of 1921 and underwent a 'Bolshevik romance'. Polina Semyonovna, the deputy head of Ukraine's Zaporozh'e ZhenOtdel had come to Moscow as a delegate at the First International Congress of Women, where she met Vyacheslav Mikhailovich who was tasked with overseeing the congress' success. Details of their actual meeting are somewhat confused: while their grandson talks of 'love at first sight'[21], he acknowledges that by their later years both had forgotten where they first actually set eyes upon each other. Given this, Derek Watson's claim that Zhemchuzhina had fallen sick in Moscow and been called upon by Molotov in his official capacity seem acceptable enough to researchers, especially as it is known that only a year afterwards Zhemchuzhina had gone abroad to Czechoslovakia to undergo treatment[22].

Whatever the case of their official first meeting, Zhemchuzhina was to stay in Moscow after the conclusion of the congress and be married with Molotov and in the Kremlin after only two months. She was 24 when she married and he some 7 years older, but despite her youth Zhemchuzhina seemed already to be a woman of ambition. She had started working as a cigarette maker in 1910 (aged 13), had joined the Bolshevik movement in 1918 and was high ranking enough to be invited to

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19 On the nature of these 'visions of the new world', as Fitzpatrick puts it, see S. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 83-87 or R. Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams. Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

20 For a brief history of the struggle to establish a women's section in the Party see Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, pp. 35-39.

21 'Love at first sight' – see *Kreml'-9* episode "Molotov – Shkola vizhivaniia".

22 For two accounts of their meeting, see Watson's *Molotov*, p. 44 and Nikonov's *Molotov: molodost'*, p. 529. On Zhemchuzhina's medical treatment see Chuev, *Molotov Remembers*, p. 145. It is interesting that Zhemchuzhina's journey out of Russia came before Molotov ever travelled abroad.

Moscow only some three years after establishing contact with the Party. Upon her marriage, she moved into Molotov's apartment in the Kremlin: a hallway with bookcase, a dining room with semi-circular windows with thick glass, bedroom and a small office for Molotov himself.

Wives and 'Women's Work'

While Zhemchuzhina was drawn into the Bolshevik elite through her participation in the ZhenOtdel, many more already established Bolshevik wives became involved in the Party's women's departments. Kirov's wife, Maria Markus was involved in ministering to Leningrad's female street workers through a ZhenOtdel program, Yekaterina Kalinina worked through ZhenOtdel in the education of women, Zlata Lilina continued her work writing for *Rabotnitsa* while Yekaterina Voroshilova moved from being a ZhenOtdel manager and instructor to editing the women's page for the Moscow daily "Bednota". Thus a considerable number of Bolshevik elite wives became occupied with jobs focussed specifically on women's affairs.

When it came to the employment of Bolshevik wives, however, not only were they often thrust into 'women's work' in positions of greater authority than they were used to, but it seems that frequently their occupations were in fact sinecures. At the very least, the privileges afforded to Soviet elite families were disproportionate to their work as Aino Kuusinen, the wife of Otto Kuusinen who arrived in Moscow in 1922 quickly discovered:

> I could see that there was a large difference between the life led by the workers and that of the 'Soviet aristocrats', as they were popularly called. Our own example was as good as any. Each year we received a new car, which we did not pay for, and thanks to the generosity of the 'classless society' we had the free use of our apartment, our *dacha*, a chauffeur and a housekeeper. Our housekeeper, Alexandra Prokhorovna Seldyanovka, who could neither read nor write, had worked as a cook for wealthy Russian families before the Revolution. When she went shopping for us she did not need any money, only three small books which she presented in the different shops… The average housewife could not buy as much as she liked by any means.[23]

[23] A. Kuusinen, *Before and After Stalin* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), p. 26.

Thus any domestic burden upon the Bolshevik wife was alleviated significantly – a figure like Kuusinen or Krupskaya was not required to cook, to clean, to do shopping, to ride public transport or even – in many cases – to be involved in child-rearing, given the presence of nannies for many top Bolshevik children. Despite this relative surfeit of hours free over their contemporaries, however, there is reason to suspect that many Bolshevik wives spent much less than forty hours a week engaged in paid work. Yekaterina Voroshilova, for instance, listed (in the 1950s) her only occupation during 1926 as having been editor of the women's page for Moscow's "Bednota" newspaper[24]. Yet examination of the paper reveals less than ten articles authored by her over more than 12 months, with no woman's page to speak of[25].

In other cases it is much more difficult to assess the work output of Bolshevik wives, but given that they were some of the few women in the country to have been released from the 'shackles of domestic drudgery', even moderate working hours would avail them with much more leisure time than their contemporaries enjoyed. In Ivy Litvinov's case, despite working in a Moscow translation bureau this free time allowed her to pursue the writing of a novel as well as short stories in the 1920s. In the case of Kirov's wife it is difficult to see how her charitable ZhenOtdel work could extend to a full time occupation, but it is also clear that when involved in more standard office-based employment, her job was not considered so vital as to exclude frequent absences. When Kirov, away in the South, received instructions to return Central Committee materials for instance he wrote to his wife telling her to "prepare all this for my arrival, even if it is to the detriment of your own work – perhaps you will have to leave your work for two or three days."[26]

Of course work, even if in the form of a sinecure, was not the only option available to Bolshevik wives. Apart from the relative ease with which they could take breaks at sanatoria and *dachi* inside and outside the Soviet Union, their connections also ensured that greater education opportunities were available to wives of the

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[24] RGASPI, *f.* 71, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 40ob.

[25] To be more specific, Voroshilova's articles in *Bednota* for this time appear on the following dates in 1926 (always on page two): Friday 12th March, Saturday 20th March, Sunday 28th March, Saturday 24th April, Sunday 9th May, Friday 21st May. Her final article for this period appeared after an eight month gap on Thursday 25th January, 1927.

[26] RGASPI, *f.* 80, *op*. 26, *d*. 65, *ll*. 1-2. The letter is undated. For many Central Committee and Politburo documents, members were expected to sign for them upon their receipt, read them and then return them for destruction.

Bolshevik elite than were provided to the public at large. The trailblazer amongst Bolshevik wives in the arena of education was Polina Zhemchuzhina.

The ambitious Zhemchuzhina took almost all the opportunities that her marriage presented to her. Immediately after moving into the Kremlin she took up a post as a *Raikom* instructor in Moscow, but quickly moved to attain qualifications – firstly at the MGU and MGK *rabfaks* (in 1923 and 1925 respectively) – before moving on to study at the economics faculty of Moscow's Plekhanov Institute. Upon graduating she was first a party cell secretary (during which time she gave birth to the couple's only daughter, Svetlana), before moving on to be the director of the *New Dawn* perfumery and an instructor in the Zamoskvorech'e district, a stone's throw from her Kremlin address. Following in Zhemchuzhina's wake were other wives such as Dora Khazan, Nadezhda Allilueva and Anna Larina who were to all attend colleges towards the end of the 1920s.

While Molotov's wife had found education an opportunity to break out of life as a ZhenOtdel instructor, others that followed her were to find it a necessity. This was because in 1930, on Stalin's instructions and as announced by Kaganovich in an edition of *Rabotnitsa* magazine, the Party decided to disband its network of women's departments[27]. Women, having officially gained equality with men in all spheres of Soviet life, were no longer required to devote themselves to sex-specific tasks and the wives who had previously engaged themselves with work in the ZhenOtdel were now encouraged to seek more 'normal' employment. An opportunity to reskill, however, was too good to pass up particularly with Moscow's Sverdlov University and PromAkademiia having created new courses that were eminently available to the 'Soviet aristocracy'.

[27] Following the demise of the ZhenOtdel movement, for a brief period *zhensektori* (women's sections) operated under local agitation departments. While this meant that it could be said an institution still existed that focussed on women, the chief role of *zhensektori* was simply to agitate politically amongst women rather than attend to 'women's issues'. In any case, *zhensektori* were abolished in 1934 for a similar reason the ZhenOtdel had been – it was considered that the problem of involving women politically had been 'solved' (Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*, p. 124). See Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*, pp. 124-127 for a brief account of the *zhensektori*'s activities.

The Paradox of Wives' Education

While on the one hand Bolshevik wives were now receiving some of the best tertiary education available in Soviet Russia (indeed, it is worthwhile remembering that while neither Molotov nor Stalin – comparatively highly educated for the Soviet elite – had attended university, workers like Kaganovich and Kalinin had not even completed secondary schooling), they were now being incorporated into a system of employment and promotion through enrolment that marked the phasing out of job privileges on a family basis. Indeed, whereas Dzerzhinsky's sisters and Kamenev's wife might have had employment in the Ministry of Enlightenment solely on the basis of their famous relatives, now the system of producing new cadres made wives much more independent of their husbands, by connecting their employment to individual skill rather than family connections. A woman that arrived at the institute by tram, participated in local party groups and activities and used her maiden name like Khazan or Allilueva did might have had very little to suggest she was married to an influential man save for rumour or a party card that recorded her residence simply as 'Kremlin'. Because of this, a irony evolved in the work of women of the Bolshevik elite at this time: while more suitable for positions of power and influence in the Party than ever before as the result of their education, the establishment of formal lines of promotion within the Party had meant the abatement of that concoction of nepotism, instability and covert activity that had previously conspired to provide Bolshevik wives with positions of authority. In short, the formalisation of systems of employment and the skilling of Bolshevik wives had actually coincided with a loss of influence.

The establishment of a more formal system of creating cadres was only part of the reason for the move of Bolshevik wives from employment in 'informal women's roles' to dilution amongst many different state departments, however. The main reason for the movement of women like Kirov's wife and Molotov's wife from administrating women's affairs was the actual dissolution of women's affairs departments in the first place – another blow to the potential political influence that not only Bolshevik wives, but Soviet women in general, might hope to wield. The ZhenOtdel, as its full name suggests, consisted of auxiliary units to local party committees charged with organising women's affairs and their two main press organs

– *Kommunistka* and *Rabotnitsa* – promoted Soviet policies from hygiene to literacy to to childcare programmes[28].

In June, 1929 Kaganovich announced to the Central Committee Orgburo in a speech "Restructuring of Work Amongst Women Workers and Peasants"[29] that the state had reached a 'new period of construction' which required 'restructuring' and hence the amalgamation of the work of women's departments back into the general Party structure. Presaging Stalin's broader announcement in 1936 that the USSR had 'achieved socialism', the central idea behind Kaganovich's justification of the ZhenOtdel's dissolution was that the 'woman problem' had been solved and gender-based discrimination eliminated to the point that there was no longer any necessity of maintaining a separate department (that was always, after all, seen as a temporary institution) for women. Because the gender divide had been apparently bridged and indeed because of the more apparent class antagonisms that had been revealed by the Soviet Union's 'war in the countryside', Kaganovich declared: "we have entered such a phase that questions of class struggle should stand at the centre of all our work"[30]. This meant that the official position was essentially that any future appeals on behalf of women alone would be considered destructive as they may divide male and female comrades that should be concentrating instead on class struggle – a philosophy that had always had strong backing in the party, particularly in its pre-revolutionary days.

In practice, of course, this shift away from specific outlets for women to advance causes for their sex when combined with the creation of a more fully functioning cadre system through elite Party schools meant the erosion of the Bolshevik wife's potential power other than as an informal women's activist. The notion, therefore, of either another Kollontai (an independent woman in the elite striving particularly for reform of women's policy) or Krupskaya (a wife appointed to posts through her husband's influence and attempting to promote herself on the basis of her husband's legacy) emerging in the 1930s was quite remote as women were to

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[28] The notion of committees targeted at particular sections of the population was somewhat unBolshevik in the first place, but nevertheless the abandonment of women's departments certainly reflected a decline in 'women's activism'. Interestingly, the only other such committee – the *Yevsektsiia* – had been dissolved after a decade of operation in 1929. The use of such organizations – to ostensibly promote the interests of a particular demographic, but effectively to provide central control over potentially influential groups – and their similar histories would make for an interesting comparative study.

[29] The speech is reprinted in *Kommunistka*, July 1929, pp. 3-6 and follows an article in *Pravda* a day earlier (9th June, 1929) on the same topic.

[30] *Kommunistka*, July 1929, p. 4.

be identified even less by their sex, but by their class and wives were no longer likely to be appointed to positions on the basis of their husband's influence or indeed because their husband could not find loyal workers through official channels.

While a woman like Anna Larina was therefore capable of being much more independent of her husband than early Bolshevik wives like Nadezhda Krupskaya, the creation of a more systematised means of attaining influence and 'de-sexed' Party departments also limited opportunities to exploit marital relationships for increased influence.

If it is thought that the phasing out of government institutions as 'family affairs' might have been a case of the Bolshevik political elite drifting further apart as the role of each family member became more proscribed by official employment, at the same time the continued approach to the organisation of Bolshevik elite private life assured that this would be far from the case[31].

By the mid 1930s, therefore, two shifts had occurred in the employment of Bolshevik elite women since the party's birth in 1903. The first came as the Soviet state solidified its control. A Party that occupied the Kremlin and ran the police force in Russia no longer had the need to be conspiratorial and thus its available manpower to produce and coordinate activities was no longer limited to dissidents available in exile or agents willing to smuggle propaganda across borders or members of local underground movements. As such, the relative political value of a wife such as Krupskaya who had undertaken the tasks of co-conspirator, personal secretary and underground organizer depreciated to an enormous extent by the legitimization of Bolshevik political activities.

In the 1920s, however, despite this drop in demand for 'activist wives', the creation of a women's movement in the USSR spearheaded through organizations such as the ZhenOtdel and publications such as *Krest'ianka* and *Rabotnitsa*, continued to give Bolshevik elite women a controlled yet legitimated arena for political activities. In this setting, Krupskaya undertook a role administering Soviet secondary education, Kalinina took part in a women's literary drive, Zhemchuzhina worked as a ZhenOtdel instructor and Voroshilova wrote on women's issues in the press. A second shift, brought about by the abolition of the ZhenOtdel, saw

[31] See chapter five for an evaluation of Bolshevik elite *byt* in this regard.

circumstances for Bolshevik elite women change again dramatically. No longer did wives hold the informal positions of responsibility many had assumed in the pre-revolutionary period and nor did they have a convenient avenue of work in women's organizations as they had in the 1920s. The limited choices available to Bolshevik wives thus became either incorporation into the Bolshevik employment system in general following reskilling or what amounted to effective retirement: a lack of any meaningful revolutionary work at all.

Sheila Fitzpatrick notes in *The Russian Revolution*:

> In a campaign inconceivable in the 1920s, wives of members of the new Soviet elite were directed into voluntary community activities that bore a strong resemblance to the upper-class charitable work that Russian socialist and even liberal feminists had always despised.[32]

She then goes on to cite an example of the *Obshchestvennitsa* – a Soviet wife-activists' movement founded upon the principle that a Soviet wife had the duty to support her husband such that his (presumably more important) work might be more efficiently accomplished – considering the campaign to be an example of the embourgeoisement of women[33].

To some extent this characterization is fair, but it must be recognized that Soviet elite wives had actually always been engaged in some form of charitable work. Before the October Revolution of 1917, Krupskaya had already been engaged in work that 'Russian socialist and even liberal feminists had always despised': occupied with improving the condition of Petrograd's playgrounds and in work for the Committee for Relief of Soldier's Wives. During the 1920s, the literary campaigns of Bolshevik wives, the work of Kirov's wife among prostitutes, the sinecure that Voroshilova received as a woman's page editor were all instances of what was, in essence, 'charitable work': wives had the means to exist without such occupations and they often spent less than a full working week employed with them.

The difference between 1920s 'upper-class charity' and later 'upper-class charity' came in fact only in terms of presentation and circumstances. In 1918 and

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[32] S. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 160-1.

[33] For more information on the *Obshchestvennitsa* movement see, for example, Rebecca Balmas Neary's dissertation "'Flowers and Metal': The Soviet 'Wife-Activists' Movement' and Stalin-era Culture and Society, 1934-1941" (Columbia University, 2002) and Mary Buckley's "The Untold Story of the *Obshchestvennitsa* in the 1930s" in Ilic [ed.], *Women in the Stalin Era*, pp. 151-172.

1919, Yekaterina Voroshilova held posts first as the manager of orphanages in Tsaritsyn and then as a worker with the Department for the Defence of Motherhood and Infancy, employed in both circumstances to supervise what could broadly be considered as 'women's issues'. Following Stalin's death, Voroshilova again worked in the area, this time as chairperson of the board of children's home number 35 in Moscow's Soviet region[34]. The posts were by no means significantly different in practice, yet the first appears, simply because of context, to be 'less charitable'. This is partly as a result of the fact that following the collapse of the ZhenOtdel system, the role of Bolshevik wives in specific 'women's work' came as a result more of individual interests and involvement rather than official placements.

The defeminisation of official placements came as a result of the reskilling of Bolshevik wives and it is interesting to reflect more broadly on the results of this reskilling particularly in terms of the employment records of Voroshilova and Zhemchuzhina.

For Polina Zhemchuzhina, a quite ambitious career woman, the movement of Bolshevik wives from 'women's employment' to the more general *nomenklatura* system was a positive development. Ahead of the wave of wives that included Allilueva, Dora Khazan (Andreev's wife), Voroshilova and Larina (Bukharin's wife), Zhemchuzhina received tertiary education in the mid 1920s divorcing herself from the ZhenOtdel system at this stage. By 1927 she was a member of the Bolshevik 'system at large' as secretary of a Party cell and by the end of the decade Zhemchuzhina was also an instructor in Moscow's Zamoskvorech'e district. Although Zhemchuzhina's next move was into the feminine perfume industry, as director of the "New Dawn" perfume factory, Molotov's wife had achieved this promotion as a result of a demonstration of skills over a long period of time. While there will always remain doubt as to whether Zhemchuzhina's marital situation rather than her abilities was the primary motivator for her series of high level appointments, what is less doubtful when looking at Zhemchuzhina's career is that she was required to demonstrate her talent for work and organization to achieve the career success she enjoyed.

[34] See, for example, RGASPI *f*. 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 425, *ll*. 47-48.

Mikoyan[35] claims in his memoirs that Zhemchuzhina's later advancement from head of *New Dawn* to boss of TEZhE, the Soviet Perfumes Trust, came as a result of a personal request to Stalin at dinner. This is impossible to verify, but plausible and it sums up the nature of the progress of Bolshevik wives' careers – with the training they received due to privilege and continued work, new career women such as Zhemchuzhina could achieve semi-important positions, but with the aid of influence they might wield significant power. Such a circumstance, of course, was by no means confined to Bolshevik wives and the usefulness of developing affective relationships for both patrons and clients in the USSR occupies a rich vein of literature about the Soviet political system

In the case of Molotova, therefore, steady advancement was made in the supposedly 'gender-neutral' system of Soviet advancement from Party cell secretary to perfume director to Perfume trust head to an eventual position as Deputy Commissar of Fisheries and a candidate post on the central committee in 1939. Yet on that central committee, of 71 full members only one was a woman (Klavdiia Nikolaeva), while Zhemchuzhina was the only other woman elected to a Central Committee post, meaning a less than two per cent participation rate for women in one of the Party's chief organs, despite the claim a decade earlier upon the folding of the ZhenOtdel system that no separate movement was henceforth required to promote female equality in Soviet affairs.

When Yekaterina Voroshilova transferred from the 'women's economy' to the more generalized Soviet work system she had a fairly different recent work history to her contemporary Zhemchuzhina. While both had worked for the ZhenOtdel in the early 1920s, Voroshilova moved on to relatively untaxing work at *Bednota* at the end of 1925, taking 16 months off performing any work during 1927-28 on account of illness. This was another area in which Bolshevik wives enjoyed a privileged status as will be seen (indeed in the early 1920s, Zhemchuzhina had also taken long-term leave of work to visit a foreign sanitorium for the cure).

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[35] Montefiore in *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 36 cites Mikoyan's *Tak bylo* (Moscow, 2000) pp. 298-99 and/or private interviews when stating that Zhemchuzhina asked Stalin 'if she could create a Soviet Perfume industry' during a dinner.

In 1930, Voroshilova entered Sverdlov University. Her private student card, contained in the Russian archives[36], gives details of her studies and grades as well as brief notes on the assessment of her 'psycho-physical condition' and 'social-party work'. In most subjects, Voroshilova scored marks of 'good' (*khorosho*) or 'above average' (*vishe sredne, vishe udovletvoritel'no*), including in mathematics, Russian, foreign languages, physics, chemistry and economic geography. In military training Yekaterina Davidovna received only pass marks (*sredne*), while in history subjects she received marks of above average and average for world history, and good and very good for 'the history of the peoples of the USSR. It was in the field of history that Voroshilova was to find employment and while data is not available as to the generally expected marks for history graduates hoping to gain the level of employment Voroshilova took on, it seems doubtful that graduates with such average marks would normally have been given such good jobs. For in 1933, immediately upon graduation, Voroshilova listed her position as 'managing the Party-historical office' at Sverdlov (Agricultural) University, a position that she filled for three years before moving to the same position at the Sverdlov 'University (*visshaia shkola*) for Propagandists'. Right up until the first months of the Great Patriotic War, the recent graduate with an undistinguished academic record was therefore in charge of offices of history and economic studies at some of Moscow's top tertiary institutions.

In a final example of 'jobs for the girls', the last of the more prominent wives to go through reskilling in the 1930s (and survive, unlike Larina who was arrested and Allilueva who shot herself) through attendance at the PromAkademiia was Andreev's wife Dora Khazan. Prior to removal from her post in 1939 (possibly due to her Jewish heritage[37]), she had enjoyed the position of Deputy Minister for Textiles.

While Bolshevik wives were seemingly free to use the influence their marriages provided them to pursue either 'cushy' or important work depending on their inclinations, another choice available was to use their freedom to precisely attempt to *escape* from a Kremlin life that many appeared to find stifling. Kalinin's wife (later to be imprisoned while Kalinin still held the post of titular head of state) moved to the Urals on a literacy drive, by most accounts to escape her husband. Ivy Litvinov, apparently bored with her duties as a diplomat's wife, had spent the early 1920s

[36] RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 4ob.
[37] A suggestion of Montefiore (p. 519) who also points to Zhemchuzhina's similar demotion at this time for reasons of her participation in 'Jewish social circles'.

working in translation and novel-writing, but by the 1930s had discovered 'Basic English'. This system of teaching English as a second language formulated by Charles Ogden proclaimed that all root concepts could be contained within 850 core words and furthermore that any concept could be related by mediating this vocabulary through a simplified grammar with a cost of little time in tuition. The seemingly highly efficient, systematic and simple methods of Basic English appealed to Soviet pedagogical authorities and Ivy used it as a method of fleeing elite life in Moscow, choosing to take up an independent position teaching English at a Sverdlovsk teacher training college.

Another route for the Bolshevik wife was to not take full advantage of all the privileges of Kremlin life. While good food and accommodation were available to Kremlin families, some wives still distanced themselves from some of the excesses of the elite. Nadezhda Allilueva, for instance, was said to have walked to the hospital (a short distance across Red Square) to have the baby Svetlana delivered, while Dora Khazan shunned the chauffeurs that were available to take her to the PromAkademiia each day. While figures such as Voroshilova and Zhemchuzhina seemed to make the most of their opportunities, one of the 'upcoming' wives, Nina Khrushcheva took another approach. Through the early 1930s she worked overtime at a Moscow lamp factory, organising a party school and, by her own report, achieved her "part of the first fiver-year plan in two and a half years". She left for work at eight in the morning, arriving home no earlier than ten – partly because commuting by tram involved at least a one-hour trip each way. Even when at home, Nina Petrovna used her maiden name when answering the phone (something done also by Natalya Rykova[38]) leading in one instance to confusion from an outsider as to why she was in Khrushchev's apartment[39]. Despite Khrushcheva being one of the more hard-working and ascetic Bolshevik wives, even she stopped regular work when their child Sergei was born, choosing instead to concentrate on her family in place of her career. While with the assistance of nannies the two were far from mutually exclusive for members of the Bolshevik elite, their comparatively excellent lifestyle meant that becoming a full-time mother was also a much more viable option for Kremlin elite wives than it was to Soviet women at large.

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[38] See N. Rykova, *Big Parents* episode.

[39] For all of these details on Nina Khrushcheva, including her quote, see W. Taubman, *Khrushchev: the man and his era* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 111-2.

For that majority of Bolshevik elite wives who both chose to stay living alongside their husbands in Moscow and survived the purges, the next major interruption to their 'everyday working lives' came in the form of the Great Patriotic War. All prominent Moscow families were evacuated to Kuibyshev soon after the German assault as Moscow was under air attack from the invading fascist forces. In Voroshilova's case, transferral to Kuibyshev meant a temporary war job working for the local *gorkom*'s department of propaganda and agitation. Similarly, children of school age continued their tuition in evacuation[40] as some semblance of 'life as normal' was created in the Kremlin-in-evacuation.

Following the end of the war, the path of employment for Bolshevik wives continued much in the same vein as it had in the 1930s, with perhaps one exception. The sudden ending of the career paths of Zhemchuzhina and Khazan amongst others – women who found as so many of their husbands had the dangers of occupying high positions – might have served as some real disincentive for future Bolshevik elite wives to pursue serious careers, but in any case the Bolshevik elite was an aging one by the 1940s so this is hard to evalute. The middle-aged nature of the demographic meant that, unlike in the 1920s, there was no crop of Bolshevik elite women just beginning their careers at this time. If any elite group was now entering the workforce is was the first post-revolutionary generation of Bolshevik children. Unsurprisingly recognising the danger for their progeny in politics, very often Bolshevik children were encouraged into non-Party working paths, as Beria's son relates:

> My father was against my choosing a literary speciality. He feared that I might end up as a historian of the Party or something like that… What was essential for him was to see me with a proper job and not about to become a Party official… When Molotov wanted to take me into the MID (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and raised the matter with my father, the latter exclaimed: 'You want to ruin him!'. The Leningrad Party Secretary, Kuznetsov, also had the idea of appointing me to be responsible for scientific research for the Central Committee, and this time it was I myself who turned down the offer. The job went to Zhdanov's son[41].

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[40] For instance, see Svetlana Molotov's letters of the time to her father in RGASPI (*f.* 82, *op.* 2, *d.* 1592).

[41] S. Beria, *Beria, My Father*, pp. 35-36.

As is clear from this excerpt, for children as well as wives, top career positions were sometimes available – indeed Sergo Beria finally accepted a position that saw him translate at the Yalta conference – but there was nevertheless sometimes a reticence amongst Kremlin families to get members unnecessarily involved in politically sensitive (and thus dangerous) work.

In the final eight years from the end of war until Stalin's passing, the employment situation of Bolshevik wives thus changed little for those still in the workforce. Andreev's wife Dora Khazan continued work in the textile industry, Yekaterina Voroshilova continued in official historical positions, moving on to become assistant director of Moscow's V.I. Lenin Central Museum, Nina Khrushcheva continued to look after her children supplemented by occasional teaching assignments and Polina Zhemchuzhina – that most ambitious of Kremlin women – continued to languish in the Soviet prison system.

Soviet elite wives had thus moved full circle in the fifty years from 1903 to 1953. They had transformed from being loyal and necessary cadres like Krzhizhanovskaya and Krupskaya working alongside their husbands in exile and carrying through with important conspiratorial work to becoming just more heads in the mammoth system of official Party employment in the USSR. While the early troubled years of civil war, NEP and the revolutionary women's ZhenOtdel had temporarily provided elite wives with a particular niche in which they could be responsible for a whole sector of Party work, the consolidation of the state and the elimination of the backbone of its 'women's infrastructure' (the women's departments essentially run by women for their specific benefit in favour of a maternally-based system ensured that the notion of Bolshevik elite women as any sort of political force evaporated[42]. For those few wives such as Krupskaya and Zhemchuzhina ambitious and determined enough to almost become members of the Party's official political inner circle there was still always the clear option for them to be politically sidelined

[42] This is not to say that women's representation disappeared entirely, but simply to point out that – especially in terms of female political actors in formal government bodies and political actors specifically tasked with improving the lot of their sex – an area ended with the dismantling of ZhenOtdel. The abandonment of ZhenOtdel and the coming of *mat'-geroinia* awards are certainly both symbolic points when assessing the path of Soviet women's policy, but this is by no means to say that through this process the Soviet state entirely abandoned women's active involvement in society. The *Obshchestvennitsa* movement, for instance, in which wives came to be viewed as important supports for their husband's activity was one way in which women continued to play an active (if somewhat compromised) role in Soviet social life.

or disposed of, even without their husband's consent. Overall, therefore the history of elite wives' employment was one where their actions were to follow the desires of the Soviet ruling elite as much as any other Soviet woman. They may have lived with significant advantages over the ordinary Soviet working woman, but like her they too could not seriously aspire to be masters of their own destinies. One year before Stalin's death, the final Central Committee of his era was elected and again, despite the vast increase in the number of Central Committee members, the percentage that was female still lurked in the single digits.

While privilege had spared Bolshevik wives the limited options of their contemporaries, they were still faced with the same pressures and circumstances brought to bear upon their sex from what had essentially become, despite all official ideological pronouncements, a neo-patriarchal state. It is perhaps significant just how willingly Soviet wives accepted these changes – how quickly figures such as Krupskaya and Voroshilova were to adopt bourgeois notions of charity, how quick enlightened Party minds such as Khrushcheva and Larina were to accede to the maternal paradigm for women, casting aside notions of the wife as co-equal and also how internalised all of these shifts in the official Soviet policy towards women seemed to become for members of the Bolshevik elite. It is through analysis of the unpublished and published texts of Bolshevik wives in the next chapter that it will be clear that these women also held a role of subservience to their husband's desires not only through the history of their employment but also through the way they portrayed their history to the world.

Chapter Four
Bolshevik Elite Women as they Presented Themselves

As can be seen from an examination of Bolshevik elite women in the workplace, the model Kremlin wife was seen as a woman that was hard-working and responsive to her husband, eschewing notions of personal glory or achievement in favour of a support role. That is, she was to blend into the background in most things – while a life of privilege was available to her, a virtuous elite wife was still the one who did not take advantage of her station for personal gain nor her contacts for promotion, but who went about her daily life as a normal citizen, riding public transport in Moscow, looking after children and even answering the phone with her maiden name. These encouraged social norms are not surprising, given that the new Soviet order was supposed to be based upon the disintegration of class boundaries and not merely the replacement of one aristocracy with a new Bolshevik elite who freely delighted in their own privilege.

What is in contrast to the idea that Bolshevik women should not be 'set apart' either from the rest of their sex in the Soviet Union or from the public at large is the notion of Bolshevik elite wives as bearers of messages, spokeswomen for the regime and even role-models for other Soviet citizens. Indeed, for all the homeliness of characters like Voroshilova and Allilueva, a good number of Bolshevik wives were to present a very open and deliberate persona to the public at large. Zlata Lilina (Zinoviev), Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin), Anna Larina (Bukharin), Aino Kuusinen, Ivy Litvinov, Yekaterina Voroshilova and Zinaida Ordzhonkidze all wrote work to be published[1], and thus all as authors had a peculiar and examinable portrayal of themselves to the world that might be evaluated. Of this number, Lilina, Krupskaya, Voroshilova and Ordzhonikidze all wrote as members of an active Soviet regime and, as *primae inter pares* of the new order, were to act as role models for society at large.

[1] As did both of Lunacharsky's wives, though their works as contained in the RGASPI archives (*f*. 142, *op*. 1, *dd*. 848, 892) are of a purely fictional and apparently non-autobiographical nature.

While, as has been discussed, the personal lives of members of the Bolshevik elite were not considered appropriate public knowledge and thus wives largely had no public ceremonial or charitable role (as one might often find for the spouse of a modern-day political leader), there were also opportunities for wives to act officially or be seen to represent their husbands and the elite at large in a small number of circles – Voroshilova's role overseeing a Moscow children's home, Krupskaya's involvement in the running of charitable programs during the time of the Provisional Govenrment and Litvinova's presence at diplomatic functions alongside her Narkomindel husband are three such instances.

Overall this chapter will be examining the public face of Bolshevik women and how they portrayed themselves (and their husbands) to the outside world, both in words and deeds. A detailed understanding of this area will shed light not only upon the opportunities presented to Bolshevik elite women (as has the previous chapter concerning the changing employment roles of Bolshevik wives), but perhaps more importantly on to what extent these roles were accepted and internalised by wives. For it is one thing to passively accept the role of obedient wife, but altogether on another plane to actively show one is at peace with it through writing.

While the few 'public engagements' of Bolshevik wives will be considered in this chapter's analysis, the main focus will be on an investigation of key texts written by Bolshevik wives, most particularly Krupskaya's collected works (specifically 'Memories of Lenin'), Larina's account of her years with Bukharin ('This I Cannot Forget'), Ordzhonikidze's hagiography to her husband ('The Path of a Bolshevik') and Voroshilova's diary and autobiography of her early years contained in the Russian archives. These will be assessed in a broadly chronological manner in order to tease out both the development of Bolshevik elite women's lives in the first half-century of Bolshevism but, more importantly, to examine how Bolshevik women portrayed themselves and their society. As the 'first lady' of the Soviet state and the most prolific of all wife authors, the role of Krupskaya as the creator of an archetype for the new Bolshevik wife – a model for behaviour of future partners – will require especially intense examination.

In late 1924, Nadezhda Krupskaya began the task of writing about her deceased husband's life, her reminiscences – which consisted of their pre-revolutionary life together – being published in 1926. They begin in 1893 and read more as a witness

statement than any narrative of a loved lifelong companion. Though Krupskaya's memories commence with her first encounter with Lenin, her narrative does not take the form of a detailed character description of a serious-but-sarcastic former university student in his early 20s – instead personalised impressions of Lenin are replaced with notes upon specific meetings and the subjects discussed. Indeed, Lenin's points of view on various subjects are the focus of the work which at times almost leads the reader into a didactic narrative. The first note on Lenin, for instance, is in the context of a discussion of markets:

> Our new Marxist friend [Lenin] treated this question of markets in a very concrete manner. It was linked up with the interests of the masses, and in the whole approach we sensed just that live Marxism that takes phenomena in their concrete surroundings and in their development. One wanted to become more closely acquainted with this new-comer, to find out his views at closer range.[2]

Thus the reader is not only presented Lenin as authority rather than Lenin as man, but also told that his views deserve scrutiny. Unsurprisingly, as will become clear, Krupskaya's claim to be more intimately acquainted than anyone else with Lenin's views on the best course for the development of Communism in the Soviet Union was a claim for considerable ideological power.

Only some few pages into her chronological manuscript, Krupskaya claims that she had already gotten 'to know Vladimir Ilyich fairly intimately', yet still her narrative has only concentrated up until this point on Lenin's ideological preaching and not on any affective relationship built up between the young twenty-somethings. As if to reinforce the point that Krupskaya's memoirs are more political than personal, her portrayal of Lenin is also of a man who could do no wrong, and the book's tone is quite defensive at times. After discussing the actions of Lenin's group amongst Petrograd's 'masses', for instance, Krupskaya quickly notes "Vladimir Ilyich never forgot the other forms of work"[3]. Later on the same page it is her husband who is also described as 'the best equipped for conspiratorial work' and who taught Krupskaya's group (after some effort) to use cipher to protect contacts' names (contacts that had, of course, been assiduously collected by Lenin).

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2 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 16.
3 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 22.

The first real character portraits in Krupskaya's *Memories* are actually of the men which Lenin and Krupskaya met in Siberian exile. As Lenin and Krupskaya were only married in Shushenskoe, her first description of life as Lenin's wife comes at this point in the narrative as well. On the one hand Krupskaya relates that 'it was impossible to find anyone to help with the housework' and that at first she managed to spill soup and dumplings due to her lack of command of the kitchen, but afterwards 'got used to it'[4]. While this is hardly a description of a masterful housekeeper, Krupskaya still only hints at the fact she was never really a capable wife 'domestically', according to the standards of her time.

When it came to running the household, it appears that her mother was the more dominant personality, though this is not made clear in Krupskaya's memoirs. In one letter home, Krupskaya describes how her mother was quite peeved at Lenin mistaking a meal of goose for grouse[5] (presumably an indication that the bird had been cooked by Krupskaya senior), while when the rather strange revolutionary family acquired a 'girl-help' later in their first year of exile while Krupskaya claimed to have taught her to read and write, it was her mother who instructed her to 'never, never spill the tea'[6].

This is not to say that Krupskaya was inactive during her period of exile. She was frequently engaged in household duties of one kind or another or in taking dictation of Lenin's *Development of Capitalism in Russia* at this time. Even when Lenin was away on brief trips to the nearest regional centres, Krupskaya occupied herself, describing one typical work routine thusly: "In the absence of Volodya, I intend to 1) undertake the final repairs to his suits 2) study my English reading – for which I will learn 12 pages of different exceptions in Nork 3) read through to the end the Engl. book that I've started. And then, well, I'll go and read something more [*podchitat'*]"[7]. Nevertheless, while in her memoir she comes across as playing a dual role of domesticated wife and private secretary, Krupskaya had apparently in practice inherited few traditional 'wifely' traits from her mother. Indeed when Lenin and Krupskaya arrived in London in 1902 it was not until the arrival of Krupskaya's

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4 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 36.
5 RGASPI *f.* 12, *op*. 1, *d*. 1, *l*. 33.
6 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 36.
7 RGASPI, *f.* 12, *op*. 1, *d*. 1, *l*. 19 – letter of September 11, 1898. It is unclear who 'Nork', the author of an English-teaching text is and therefore whether the transliteration from Russian back to English is accurate.

mother that the family began to 'eat in' again – perhaps an indication of Krupskaya's cooking abilities[8].

In European exile from Shushenskoe, Lenin had first chosen Munich as a base to distance himself from the rest of the Russian émigré community, but also to establish ties with the 'elders' of the Marxist movement in Germany who could sponsor a new revolutionary newspaper. Vera Zasulich already lived in the Bavarian city, while Lenin, Martov and Potresov all emigrated there together. With the support of Axelrod and Plekhanov, Lenin embarked upon the publication of *Iskra*.

Krupskaya's role in this new venture was to be considerable – she was to become, on Lenin's arrangement, the new secretary of *Iskra* (taking over from Inna Smidovich-Leman). This was a major administrative role and entailed developing and maintaining contacts in Russia for the paper, arranging the smuggling of pamphlets into Russia and obtaining money from subscribers and sponsors. While Michael Pearson rather unkindly suggested that Krupskaya's elegant copperplate hand had preferred her to a job as Lenin's fiancée, in the case of the post of secretary of *Iskra*, Krupskaya's administrative skills were most probably a major factor in Lenin's selection, although in this case the choice of Krupskaya seems motivated primarily by the fact that, as Krupskaya herself says "this, of course, meant that contact with Russia would be carried on under the closest control of Vladimir Ilyich"[9]

At the same time, Krupskaya, now over thirty and already looking considerably older with her thyroid condition, was for the first time in her life not living with her mother[10] and it seems that Munich marked the first time when Krupskaya was therefore responsible for all cooking – a task, as has been seen, at which she demonstrated no proficiency.

The kitchen in Krupskaya and Lenin's small Munich living quarters, however, would have not been the only room to smell of burning. Destroying correspondence and developing 'invisible' messages meant that "the odour of burnt paper was almost noticeable [sic] in her room" [11] during the *Iskra* years. Just over fifty editions of the

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8 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 68.

9 Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 56

10 This was not to last for long. Yelizaveta Krupskaya quickly joined the couple again in Munich, then returned to Petersburg again towards the end of the Munich months, later again joining Krupskaya and Lenin in London in mid 1902.

11 Trotsky is referring to the smell of Krupskaya's room in later years of her émigré work as *Iskra* secretary. Indirectly referenced through Pearson, *The Sealed Train*, p. 29

paper were published while Lenin was on *Iskra*'s editorial board and Krupskaya was responsible for distributing – often illegally – some eight thousands copies of each during this period, accumulating a large 'black book' full of codenames and addresses of contacts in Russia and of those sympathetic to the cause that might smuggle such *tamizdat* back into Russia. Krupskaya sent messages back to Russia encoded, written in invisible ink and through obscure third parties in third cities like Nuremberg, Liege and Darmstadt. These precautions, together with her false Bulgarian passport, seem to have meant that Krupskaya evaded the scrutiny of the *Okhrana* at this time; right through the couple's stay in Munich and then London Krupskaya's whereabouts remained unknown to the tsarist police. Krupskaya may not have impressed any English women with her wifely talents – neither her care for her husband (who apparently sewed his own buttons more expertly than Krupskaya might have), nor her ability to manage the household (with no servants it was Lenin who generally structured the day and had almost an obsessive-compulsive desire to keep their rooms tidy), nor her cooking – but as an organiser and administrator she seemed to have found her calling. Each month she was receiving and answering some three hundred letters back and forth between Russia and her Bavarian base[12].

It is therefore not a mischaracterization to state that Krupskaya's portrayal of herself as a Bolshevik wife is of a woman with a very *professional* relationship with Lenin, but also one who saw her duty to act in a supporting role for her husband, including occupying herself with domestic duties. On the subject of her personal life with Lenin, Krupskaya is particularly silent, however: whilst it is not remarkable that Krupskaya refrains from discussing their failure to start a family, at the same time quite notable details of the couples' attachment – for instance Lenin's 4000km round trip from European Russia to Ufa to see Krupskaya in 1900, when he might have simply left for European exile – details that might only reinforce Lenin's commitment to Krupskaya personally and his compassion as a husband, were also omitted from Krupskaya's reminiscences.

Krupskaya's portrayal of her own role is therefore one that on the one hand de-emphasises her capacities as an administrator of Bolshevik contact lists and as a liaison officer vital for the success of the Party's conspiratorial operations, but at the same time one that over-emphasises those qualities that might see her as a typical

[12] Many of these letters are lost or unpublished, but '300' is an estimate made by 'a Soviet writer' based on extrapolation. McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, pp. 102-3.

'wifely' figure: a manager of the home, maker of coffee for when Trotsky popped around, cook, amateur seamstress and companion who looked up to her teacher and husband, Lenin, and put up with his penchants for duck hunting and the like, learning to adapt to his tastes 'as a good wife should'.

Of course, Nadezhda Krupskaya was never a calculating revolutionary in the way her husband was – she had been brought up with the more romantic influences of Nekrasov and Tolstoy, her sketches suggested a certain petit-bourgeois nature and even by the eve of revolution was involved in 'charitable' rather than revolutionary activities in Petrograd. At the same time, however, her choice to represent her own role in Lenin's wife as that of a domesticated wife more than a co-revolutionary suggests that Krupskaya held rather old-fashioned values when it came to marital relations and saw her role as a wife in a very different manner than did contemporaries such as Armand and Kollontai.

The other chief way in which an early 20th century wife might be said to be 'doing her duty' was by becoming a mother. This, however, appeared a physical impossibility for Lenin and Krupskaya quite possibly because of complications associated with the onset of Graves' disease in Krupskaya and her subsequent hospitalisation. Nevertheless, this did not stop Krupskaya presenting herself as a mothering figure as Robert McNeal's chapter "Mother of Her People" makes clear. Krupskaya allegedly remarked: "I was always very sad that I did not have children, but now I am not sad. Now I have many of them – Komsomols and Young Pioneers. All of them are Leninists."[13] Krupskaya did a significant amount of work with children, with an anthology of her letters – *Correspondence with Pioneers* – published in the early 1930s, not to mention her continued public role as a pedagogue.

While overplaying her domesticity in her memoirs, Krupskaya still did not pass up entirely the opportunity her unique access to Lenin's legacy gave her in the political sphere, however. With the notion that the dead Lenin had been almost the prophet of the revolution established following his death and monumentalisation, a serious claim to be able to decipher the words of the prophet was indeed a substantial political asset. Despite having the closest long-term relationship of all revolutionaries to Lenin, however, Krupskaya did not attempt to use this influence to make significant political inroads. Neither Stalin nor Trotsky, for instance, are portrayed in

[13] Drizdo's memoirs, as quoted in McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 272.

a negative light in her memoirs, despite the fact that a simple claim that Lenin had disapproved of one or the other might have had political ramifications.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of Krupskaya's role as a 'legacy bearer' for the memory of her husband came in the form of her attitude towards what came known as Lenin's 'testament' – a series of observations on the Party's leadership that were dictated by Lenin in the Winter of 1922-23 in spasmodic bursts, typed up by his secretaries and set aside in sealed envelopes entrusted to Krupskaya – envelopes only to be opened by Lenin himself or by his wife following his death. The fact that Krupskaya also sought to protect Lenin's health at this time through preventing colleagues interrupting his recuperation (leading to Lenin's famous testament comment that Stalin was 'too rude') also bears testament to her willingness to protect her husband's interests.

There is little reason to suppose that Krupskaya was desirous of any serious political leadership position after her husband's death but even less reason to believe that such a desire might have been realistic. Krupskaya had never been a dominant ideologue, conducting herself as Lenin's proxy on some issues, but otherwise devoting herself to more practical educational or administrative matters. More significantly, she had not been working in the offices of the Commissariat of Enlightenment since Lenin's last cerebral haemorrhage and did not enjoy strong contacts with any member of the ruling Politburo. This was evidenced by the fact that she turned to Kamenev on the matter of Stalin's abusive phone call and again to Lev Borisovich on the matter of her husband's testament. Kamenev was indeed a prominent politician – the deputy head of Russia's Sovnarkom and Council of Labour and Defence from mid 1923 – but Krupskaya did not have particularly close ties with him, and now enjoyed a frosty relationship with the USSR's General Secretary, Stalin with whom Kamenev and Zinoviev were united in a temporary alliance against the quite recalcitrant Trotsky[14]. While she might have had political capital as Lenin's wife, without support from prominent politicians, Krupskaya had little means of effecting any political manoeuvres, especially in the cut-throat world of the post-Lenin Soviet Union.

[14] There are signs that Krupskaya made some approaches of 'rapprochement' with Trotsky during early 1924, but it was not until some years later (when Trotsky's political life in the USSR was spent) that the two became at all friendly.

A primary means of Krupskaya establishing herself as Lenin's legacy bearer would have, of course, been a speech at his funeral, and Krupskaya did indeed give a eulogy, but a restrained one. Dzerzhinsky, another Stalin ally, had been appointed the head of Lenin's funeral commission and appears to have rejected a more substantial speech drafted by Lenin's widow in which she expounded on Lenin's wishes for the young USSR in favour of a much dryer text[15]. Much has been made of the fact that Dzerzhinsky's commission also gave Stalin the opportunity to usurp the position of Lenin's successor at this same funeral. If this is not enough evidence of Stalin's 'victory' over Krupskaya in the appropriation of Lenin's legacy, Lenin's embalming and entombment on Red Square was also counter to his wife's wishes but went ahead nevertheless. Krupskaya had expected that her husband would be buried and wrote in *Pravda* of January 29 (two days after the funeral): "Do not permit your grief for Ilyich to take the form of external reverence for his person. Do not raise memorials to him, palaces named after him… To all this he attached so little importance in his life, all this was so burdensome to him"[16]. Her wishes were ignored, Lenin was put on display and is on display to this day, although his tomb was never visited (nor stood upon) by Krupskaya.

Apart from the prestige that came with being Lenin's widow, Krupskaya was left with very little to make her politically relevant following Lenin's death. She retained few records of Lenin's, and his final writings together with Lenin's 'testament' were given over to Kamenev just in time for the May 1924 Party Congress. Her husband's testamentary writings, containing as they did criticisms of all major Party figures were not the type of document that might grant Krupskaya any 'political mileage' and in the end they were to force her into a difficult position when the Eastman affair arose: part of Lenin's testament particularly damaging to Stalin was leaked to a Western journalist and Krupskaya was forced to deny the presence of any sort of testament on the order of the Politburo. In the meantime, Lenin's final words of abuse were not even openly discussed at the Congress as he had wished[17].

Following Lenin's funeral, Krupskaya gradually lost any influence she still possessed. Her health suffered further and she was ordered on vacation later in 1924.

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[15] See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, pp. 239 – 241.

[16] For this section, see McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, pp. 241-2.

[17] An informative and concise summary of the politics of the Eastman Affair is to be found in the introduction by Lars Lih, Oleg Naumov and Oleg Khlevniuk to *Stalin's Letters to Molotov* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 18-24).

When she returned, she was for some brief months a member of the Kamenev-Zinoviev opposition to the temporary duumvirate of Bukharin and Stalin, but by 1927 had confirmed publicly her support of the Stalinist line[18]. She was rewarded for this change of heart by a position on the Central Committee (as a full member) from the XVth Congress of 1927 until her death, but Lenin's widow was never in the Secretariat, Politburo or Orgburo and struggled to promote minor reform even within the Commissariat for Enlightenment. In 1929 she submitted her resignation (which was rejected) from the Commissariat, conceding that her position (and that of the Commissar, Lunacharsky) supporting polytechnical education was never to be politically successful[19]. While during her working life she had assembled some ten volumes worth of articles and comments concerning pedagogy, ultimately therefore even her ability to seriously influence Soviet policy in this regard was limited.

Krupskaya lived another decade after this last major defeat, through Stalin's collectivisation (which she appears to have utterly opposed) and the purges of her comrades (some of whom were fancifully charged with plotting to kill her husband twenty years earlier), but was socially and politically isolated and her writings – on technical pedagogical matters and decreasingly about her husband – had little connection with mainstream politics or the events of Stalin's industrialising, collectivising and traumatising Soviet Union.

There was to be no other Bolshevik wife who commanded such a place amongst revolutionaries as Krupskaya – a woman who had, after all, been the closest confidant to the Soviet Union's *de facto* founder for some three decades. Whereas Krupskaya's portrayal of the Bolshevik wife was one that overemphasised her domestic, wifely nature, from those wives such as Anna Larina and Aino Kuusinen who saw the revolution from a very different angle, a very different imprint of the role of Bolshevik women is to be had.

Anna Larina, writing her memoirs in the Soviet Union of the 1980s, was of course addressing a very different audience to Krupskaya on a very different subject – her task was not to immortalise a husband already revered, but rather to resurrect a spouse almost forgotten.

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[18] See McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 262.
[19] McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 276.

In a departure from the role of many other wives of the period, Larina's first duty as a promoter of Bukharin's legacy was not as an author or as a supplicant to the authorities, but as someone who was called upon quite specifically, to memorise her husband's testament for the future. As she recalls:

> I was twenty-three years old now; my husband was convinced that I would live until the day when I could personally deliver his letter to the Central Committee. But, certain that any writing of his would be confiscated during the routine search, fearful that any such discovery would cause me to suffer repressions, he asked me to memorize his valedictory statement word for word so that the actual letter could be destroyed. (He did not imagine that I could be persecuted anyway, letter or no.) Again and again, Nikolai Ivanovich read his letter in a whisper to me, and I had to repeat it after him[20]…

Larina appears to have successfully preserved in her memory the two-page text, rewriting and destroying copies from time to time in exile until she finally felt able to preserve a copy safely following Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956. Her next task as a preserver of Bukharin's legacy was to keep his archives of manuscripts and photographs – something she attempted to do by having them transported with her to exile in Astrakhan in the hope that she might keep them from destruction. As it is, with the exception of a photograph that she preserved in her shoe when sent to prison, her copies of these documents appear to be lost. Certainly there are no personal documents of Bukharin's contained in the Moscow archives for socio-political research: what of Bukharin's private letters and writings that still exist have gradually filtered out of Stalin's personal archives in GARF since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Of course, it was primarily through her memoirs that Larina preserved her own version of Nikolai Bukharin's life and character. The importance of these memoirs should not be underestimated: up until the final decade of Soviet rule, the excision of the repressed from the collective memory of Soviet citizens, the lack of information available on erstwhile political giants such as Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin and

[20] A. Larina, *This I Cannot Forget* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), p. 333. The whispering was no doubt connected to the Bukharins' belief that their apartment had been bugged.

the removal of their texts from libraries made serious understanding or investigation of Soviet politics difficult within the USSR.

Outside the USSR, even sometimes with a wider availability of source materials, by the late 1970s Bukharin's biographer Stephen Cohen appears to have found it taxing to produce a 'human portrait' of the man said to have coined the phrase 'socialist humanism'. With a lack of available eyewitnesses to Bukharin's inner life, this is not surprising: for the most part, Cohen's volume is an analysis of the development of Bukharin's political and economic theories as illustrated in his books, while in the few pages Cohen considers Nikolai Ivanovich's character, a fairly one-dimensional figure emerges of Bukharin as he presented himself, rather than of the inner Bukharin:

> Those who encountered him over the years testify that the gentle, open, good-humored Bukharin, who in his traditional Russian blouse, leatherjacket, and high boots conveyed the aura of Bohemia-come-to-power, was the most likable of the Bolshevik oligarchs… He was "lovingly soft in his relations with comrades," and "beloved." Exuding an "impervious geniality," he brought infectious gaiety to informal gatherings and, in his best moments, an ameliorating charm to politics. Bukharin, observed Lenin, was among those "people with such happy natures… who even in the fiercest battles are least able to envenom their attacks."[21]

Larina's account, somewhat surprisingly for someone so clearly partisan to Bukharin, is much more nuanced in contrast:

> In the furious energy of his political passions, he had been known to seize hold of an opponent with a death lock. At the same time, his nervous temperament was surprisingly delicate – pathologically taut, I would say. Even on ordinary days during that tempestuous epoch that called upon him to play a leading role, his nature, exceptionally sensitive and alive, could not bear nervous overloads, for its "tolerance" was unbelievably slight, and the emotional strings would snap… Emotional hypertension was only one facet of his multifaceted, complex character.[22]

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[21] S.F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 219.
[22] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, pp. 126-7.

Larina's portrait is therefore not of a man without foibles, but at the same time it does much to humanise her former husband. Indeed the three greatest desires of Bolshevik family members who wrote about their famous relatives appear to have been to preserve their legacy, humanise them, and perhaps most importantly to 'correct the historical record'.

In the case of Krupskaya, in particular, this wish to 'control' Lenin's legacy was especially important, as it was theoretically Lenin's testament upon which the future development of the Soviet Union was to be based. As such, it is not surprising that Krupskaya's access to publish details of Lenin's revolutionary beliefs was somewhat limited: her 'Memories' extend only up until the time of revolution, while her custodianship of 'Lenin's Testament' was defused as a potential weapon by Lenin's successors through the cautious manner in which its reading was treated within the Soviet Union and the denials of its existence forced upon Krupskaya by the country's top political figures. Her options to act as a 'spokesman for Lenin's will' after his death thus severely constricted, Krupskaya for the most part turned to her own memoirs and writings on the subject of education, at least secure in the knowledge that her connection to Lenin – while never able to be fully expressed in writing – secured her safe position amongst the Bolshevik elite.

The story of Ordzhonikidze's wife and her contribution to 'legacy preservation' is more interesting still: the fate of Bukharin and Lenin was well known to their wives and to the general public at the time their spouses' books came out, while the fate of Sergo Ordzhonikidze was known to his wife but not to be revealed to the public[23]. How though did Zina Ordzhonikidze, by all accounts a woman to be reckoned with[24] intent on preserving her husband's legacy, manage to write about a man whose final years were in the category of an unofficial state secret – a man who had been

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[23] Indeed, Ordzhonikidze's fate is so surrounded by mystery today that one cannot be absolutely sure of the cause of his death. The most realistic reports – as detailed by his daughter and Khrushchev (who himself did not know the truth behind Sergo's death until Mikoyan revealed to him the details – see Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: vol. 1 Commissar*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004, pp. 666-7) – are that Ordzhonikidze, much like Stalin's own wife, so found the nature of Kremlin life and the Terror and his impotence to prevent it heartbreaking that he shot himself in his home. The official version was, of course, that he died of a myocardial infarction.

[24] Montefiore reports (seemingly according to the testimony of Zina Ordzhonikidze's daughter) that Zina 'ordered' Stalin to the phone after her husband's suicide with the message 'Sergo's done the same as Nadya!' (Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 189), while during Ordzhonikidze's life she refused to shake hands with Beria, considering his work within the party against Ordzhonikidze and his family (Eteri Ordzhonikidze, *Big Parents* episode).

psychologically tortured by the Terror leading him to descend into depression and finally suicide as it sprang up around him? In the end, she decided to avoid talking of Ordzhonikidze's role within the elite altogether, presenting her biography, as its title (Path of a Bolshevik) suggests as a portrait of his journey from birth into the party. The manuscript ends with Sergo's journey to Moscow to take on his post as the secretary of the Central Control Commission.

Unfortunately for the historian of Soviet private lives and indeed Soviet women, Ordzhonikidze's account provides little by means of detail as to her husband's private life or the nature of their marriage. After describing the circumstances of her meeting Ordzhonikidze and their elopement, Zinaida has very little to say about what type of husband Sergo was and what her wifely duties through their almost two decades of marriage consisted of. If such reticence might be considered exceptional, the account of Kuibyshev's sister, Galina Vladimirovna, must be labelled extraordinary: despite co-writing an entire book on the life of her brother and, as a sibling, having a specific and personal insight into his life, she not only does not detail anything of a 'private' nature in her work, but there is nothing to suggest, save the coincidence of names, that the 'G.V. Kuibysheva' who worked upon the biography was in fact a relative[25].

As distinct from authors such as Ordzhonikidze and Kuibysheva, Yekaterina Voroshilova was a very different legacy preserver again. She wrote of her husband's exploits in the final years of his career as they happened and seemingly for the desk drawer, yet the nature of her manuscript – ordered, corrected, formal and reserved - suggest that Voroshilova too meant her diary to be read by more than simply her own eyes.

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[25] The place of the Kuibyshevs in the Kremlin elite is interesting. Valerian Vladimirovich was married twice, first to Evgeniia Solomonovna Kogan, who was secretary to the Samara *gubkom* and then the Party's Moscow *gorkom* in the 1930s and then to Pana Afanas'evna Stiazhkina who also had been a long-time Party member and undertook work in the organs of the Central Committee (see entry in Zalesskii, *Imperiia Stalina*, p. 258). A rumour in the Kremlin elite was that Kuibyshev beat his wife, something that Stalin discouraged (see Montefiore*, Stalin: Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 215) and Montefiore claims Kuibyshev died "unexpectedly of heart disease and alcoholism" (Montefiore, *Stalin: Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 149). Kuibyshev's son, daughter and two sisters are listed as residents of the House on the Embankment (*Oknami na Kreml'*, p. 246). His first wife was arrested and shot in 1937 (following his death) and his brother Nikolai (who distinguished himself fighting for the Red Army in the Civil War) was sentenced to death in 1938 (see Zalesskii, *Imperiia Stalina*, p. 258). Kuibyshev's son Vladimir married the Andreevs' daughter Natasha, who herself was to write three books on the life of her father, Andrei Andreev (*Oknami na Kreml'*, p. 216). Galina Vladimirovna's account of her brother is to be found in G.V. Kuibysheva et al., *Valerian Vladimirovich Kuibyshev: biografiia*, Moscow: Politizdat, 1966.

As a text, Voroshilova's autobiography is an interesting one. One might wish for her to have instead spent time analysing her post-revolutionary years, save for the fact that from the time of the beginning of her relationship with Voroshilov, Yekaterina Davidovna seems to find it difficult to talk much of her own life, or even of her husband's in any objective, deep manner. The young Voroshilova is allowed to have rich relatives, is permitted to have been naïve enough to have joined the SRs, may admit to having never read Lenin before her exile – but such options are not available to Voroshilov the revolutionary or Voroshilov the husband, whose status must be preserved as an eternal Marxist-Leninist in writings.

What is bizarre about Voroshilova's notes about her first years with her husband is the lack of any discussion of the passions that motivated them or drew them together: Voroshilova does not mention the word love or the notion of falling in love, she does not refer to Voroshilov as arousing her revolutionary instincts, of him being devoted to her, or standing out from the crowd physically or in terms of personality. One might even say that there is a deliberate omission of talk of love, commitment and the personal life of Voroshilova and her husband in the autobiography because such things were seen to be incompatible with the notion of the revolutionary marriage and of Voroshilov as being fully committed to the working classes and not to 'family'. Voroshilova is more than happy to dwell on the comradely relationships of her husband at the time, to explain at times negative words and attitudes of others towards him, but never paints herself in a 'wifely' light in relationship to him. Not being with Voroshilov during his exile is 'difficult', but not 'lonely' for Voroshilova, while her decision to convert is painted as entirely rational and not motivated by sheer love.

In these respects, Voroshilova's autobiography continues in the tradition of texts such as Krupskaya's (and to a lesser extent, Ordzhonikidze's) in portraying a union unmotivated by bourgeois notions of love (or even by the revolutionary passion of works like *What Is To Be Done?*) but rather rationally entered into by both parties for the sake of revolutionary prudence, where although the wife has been independently active in revolutionary circles prior to her marriage, marriage and revolution see her role quickly converted to the sustaining and legitimisation of her husband's political legacy. It is somewhat of an extraordinary achievement that this process was ongoing for Voroshilova for almost five decades after her marriage to

Kliment Yefremovich. In her pre-Great War autobiography she touches upon some of the early sacrifices she made for the union – her travelling to be with him and her conversion – but it is in Voroshilova's diaries of the post-Great Patriotic War period that Voroshilova's role as a subservient even doting wife and mother is most noticeable and this second major text from the archetypal wife of a committed, stable Bolshevik marriage will be examined now.

In the Russian state archives are to be found eight exercise books, covered in brown paper, containing the daily notes and jottings of Yekaterina Voroshilova. The first is marked "Beginning of notes – 1945" and the last ends in 1959, not long before her death. The pages are filled with everything from short outlines of appointments that day, to diary-style narratives, to copies of letters sent to friends, to biographical recounts of the years past all written in a legible but ragged (by Russian standards) script with occasional spelling errors – a work that bespeaks a committed and literate woman who, all the same, had received an irregular education. Unlike Voroshilova's autobiography, her diary materials are not presented in a way that suggests they were ever meant for publication, though fortunately for the researcher they have already been collated and typed up into a manuscript of over 100 pages titled "The Chronicles of Y.D. Voroshilova 'Something Resembling A Diary'"[26].

As a post-war work of a woman active within revolutionary circles even prior to the Great War, Voroshilova's writings are those of a veteran who has survived the revolutionary struggle, the war in the countryside, the political intrigues of the 1930s and the trauma of the Second World War. She focuses little therefore on those issues and scandals that have frequently been the staple diet of those examining Stalin and his circle and many pages are devoted simply to the mundane in a time that was in many respects more tumultuous than that of the purges. Apart from limited biographical flashbacks contained within Voroshilova's diaries, they are yet to face the detailed examination of researchers for this reason, but nevertheless they are again an important source in examining the roles and attitudes of Bolshevik wives within elite society for two main reasons – first, in that they provide one of the only dense documentary accounts of what a wife was actually *doing* on a day-to-day basis and

[26] The text being directly referred to and referenced throughout these pages is the typewritten manuscript which appears to be an entirely accurate copy of Voroshilova's original handwritten text and can be found in RGASPI *f.* 714, *op*. 1, *d*. 419, *ll*. 1 – 108, where diary pages correspond to the *delo*'s *list'ia*. This text is supplemented by five pages of entries from 1959, that have not been typed up, available only in handwritten form in the above *delo*, *ll*. 158-162.

second, in that they depict the *byt* of the Bolshevik elite wife from her own perspective: the choice of material and manner in which it is analysed by Voroshilova can tell us much about her attitudes and approach to formal life, whilst still being contained in a text written in a private and informal setting. The following paragraphs will examine Voroshilova's diaries in chronological order with this in mind, focussing particularly on major themes that can be drawn out from them – the perquisites of elite life, Voroshilova as a mother, the recurring theme of the wife as a legacy preserver, her work and her duties as a 'first lady' style figure – but also keeping in mind that this text by Yekaterina Davidovna is temporally situated in the final years of Stalin's reign, the interregnum and early Khrushchev period and thus can be seen to round off a chronological portrait of the growth, evolution, maturity and finally obscurity of the Bolshevik elite wife.

To aid the understanding of the development of Voroshilova's life and career, before moving to examine her post-war activities, it is prudent to outline briefly her movements and developments as a Bolshevik wife in the period of time between the end of her autobiography and the beginning of her diary. Voroshilova continued supporting her husband in various activities, living a travelling lifestyle up until the time of the February Revolution when the couple found themselves back in Voroshilov's original agitating ground of Lugansk, where his wife was appointed technical secretary to the Lugansk committee of the Party. Following the onset of the Civil War, Voroshilova was evacuated to Tsaritsyn in mid-1918, where she ran a children's home through the newly-founded Social Security section until moving onto Kiev to perform similar work[27]. All through this period where feasible Voroshilova had kept close to her husband who was leading the Bolshevik 10th Army. In November 1919 as the First Cavalry Army was being formed she worked over the winter in Moscow (in the city's organization for 'victims of counter-revolution'), but then travelled back to be with her husband for the rest of his military service, helping out in the cavalry force's medical section through to March 1921. From 1922 to 1924,

[27] This summary is based on the work history detailed by Voroshilova herself on her Sverdlov University student card *anketa*, together with her chronology of activities provided in a 1950s document – a *nagradnoy list*, or form to be completed by those receiving a decoration from the state. Both lists seems detailed, specific and generally accurate, containing dozens of work placements that generally correspond, but in the earlier, handwritten *anketa* Voroshilova has had the habit of listing no time gaps between her placements, and hence commences her time in Kiev from December, 1918 when her period in Tsaritsyn ended. This seems entirely unlikely considering the Red Army did not 'liberate' Kiev until early February 1919.

Voroshilova held down a post in the ZhenOtdel administration of the Don region while her husband was a member of the Central Committee's South-East bureau and in the latter half of 1924 when Voroshilov was called to Moscow, his wife again followed.

Through to her wartime evacuation, and with the exception of holidays and recuperation, Voroshilova remained in Moscow with her husband. In the late 1920s she held a succession of posts first as a ZhenOtdel instructor, then as an editor of the women's pages of the newspaper *Bednota* ('The Poor') and finally of its 'investigations bureau'. The tendency, it would seem, was thus for Voroshilova to move from specifically women's employment through her early work in children's houses and the ZhenOtdel through to more gender-neutral but nevertheless essentially work-a-day occupations. Come 1930 and Voroshilova distanced herself even further from her earlier career path by embarking on a degree at Sverdlov University in Moscow. Amongst an increasingly elite enrolment of approximately 1000[28], over the course of the next three years[29], Voroshilova would have been occupied in learning general Marxist theory as well as a speciality for thirty to forty hours a week, generally within a group of some few dozen fellow students.

Following the completion of her tertiary education, Voroshilova went on to be involved in Party work as a leader of 'party-historical' offices – that is, as a propagandist attached to various Moscow Party schools and organs. In December, 1941 she was evacuated to Kuibyshev along with other Bolshevik elite families where she worked as acting head of the propaganda and agitation department attached to the local *Gorkom*, before returning again to Moscow in early 1943.

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[28] Sverdlov University, like most Soviet higher education institutions had become more and more the province of the privileged elites by the end of the 1920s, despite the fact that the tertiary education sector as a whole was burgeoning. Previously nominally open to any person over 18 with some secondary education, by the time of Voroshilova's enrolment, access to the university was limited to those with at least five years party membership, three years manual labour under their belt, demonstrated aptitude in certain practical tasks (eg. map-reading) and, of course, the appropriate recommendations of Party committees. It appears that the access to university education by Bolshevik wives was made considerably easier through the support of their husbands and thus higher Party organs. For a summary of the growth and changes to Soviet higher education in these years see, for example, Z. Katz "Party-Political Education in Soviet Russia, 1918-1935" in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3. (Jan., 1956), pp. 237-247.

[29] Voroshilova lists her time as a student as starting in September, 1930 and finishing in January, 1933 – only two years and five months at a time when Sverdlov University was moving from three to four year courses. There is no specific evidence to suggest that Voroshilova's term of study was especially abbreviated because of her 'connections', however.

It is with Voroshilov and Voroshilova in Moscow, during the final months of the Great Patriotic War, with her working as a propagandist for a higher Party school and him coordinating various military matters, that Yekaterina Davidovna's diary begins and while its first entry is uninformative in terms of subject manner, its tenor is interesting:

> January 30
>
> On the 20th of January, 1945 on the instructions of the Soviet government, Kliment Yefremovich signed the Soviet-Hungarian armistice agreement.
>
> On the 29th of January at around 6-7 in the evening K.Y. came to say goodbye to me at Barvikha where I was resting after illness before his departure for Hungary. Our spirits were better, for soon, very soon was our victory over the hated fascist Germany.[30]

Thus Voroshilova begins her diary not simply with a personalised factual account, but a line that might be copied straight from a textbook: her husband is the formal 'Kliment Yefremovich' and he is signing an armistice with the somewhat redundant phrase 'on the instructions of the Soviet government' – seemingly simultaneously a sign of the pride of Yekaterina Davidovna in the importance of her husband's work, but also a rather defensive claused aimed at reminding any reader that Voroshilov was working as a servant of the Party. Even more odd, perhaps, is the final sentence: Soviet troops had been advancing westward through Poland since October of the previous year and although with each day more territory was being captured, it seems bizarre that Voroshilov and his wife would have been in a better mood because of it even by January – had this mood really lasted since the beginning of the German retreat, or is Voroshilova being disingenuous? The use of the simple past 'was' instead of the subjunctive concerning the victory also reads strangely as though written after the war while the adjectives 'hated fascist' applied to Germany again seem more appropriate to a textbook than to a personal and private journal. In letters of the time (including those exchanged between the Molotovs – see elsewhere) the German forces are frequently prefixed by adjectives such as 'hated' and 'fascist'

[30] Voroshilova's Diaries (RGASPI *f.* 74, *op.* 1, *d.* 429), p. 1. Again, as with Voroshilova's autobiography, page numbers refer to the markings on Voroshilova's typewritten manuscript and not to RGASPI *list* numbers.

and affixed by terms such as 'invaders' (*zakhvatchiki*), but their presence in a private account suggests either that Voroshilova intended her diary be read, or else had completely internalised such lexical structures that they had become natural for her.

Voroshilova's next entry is on the 6th of July, some two months after the victory in Europe, where Voroshilova is on a train to Budapest with her husband. She delights in the general good spirits of the population around her and the fields which pass by the carriage are apparently 'in better shape than they were before the war': "it seems that by this small measure the concern of our government for people can be seen, and that such is only possible under Soviet power"[31]. Arriving in Budapest, Voroshilova begins with the travelogue commentary of an *Intourist* official, describing the division of the city, detailing numbers of seasonal agricultural workers, thousands of batraks, post-war Soviet land reforms, the amount of arable land in control of those dependent on it and such similar figures. It is not clear exactly what Voroshilova was doing in Budapest (especially as she stayed there longer than her husband), though Yekaterina Davidovna notes she attended various *mitingi* (revolutionary assemblies), including those specifically for women. She notes that these had little in common with 'our women's meetings', being of a disagreeably philanthropic character to the point that one ended with the distribution of a piece of soap to each female attendee[32]. From the nature of her writing, which talks of meetings and weekends and dinners with visiting writers (such as Ilya Ehrenburg), it appears Voroshilova was living the life of somewhat of an ambassadress during this time. As if to emphasise her life of privilege, the last two entries from Voroshilova's first notebook concern Semyon Budyonny acceding to her request for two 'little horses' (*konyachki*) for the Party school and her husband's departure by plane to attend the Hungarian National Assembly[33].

For February 9th, 1947 – the day of Voroshilova's 60th birthday – she received an oil painting from her husband based on a photograph taken of a much younger Gorbman in 1910. The couple went to the Kremlin to vote in elections to the Supreme Soviet and then returned to their dacha where they were joined by their grandchildren Klimushka and Volodya. Despite trying to keep the date a secret, Voroshilova's work colleagues also celebrated with her later that day. That same month Voroshilova

[31] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 2.
[32] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 11.
[33] Voroshilova's Diaries, pp. 14-15.

began a new job working at the V.I. Lenin Central Museum, a large building on Revolution Square which received over half a million guests a year, as its deputy director. This change of employment had come some two months after the authorities had acceded to Voroshilova's requests to be freed from work with the office of the Academy of Social Studies whose 'direction' she had not agreed with[34]. The fact that Yekaterina Davidovna had the independence and strength of character to request removal from work is perhaps surprising for someone who seems to be a model servant of the state in her writings, though it bespeaks the fact that this woman, now nearing retirement age, felt assured of the continuance of her position of privilege within Soviet ranks enough to speak her mind to a limited degree.

By this time, the ravages of age were catching up with Kliment Voroshilov. He was so sick as to not be able to spend May Day, 1947 in Moscow, retiring to Sochi alone while his wife could not get leave from her workplace to go with him. In March the following year, one of Voroshilova's next entries describes that he has had to spend a week in bed, then only released for a time with doctors' permission to work four hours a day. 1949 greeted the Voroshilovs with more bad news: their dacha had caught fire during the New Year's festivities of their grandchildren playing with matches near the Christmas tree. Voroshilova wrote to the eldest Klimushka:

> I hope that you will understand that the fire firstly inflicted a heavy loss upon our state. The dacha belonged to the state. It was granted to your grandfather for his services to the Motherland and the Soviet people. Secondly, the dacha's burning denied your grandfather his favourite place to relax and his favourite books…[35]

Her letter continues at some length, castigating the 13-year-old for having been so careless and not living by the example of the Young Guards. In the fire, Voroshilova lost a collection of decades worth of correspondence with her husband amongst other personal effects.

In her next entry, Voroshilova describes the living conditions of husband and wife: while both are working they seldom see each other. They might meet periodically for dinner, but not every day with Voroshilov staying overnight out of

[34] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 22.
[35] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 28.

town and his wife only venturing out for Sundays. The couple had been moved into a replacement wooden house, seemingly ousting a commandant's office, seeing as their dacha was no more.

Yekaterina Davidovna does not write again until 1951, and then only a few pages on Kliment's horseriding and walking activities. Her next major entry is on 2nd March, 1953. The entry says little about Voroshilova herself, though the gravity of the event she details requires that it be quoted in full:

> March 2nd
>
> Early this morning Kliment Yefremovich was informed by telephone that Iosif Vissarionovich had suddenly fallen ill.
>
> K.E. was transformed in those difficult moments. He pulled himself together even more, became more strong-willed. I had seen him like that more than once during especially crucial moments of the Civil War, in the critical periods of the fight of our Party with enemies of the party and people and in the terrible days of the Great Patriotic War. And it was in the same way I saw him this morning.
>
> He said almost nothing to me. But since, at such an early hour, he was suddenly and quickly readying himself as though going into a decisive battle, I understood that some misfortune was coming.
>
> In great fear, through tears I asked him:
>
> "What has happened?"
>
> K.E. embraced me and hastening replied: "Calm down, I'll ring you." And he left then and there.

Voroshilov travelled to Stalin's dacha at Kuntsevo as part of the second 'detachment' of the elite to find the Generalissimo on his sofa, snoring with his body contorted from a stroke. Beria called home to tell his wife what had happened[36], but apart from this the men of the elite seemed to hunker down and were not in touch with their families during these politically-crucial hours. Voroshilova, for her part, has nothing more to report that day and her next diary entry is in the form of a letter to her grandson a fortnight later where not one word is mentioned of Stalin, or even the

[36] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 569.

post-death reshuffling of the Soviet hierarchy which saw Voroshilov elevated to deputy head of the Council of Ministers and Head of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

For the next couple of years, Voroshilova's diaries are full of cordial but uninspiring letters to friends and grandchildren together with the occasional note of a meeting or dinner attended by prominent friends, like Khrushchev and Nina Petrovna or Anastas Mikoyan and his large family, but staying in the Crimea in late Summer 1955 next to one of Stalin's former seaside palaces[37] brought back memories again. In an extended and often quoted passage, Voroshilova recalls birthday parties at Stalin's dacha fondly, bringing to mind the different dancing styles of the Kremlin elite, Stalin's singing and his record collection complete with handwritten notes, but also other quirks:

> Comrade Stalin was very jealous towards his guests and remembered if someone who was invited didn't turn up.
>
> Once when we met – I can't remember where, maybe in a box at the Bolshoi – I.V. asked me why I hadn't come to his birthday. I was actually taken aback and could not answer him straight away.
>
> And such a thing had in fact taken place. K.Y. hadn't reminded me beforehand about I.V.'s invitation and on the morning of that day I left for work as per usual. In the evening, at the Soviet party district committee, I took part in a small meeting on the exchange of the experiences of propaganda activities by the students of the V.P.Sh [Higher Party School]. I became absorbed simultaneously by the audience and by the work of the students for which I was responsible.
>
> By this time K.Y. was looking for me but couldn't find me. When I returned home and remembered about the invitation to I.V.'s it was already late and so I didn't attend the party. It appears that I.V. had not forgotten about it.[38]

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[37] Maevka, which the Voroshilovs were more used to relaxing in, was already occupied by the Molotovs. Voroshilova, incidentally, makes no mention of Polina Zhemchuzhina's career, arrest or reinstatement in her works.

[38] The full reference for this whole section is *f*. 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 320, *ll*. 65-75. The handwritten copy is to be preferred here give a number of struck-out words and corrections by Voroshilova.

This tale adds an interesting note to Voroshilova's preceding comments, suggesting – as we know now to be the case – that Stalin was someone with whom elite members and their families had to persevere to keep good relations and that he was a man easily slighted with a propensity to keep personal grudges. More than this though, Voroshilova's guarded readiness to hint at these characteristics suggests some willingness on her part to acknowledge the conflicts that could exist between personal and political life within the elite which meant they were less than one big happy family. Nevertheless, Voroshilova at least preserved a more nostalgic view of the 1930s and 1940s than many:

> What a remarkable time it was. What simple and genuinely good comradely relationships. And now it is the modern day, life in the Party has become harder and now there is some strange pain that is in our mutual relations too.

Yekaterina Davidovna was writing this at the time of Khrushchev's new-found ascendancy, not that long after the arrest and execution of Beria and the struggles to fill the power vacuum after Stalin's death, so this excerpt is not too surprising, but nevertheless as a comparison of the Terror and the 1950s, for example it is quite astonishing that a member of the elite could consider the times of the Kirov assassination, of Allilueva's suicide, of the detention and execution of many key members of the elite and the destruction of the families a period of 'simple and genuinely good comradely relationships'. Such a description does not so much suggest that Voroshilova was unaware of the Terror or simply politically naïve, so much as it serves to remind us that many in the Bolshevik elite – those politically stable, unremarkable and trustworthy aides to Stalin such as Voroshilov and Kaganovich, Malenkov and Khrushchev – simply never felt as seriously threatened in their political and personal lives by the political intrigues of the time as others such as the Bukharins and Molotovs were made to feel.

In closing her notes on the Crimea, however, Voroshilova does sound more than a trifle naïve and reminds us of the level of luxury to which the Bolshevik elite had become accustomed as a way of life: "We lived in a palace, but not for the 'good life'. We had lived there simply because there is nowhere else to stay now in the Crimea."

In a succession of entries from 1954 and 1955, Voroshilova recalls a number of dinners and meetings amongst the Bolshevik elite in the post-Stalin era, and perhaps the best exemplar of such evenings is her recount of a night celebrating Andrey Andreev's 60th birthday and reception of the Order of Lenin. Voroshilova's husband acted as *tamada* or toastmaster, and in attendance were Andreev's large family, Kaganovich, Bulganin and other Central Committee members together with members of the younger generation: Shvernik's son, Kaganovich's daughter and the Andreev's son Vladimir. Voroshilova particularly notes of Andreev's wife, Dora Moiseevna, that she was "a woman, mother, old member of our party and great woman worker. Right up to the present she has been engaged in important work in her speciality – as an engineer-director of a textile factory. Volodya and Natasha [the Andreevs' children] are also members of the party and candidates of science."[39] It seems clear that Voroshilova considered the independence and important work of Andreev's wife as something to be admired: not only was she a loyal worker and a mother, but she had forged her own life independent but supportive of her husband. Dora Khazan had entered a tertiary institute at the same time as Voroshilova and thus both represented, even though quite mature ladies, the new wave of Bolshevik wives: those re-educated through the Party process to be employed in general Party work, rather than simply as secretaries to their husbands or workers in education and agitprop.

In Stalin's absence too, the atmosphere at such gatherings seems slightly less guarded (if also less jovial, considering also Stalin's record as a *bon vivant*). Andreev's celebration is certainly a far cry from the sort of formal dinner out of which Nadezhda Allilueva had stormed in November 1932, it was a more friendly affair than any of Stalin's early morning 'boys club' parties had been with his coterie, and even children were now at the table – a distinct difference to Kremlin evenings in the 1930s. In the absence of the *ghopak* and old revolutionary songs, however, Voroshilova happily put up with Andreev's short speech of thanks instead, noting that "it has been a long time since I heard such simple, penetrating Marxist-Leninist ideas addressed as A.A. did that night"[40].

It is around this time that Voroshilova commenced writing her autobiography. While Zinaida Gavrilovna, Ordzhonikidze's widow, had urged her to write a

[39] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 74.
[40] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 74.

biography of Voroshilov, Yekaterina Davidovna expressed the view to a friend that it was 'not for relatives' to write the biographies of 'our Party and government leaders' and that it would be better for her to simply write personal memoirs. Voroshilova does not precisely spell out the rationale behind this opinion, but it appears to arise from the hitherto-noted readiness for the Bolshevik elite to distance their private and public lives. As a servant of the state, Voroshilov was best remembered through his official works and formal writings about him, and it was not for a family member to presume to have the ability to write an accurate and purposeful account of his life – for what was important to state about public figures was the nature of their public life and pursuit of Marxism-Leninism and not how they might have been as private individuals.

This belief – in the necessity of separating the public and private – runs as a common thread throughout many Bolshevik families of the time: while wives and children prepared to readily and perhaps naively accept the perquisites that went with being related to a top Party official, on the whole in their public lives they encouraged themselves and each other to pursue a life independent from those major luminaries who would inevitably cast some shadow over their day-to-day affairs. Wives retained their maiden names rather than take the famous surnames of husbands, they pursued minor Party offices despite having more influence through their husbands and the height of respect went to those women who, like Dora Khazan and Yekaterina Voroshilova, worked as good mothers but most importantly as loyal Party members pursuing important work external to their husband's affairs.

Voroshilova began writing her memoirs in earnest only after retiring from her positions at the Lenin Museum and as a deputy of the Moscow City Soviet in the mid 1950s. The final five years of her diaries are marked increasingly by simple notes of dinners with the Khrushchevs and special guests (for example, the arrival of Iosip Broz Tito in September, 1956), together with various details of her research in compiling her autobiography.

On 9th November, 1956 Voroshilova sent a letter to Ordzhonikidze's widow together, apparently, with a letter from Stasova to Zinaida Gavrilovna[41], which had been somehow received in error. Feeling the need to write about her attitude to

[41] It seems that these two figures may have been keeping up a long-standing correspondence.

Ordzhonikidze's own memoirs, Voroshilova notes that she is not 'against them', but simply holds it is not the place of family members to write such things. What is then added is more interesting:

> And still I would wish from you that you do not pay tribute to those times connected with the cult of personality. Be objective, otherwise the most valuable thing – historicity and truth to life – will be lost.[42]

The message is rather cryptic, but still appears decipherable. Ordzhonikidze was the wife of a man who had died in mysterious circumstances, his death reported at the time as the result of myocardial infarction. In February, 1956 Khrushchev sought to revise this account in his secret speech that dwelt on Stalin's 'cult of personality', stating that "Stalin allowed the liquidation of Ordzhonikidze's brother and brought Ordzhonikidze himself to such a state that he was forced to shoot himself."[43] It must have seemed a distinct possibility to Voroshilova that further editions of Ordzhonikidze's biography might take advantage of this change in political climate to pursue a more accurate rendering of events – Zinaida Gavrilovna, after all, had devoted her years since her husband's death to preserving his memory – and Voroshilova, as a member of Stalin's loyal guard was troubled at the prospect of someone dwelling on the intrigues of the 1930s, considering that it had been through them that her husband's political career – and consequently her own life – had flourished.

Even more than this, however, Voroshilova seems to consider (unless her words are interpreted as little more than bluff) that Khrushchev himself has done history a disservice and misrepresented the Stalin period and the cult of personality, such that 'acknowledging it' (*otdavat' dan' vremeni*) would be to lose objectivity, historicity and 'truth to life'[44]. It seems somewhat extraordinary that one wife should ask another to not acknowledge her husband's possible murder for the sake of preserving the historical record, yet this also serves as a reminder that for many of the Bolshevik elite who had survived Stalin there existed a mutual desire to suppress and ignore the most traumatic episodes of the Party's internecine struggles for the sake of all

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42 Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 87.
43 Khrushchev's special report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU(b), February 24-25, 1956. Translator unknown.
44 Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 87.

concerned. It would seem to be the same belief in the need for prudence and secrecy when discussing these times that informed Molotov's benevolent reminiscences concerning Stalin collected by Felix Chuev[45].

In 1957, Voroshilov went on an Asian tour to China, Vietnam and Indonesia, but was not joined by his wife though she was his companion for some of the over 12000 kilometres of air travel he clocked up that year, flying down to Simferopol and another relaxing, if official, getaway. This time at dinner with the Khrushchevs were the Mikoyans, Tupalovs and Zhukovs together with an assemblage of delegates from Eastern Europe, amongst them Vladislav Gomułka and Walter Ulbricht.

Perhaps Voroshilova is herself aware that her "so-called diary" is full simply of fond reminiscences and banquets of leading historical figures, for her last entry of 1957 (and of her seventh notebook) has a more reflective tone as she defends her choice of subjects and tenor: "The bad of us and about us is written about by them an awful lot. I don't wish to write about the bad. Unfortunately, there is still a lot that is bad in our socialist society, in our communist surroundings. Much of it has remained from the tsarist system and even more vileness has been brought by the capitalist encirclement that has been so difficult to root out from people's consciousness."[46]

It is clear from such words, if unsurprising, that Voroshilova – a woman who had now been involved in the revolutionary movement for a half century, had undertaken agitprop, served as an informal ambassador to the USSR abroad, been married to one of the Party's major figures – to the last appeared to maintain an entirely 'ideologically appropriate' view of the construction of socialist society in the Soviet Union. She will not even acknowledge in her personal writings that any of the 'bad' about Soviet society that she so dutifully declines to write about has been caused by ideological, systemic or revolutionary failures – instead, outside forces together with the repugnant leftovers of the Russian autocracy are to blame for any the Soviet Union's continued woes.

The final pages of Voroshilova's diaries are given over to more descriptions of evenings with the Khrushchevs and their guests (including Paul Robeson on one occasion). The typewritten account concludes with an entry of September 8, 1958 although some further loose-leaf pages from Voroshilova's notes are available in her

[45] See Chuev, *Molotov Remembers*.
[46] Voroshilova's Diaries, p. 99.

archival file. In an ever more irregular and unsteady hand, Voroshilova's notes of February 1959 betray a woman who is concerned most of all with her husband's activities and health, despite her own demonstrably fragile physiological state. Her last entry, of February 26th, 1959, begins by noting that Mikoyan came around in the evening and concludes "today I read the newspaper to him [Voroshilov]"[47]. Voroshilov was to outlive his wife by a decade and they were never to quite reach the fifty years of life together which she so desired. As the official record, signed by Andreev and other colleagues notes: "On 26th April, 1959 after a protracted and difficult illness, Yekaterina Davidovna Voroshilova passed away"[48].

Thus while each of the Bolshevik wives considered so far were writing at different times, with differing motivations and audiences, all three continue to emphasise their roles as very much 'wifely' and supportive. In cases such as Krupskaya's, where she had great responsibilities in her own right in the distribution of Party materials, these formal, professional responsibilities are de-emphasised in her portrayal in favour of a portrait of a woman who was more a domestic support for Lenin. In Voroshilova's case, while Yekaterina Davidovna is far less likely to chronicle her husband's political activities and thoughts and even was of the opinion that it was not the place of relatives to do so, her writings still display that she felt her duty as a Bolshevik wife was above all to her husband and children and that her own Party work was less important than her job in supporting them. Finally in the case of Anna Larina we may read what is a far more *contemporary* portrayal of a Bolshevik marriage – focussing as it does on the courtship and romance of Bukharin and Larina in a way that Krupskaya might have considered inexcusable[49] – but nevertheless a portrayal that still places Bukharin's wife in a subordinate role. In the very act of writing in order to rehabilitate her first husband of a marriage a half-century before, Larina demonstrates her wifely commitment to be a 'legacy bearer' for Bukharin.

Finally, there are two more Bolshevik wives whose distance from the 'mainstream' mean that their portrayals of their lives are important in any

[47] Voroshilova's Diaries, pp. 161-162.
[48] RGASPI, *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 124
[49] See for instance the section 'Our Romance, Stalin's Wife, and Premonitions' (Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, pp. 133-147) where Larina discusses such matters as early 'dates' with Bukharin, his difficulties in broaching the nature of their relationship and even the jealousy Bukharin displayed when the young Zhenya Sokolnikov showed interest in his future wife.

consideration of what aspects of Bolshevik elite women as they presented themselves might be generalisable. These are two women who were born outside Russia, who found themselves in the midst of Soviet society as a result of their marriages, but who died abroad having always been outsiders of sorts amongst the Soviet Elite. They are Ivy Litvinov (wife of Maxim) and Aino Kuusinen (wife of Otto).

Ivy Litvinov, who never became either 'Russified' or fully converted to a Marxist way of thinking by her decades living with Maxim in the Soviet Union, had at least some fiscal motivation for writing her memoirs: spending her last years widowed and living in Hove, England as an established writer and long-time diplomat's wife, should Ivy have chosen to document her life in the Soviet Union the readership of her memoirs might have been expected to be on par with Svetlana Allilueva's. Instead, she stuck to short stories, but fortunately for the historian at least some of these were semi-autobiographical.

Litvinova's most revealing comments about how she felt she should come across in public life were detailed in a letter she wrote to a friend:

> I don't care a pin what anyone says or thinks about me, it seems to me, for I feel heads and shoulders taller than anyone who can gloat over such outworn topics of scandal as who sleeps with whom, but the torture was to feel it might come to M's [Maxim Litvinov's] ears one day… I don't care a pin about his career, considering he has already had several men's careers and knowing how utterly without ambition he is, but I do feel awful remorse at the thought of him losing face because of my conduct and being *personally* humiliated[50]

To some extent, this stance explains Ivy's reluctance to detail the nature of her life as a Bolshevik wife even over a decade after Maxim's death and the end of the 'cult of personality', but more so it would seem that Ivy's hatred of scandal and celebrity and wish to be acknowledged as a good writer rather than as a 'famous widow' were behind her decision not to be forthcoming about her personal life. Her most autobiographical short story, 'Call it Love' came out in The New Yorker in 1969 when Ivy was almost eighty years old. Despite it detailing a courtship that had happened a half-century ago, despite the fact that social mores had changed

[50] J. Carswell, *The Exile: A Life of Ivy Litvinov* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p. 130 – an excerpt from a letter to Carswell's mother from 1932.

considerably in that time as had any real chance of causing a scandal through detailing a more realistic portrayal of her personal history, still Litvinova wrote of Maxim in an entirely clichéd manner:

> Eileen [Ivy] went up to him and laid her head against his shoulder, happy now to receive his warm hygienic kisses on her cheek.
>
> "You are brave girl," he murmured. "You trust a stranger, foreigner. I Like. You shall not regret. Much money, lives of many comrades have been trusted in me, and none was lost. And you will be safe."
>
> "You make me feel ever so safe," said Eileen. "I don't know why."
>
> "You will always be safe with me," he repeated, "but when the drum of Revolution sound I shall follow it wherever I am, even if I must leave you."
>
> "I'll go with you. So nobody will have to leave anybody."
>
> "You will be revolutionary?" He smiled.
>
> "You must tell me how," said Eileen.[51]

Where Krupskaya and Larina, Litvinova, Ordzhonikidze and Voroshilova had been faithful to, but in some cases betrayed by the revolution, they had, to a woman, most certainly been kind to the memories of their husbands, choosing to adopt a role and portray their marriages in a manner that might not do a disservice to their spouse's memory, but even more so that would establish themselves as role-models of very submissive, domesticated and – it must be said – bourgeois wives. It is known that Litvinova's marriage was very 'open' for its time and that neither husband nor wife were faithful, it is known that Krupskaya was far from domestically competent and never had children: yet both these figures still maintained the pretence in the way they conducted themselves that they were 'good wives' – not in the manner of a character from Chernyshevsky, not in the manner of a 'new woman' such as Kollontai, nor as political figures like the wives of the Decembrists or their images depicted by Nekrasov, but 'wives' in a very traditional, submissive sense.

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[51] I. Litvinova, *She Knew She Was Right* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971), pp. 81-2. *She Knew She Was Right* is a compilation of Litvinova's short stories, including previously published works such as 'Call it Love'.

The fact that so many Bolshevik women were not only driven to adopt certain roles (as can be seen through the previous chapter on wives and employment), but openly seemed to have internalised and accepted them given their propensity to 'play the part' in official and unofficial publications, suggests the changing face of Bolshevik elite society came not simply as a product of 'Bolshevik husbands' asserting their dominance in relationships. It also came because Bolshevik wives were never themselves truly revolutionary, at least in terms of their personal relations. As is evidenced in their writings, women like Krupskaya and Voroshilova still held onto those pre-revolutionary social norms and values that set aside their duties as wives to be supportive of their husbands and occupied with 'the domestic life'. Wives such as Ordzhonikidze and Litvinova did not simply fail to live up to the idea of the new, independent and equal women envisaged by thinkers such as Kollontai – they were never of a mindset in the first place that might have naturally seen them in that class.

Of course, as with any large group, this generalisation is not true of absolutely every member. A number of Bolshevik marriages did break down, often because wives were uncomfortable with being anything less than independent and professional rather than submissive and domesticated. But women such as Lunacharsky's wives, Zinoviev's first wife and Kalinin's wife did not produce extant texts that might detail their feelings on their husband's roles and their issues with their marriages. The only woman that did was Aino Kuusinen – disillusioned with the revolution and having lived independently and estranged from her husband since unsuccessfully demanding a divorce over two decades earlier, the next time she was to see her husband was at his funeral:

> They rang at the door of my flat, and I opened it to them. Shelepin bowed with stiff formality and pressed my hand; the general also bowed. Then Shelepin said: 'Mrs Kuusinen, we have come to escort you to the lying in state, which of course you know about.' Before I could say anything, he made a gesture and went on: 'We know you lived apart from your husband but you realize that appearances must be preserved. The ceremony begins in an hour's time. May I ask you to put on mourning clothes?' He did not know, of course, that I had a black dress ready, being as well acquainted as most people with the art of 'preserving appearances'. I changed quickly

> and, wearing a solemn expression, went down to the car with Shelepin and his companion[52].

While Kuusinen was willing to play the part in this respect, her autobiography with its portrait of her husband is actually the only frank personal account written by a Bolshevik wife about her spouse. To Aino, Otto Kuusinen was "at bottom a man of immense, rather cynical self-confidence", single-minded, but never a 'true believer' in the cause, a man that once boasted "in all sincerity that he had 'cast his skin seven times in his life, like a snake" and thus displayed a "cold faithlessness towards one comrade after another"[53]. Aino, who was arrested and spent years in a Vorkuta labour camp herself noted: "He did not lift a finger when his own son was arrested in Karelia and sent to Siberia… Similarly Kuusinen did nothing to save his principal Comintern assistants… or his first wife's brother… Nor did he do anything for me, his lawful wife, even after I stood up for him in prison and refused to admit that he was a 'British spy'". In short, above all, Aino Kuusinen concludes "after much though, it seems to me that the true key to his personality was hatred".

For all this far from flattering assessment, however, Kuusinen had always been an outsider and, by the time of her writing, was a widowed outsider who had suffered at the hands of the Party and was now free in exile. And even she had maintained at the very least a superficial regard and support of her husband whilst in the Soviet Union. Overall though, Aino Kuusinen is an exception that serves to highlight a generalisable rule about the nature of Bolshevik wives as role-models and illustrators of Soviet life: most not only willingly displayed support for their husbands and played the part of the faithful domestic helper for such gallant revolutionaries, but also *believed* that this role – a decidedly less independent one than might have been suggested in the pages of a 1920s copy of *Rabotnitsa* or *Krest'ianka* – was an appropriate one to model for other Soviet women and to the world.

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[52] Kuusinen, *Before And After Stalin*, p. 223.
[53] For these characterisations see Kuusinen, *Before And After Stalin*, pp. 225-233.

Chapter Five
The Changing Structure of Bolshevik Elite Society

In the first years following the October Revolution, the frenetic nature of the civil war, the massive drive required to reform all aspects of society and the lack of resources available to the elite to undertake projects all conspired to make serious long-term planning and public works distant goals. One might almost say one provisional government had succeeded another; decisions such as the Brest peace and the introduction of the New Economic Policy did not mark an overturning of official ideology so much as a willingness, considering the immediate material conditions, to adopt a pragmatic position with regard to policy and public life.

Private life in the early revolutionary years was also very much guided by the same provisional nature and pragmatism. Yet by the end of the 1920s, just as in other spheres, structure was brought to bear on what had hitherto evolved somewhat organically. Just as the adoption of the cadre system marked a shift in the roles of Bolshevik elite women at work (chapter two) and the rise of the Stalinist political system changed the manner in which such women represented themselves (chapter three), the movement from relatively unstructured living arrangements to a structured and compartmentalised way of life for the Bolshevik elite provided for a profound shift in the nature and composition of Bolshevik elite society.

Through the consolidation of privilege, the creation of living spaces especially for the elite, the establishment of key social cliques within Kremlin society and the profound changes in the membership of this group as a result of the Great Purge in particular, the shift in everyday life (*byt*) and the culture of the Bolshevik elite from the revolution to Stalin's death was quite profound. Whereas previous chapters have focussed on the changing nature of individual women's relationship to work and their own roles, this chapter will outline the changing structure of Bolshevik society as a whole, focussing in particular on the greatest period of change from the conditions of the 1920s as outlined in previous chapters, namely the period from the beginning of the 1930s right through to the early 1950s. To accomplish this, a chronological

portrait of the changing face of Bolshevik elite society, comprising both commentary on the changes in material conditions (such as the consolidation of Kremlin apartments, the creation of the House on the Embankment, evacuations during the Great Patriotic War and the establishment of systems of privilege) and shifts in relationships and social networks (such as caused by the political dominance of Stalin and the Great Purges) will be undertaken, providing a coherent history of the transition of Bolshevik Elite Society from its establishment in Moscow to Stalin's death.

The result of such an evaluation leads to a somewhat paradoxical conclusion – that while Bolshevik elite society was more structured and homogenous than ever before by 1953, Bolshevik elite members were further distanced from each other but also less in contact with Soviet society at large than at any previous time. This alienation of the elite from society in general had, of course, profound effects on the nature of elite policy, a matter that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

As has been mentioned, the beginnings of Bolshevik elite society were very far removed from the highly structured conditions that had come about by the time of Stalin's death. Ambiguity was the order of the day. Even as Lenin's government transferred from wartime Petrograd in March 1918, marking the return of the Russian capital to Moscow after almost two centuries, he declared to the VIIth Party Congress, in a speech justifying the Brest peace "Perhaps we shall accept war; perhaps tomorrow we shall give up Moscow too"[1]. This was far from a case of defeatism on Lenin's part – in early 1918, Moscow was receiving less than 10% of its allocated grain supply and in the eleven months to August 1918, some 150000 people left Moscow: 10% of its population[2]. The move to Moscow did not even wholly consolidate the government, as commissars such as Anatoly Lunacharsky chose to stay in Petrograd and run their affairs from there.

Anecdotes from early Soviet years only serve to solidify a portrait of the material conditions of Bolshevik elite society as being less than well structured. Although Lenin was a *de facto* leader of the new state, on arrival in Moscow he initially lived in the Hotel National, before being moved to a third-floor apartment of

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1 Lenin, *PSS*, XXXVI, p. 25.

2 Figures from p. 432, R. Sakwa, "The Commune State in Moscow in 1918", *Slavic Review*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, 1987, pp. 429-449.

the Kremlin accessible only to the aging leader by a long flight of stairs. Lenin and Krupskaya shared four rooms between them, their dining quarters – initially shared with Trotsky – consisting of a converted hallway. Whilst this was hardly a great privation, relative to the horrendous housing situation in Moscow as a whole, the conditions the Bolshevik elite found themselves in bespeak an austerity that was to be almost unknown in Stalin's time.

Many more tales reflect also the informal but hectic life lived in this early years: the pregnant Nadezhda Allilueva walking across Red Square to the hospital is but one example. Natalya Rykova recalls how her father Aleksei had such a demanding schedule that he'd walk back to their apartment from meetings elsewhere in the Kremlin and collapse on the sofa for 10 minutes just to get a small amount of sleep before duties demanded he get up again[3]. On the Kremlin streets of the early 1920s, Stalin might be seen on one of his regular walks, dressed not in the resplendent white uniform known so well in the West from images of postwar conferences, but in a tattered, grey military greatcoat.

But the streets of the Kremlin were very far from being behind a Bolshevik elite iron curtain in the early 1920s. Those families that moved to the Kremlin did not live the life of tsars, nor even latter-day boyars. The Kremlin walls indeed housed over one thousand people at this time, mostly in communal living conditions with a large communal kitchen. Red Army officers, orderlies and minor officials found their home in a few Kremlin apartment blocks which were converted into what were essentially giant dormitories. Although families like the Stalins, Lenins, Mikoyans and Molotovs enjoyed more room in their own apartments they most certainly did not enjoy the equivalent of a 'private estate': at least in these first years, extra food was best procured by all Kremlin inhabitants from a cart that rambled along down the Kremlin's main street, while the gardens in the south-east of the Kremlin became home to a childcare facility that was far from exclusive[4].

If the living situation in the Kremlin and the protection accorded to the Bolshevik elite far from guaranteed their security (as Lenin's attempted assassination by Fanny Kaplan suggests), the Bolshevik elite in the 1920s was hardly particularly economically secure either. In wage terms, members of the political elite received

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3 N. Rykova, *Big Parents* episode.

4 In *Kreml'-9* episode "Neizvestniy Kreml'", the daughter of a minor army official who lived in the Kremlin during the 1920s discusses conditions there, including the presence of communal child care in its gardens.

only what was essentially a small monthly stipend and frequently although basic food and accommodation did not require payment, families had difficulties staying within budget. Circumstances of kopeck-pinching frugality existed right through the 1920s. As Nadezhda Allilueva wrote in a postscript to her husband in late 1929: "Iosif, send me 50 roub. If you can, I won't receive money from the Promak[ademiia] until 15/9, and for now I'm here without a kopeck. It would be good if you could send it."[5] Mikoyan's wife for her part sought loans from other Politburo wives because she could not otherwise find the funds to clothe all her children, while even Stalin is recorded as asking the chief of the State Publishing House for money[6].

Very early in the life of the revolution, the circumstances of the civil war also played their part in delaying the development of a more structured Bolshevik elite society. While politicians such as Sverdlov and Lenin were busy passing reforms such as the Family Code of 1918 (about which more will be said in the next chapter) many of the human resources of the Party were being deployed either to establish a supine party machine in regional areas or indeed to win hearts and minds – but most particularly military supremacy – throughout the former empire. As such, Molotov and Krupskaya were, for instance, dispatched on an *agitparakhod* (agitation ship), the *Krasnaia Zvezda*, to travel down the Volga and up the Kama spreading the good news of Bolshevism to the masses. Stalin journeyed with his wife-cum-secretary Allilueva, her brother Fyodor and Aleksandr Shlyapnikov to Russia's south on a grain procurement mission. Ordzhonikidze found himself in a similar region of Russia as a leader of Soviet forces in the Northern Caucasus, while Voroshilov and his wife were first involved in fighting in the northern Caucausus before moving on to the south and Voroshilov's post as Ukrainian commissar of internal affairs. Even Ivy Litvinov, hardly a member of the Bolshevik inner circle, found herself abandoned in London for two years from the end of 1918 as her husband managed to return to Moscow without her. Kamenev worked on both Western and Eastern fronts and, judging from

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5 Io. Stalin, *Iosif Stalin v ob'iatiiakh sem'i* (Moscow: Rodina, 1993), p. 27. Stalin replied on September 25th, sending 120 roubles with a comrade. The Promakademiia that Allilueva refers to was her place of study at the time and will be discussed in more detail later. As at January, 1928 the official average monthly wage in Moscow was 92.64 roubles and only 67.17 roubles across the USSR (*The Soviet Union: Facts, Descriptions, Statistics*, Washington, DC: Soviet Union Information Bureau, 1929, p. 187). Party wages were determined on the basis of different classifications, with the minimum wage for a Central Committee member set equivalent to those working in the economic organs and the Soviet.

6 The Mikoyans had five biological children and had also adopted two more. See Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 37.

archival manuscripts, managed to pursue at least one extra-marital affair during the course of his postings[7], while Trotsky famously journeyed around European Russia directing the Red forces from his armoured train. In short, even if the affective relationships of the late 1940s Stalinist set had been in place in the early years of Soviet power, the Bolshevik elite were spread so thinly across the new Soviet state that any real consolidation of Bolshevik society was impossible. What the circumstances of the Civil War and the asceticism of early Bolshevik rule did establish in elite members such as Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze, Stalin and Budyonny (and indeed also in others that would come to be collectively grouped by the term 'old Bolsheviks') was some degree of unity in mutual trials and suffering, however. In only some rare cases (take for example the case of Stepan Shaumian[8]) were Bolshevik elite relationships specifically 'forged in battle', but nevertheless the mutual remembrance of the difficulties of the Civil War not only brought elite members together but was to also play a role in the development of the Bolsheviks' official response to perceived threats to mainstream Soviet rule.

In discussing cliques that formed within the Bolshevik elite, ways in which different Bolshevik families might be united are obviously an important factor. Joint military service was obviously one – indeed while a figure such as Semyon Budyonny may have had far from a pristine Bolshevik past (having been part of the tsarist military establishment), his enviable ability to survive the purging of the Bolshevik military in the mid 1930s, let alone be viewed favourably by Stalin, owed something to his membership of the Civil War fraternity that included Stalin himself, but also Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov and Frunze amongst others.

Other ways to, most particularly, establish links with the Bolshevik elite were through family ties. In Stalin's case a number of Svanidzes – relatives of Stalin's first wife – found themselves brought to Moscow on Stalin's request, most notably Aleksandr, who was one of few Bolsheviks invited to stay overnight at Stalin's[9]. Relatives of Stalin's second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, were even more prominent in Bolshevik social circles, with no less than eleven living in the House on the

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7 See a letter to 'Levushka' from 'Riva' - RGASPI, *f*. 323, *op*. 1, *d*. 116, *ll*. 4-7ob.

8 For more information on the Baku Commune and Shaumian's involvement in it see, for instance, Ronald Suny's *The Baku Commune, 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

9 Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 153. Aleksandr Svanidze lived in apartment 214 of the House on the Embankment (*Oknami na kreml'*, p. 268).

Embankment[10], and Stalin's brother-in-law Stanislav Redens heading, chronologically, the Ukrainian GPU, Moscow OGPU and Kazakhstan's NKVD. The lack of housing in Moscow also meant that some members of the Bolshevik elite had family members stay with them inside the Kremlin – in Bukharin's case at one time his apartment housed Anna Larina together with Anna Lukina (his first wife), his old father and his brother.

Another possible catalyst for the establishment of a relationship within the Soviet elite, somewhat broader than a family tie, was joint cultural heritage. While Stalin lost touch with Georgian culture and language to some degree as he aged, this did not stop other Bolsheviks with a similar linguistic heritage – figures such as Beria, Ordzhonkidze, Lominadze and Nestor Lakoba – from attempting to use this seemingly special affinity with Stalin to their own advantage.

Three other influences on the development of Kremlin relationships were the geographical, the official and the political. Geographically, while being neighbours with other families by no means guaranteed positive relations it could at least facilitate them. Just as strong affective relationships built up amongst those housed together in the House on the Embankment (see the semi-biographical eponymous novel by Trifonov, for example), factors such as the layout of state dachas tended to group specific Bolshevik families together as they spent their free time in close proximity. Officially speaking, of course, employment within the same institutions might have a similar effect to housing in the same buildings – thus Bolsheviks might be brought together by similar expertise in Sovnarkom or the Comintern or even the offices of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. Unsurprisingly, however, the strongest affective bonds occurred between Bolsheviks of a similar political disposition – Bolshevik politics was not something that could be left at the office. Hence strong relationships, for instance, built up between Rykov, Tomsky and Bukharin as fellow supposed 'rightists' or between Armand and Krupskaya (despite the obvious tension arising from their involvement in a triangle with Lenin) concerning women's issues.

On the obverse, where political enmities existed, personal problems were bound to follow. This can be illustrated by looking at the range of source materials available on the character of Polina Zhemchuzhina. If, for instance, Montefiore's characterisation of Molotov's wife is accepted she was 'notoriously unproletarian',

[10] *Oknami na kreml'*, index of inhabitants under 'Alliluev(a)' and 'Redens'.

severe and raised a 'spoiled daughter'[11]. If Derek Watson's is accepted "the fact that as a Kremlin wife, there were comments about her poor manners, is indicative of a lowly background."[12]. Yet if the sources for these contentions are to be noted, Montefiore's come from "interviews with Stepan and Sergo Mikoyan" while Watson notes "for her manners see Mikoyan, A., *Tak bylo*"[13]. Molotova's grandson, Vyacheslav Nikonov, unsurprisingly claims his grandmother was charming and intelligent, citing different sources painting a different picture of her in his own book and noting that the Mikoyans' characterisation was as a result of their political hostility to Molotov[14]. Inferences about Zhemchuzhina's character can be made from examining the letters between her and Molotov in the archives (reflecting at least a kind and positive marital relationship, but also – in terms of the nature of her 'scrawling' – suggesting a lack of education), by considering her employment history and even by the consideration that her apparent status as a confidante to Nadezhda Allilueva bespeaks a woman who is trustworthy and approachable, but ultimately such determinations of members of the elite as arrogant or cordial, pretentious or down-to-earth are so subjective that in the climate of political intrigue and competition that permeated elite society, a definitive portrait is impossible to compile.

Tensions between accounts do in turn, however, highlight the tensions that were at play in Bolshevik elite relationships. Oftentimes, 'private' views were separated from the public, as for instance Aino Kuusinen considers her husband's stance towards Zinoviev: "My husband, who was himself far from blameless in official relationships, referred to Zinoviev in private as an unscrupulous opportunist, cringing to his superiors and pompous with his subordinates to the point of absurdity. I say 'in private', because for a short time Otto found it prudent to make a show of unconditional support for Zinoviev"[15]. In a similar example, Bukharin's wife talks of how her husband's talks with Kalinin about the possibility of unseating Stalin[16] secretly co-existed alongside public support by both leaders for the *vozhd'*.

Whilst two-faced dealings existed, and were indeed necessary for certain political manoeuvres, when a Kremlin figure became the figure of political disdain it necessarily followed that their place in Kremlin society would be affected as a result.

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[11] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, pp. 34-37.
[12] Watson, *Molotov*, p. 44.
[13] Mikoyan, *Tak bylo,* p. 299.
[14] Interview with Vyacheslav Nikonov.
[15] Kuusinen, *Before and After Stalin*, p. 78.
[16] See, for example, Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 70.

During the 1920s, the affect of 'falling out' of Kremlin favour was not so serious as it was to become (see discussion later in this chapter on the coming of the great purges), but it could still be terminal for relationships. Esfir Gurvich, for instance, was a party member, co-worker at *Pravda*, partner to Nikolai Bukharin for several years and mother to his first child. When a *chistka* removed her party membership in the mid 1920s, however, she and Bukharin separated whilst remaining on friendly terms. According to their daughter, Svetlana Gurvich-Bukharina, Esfir Gurvich's purging not only came on Stalin's orders, but was the direct and specific cause of their break-up[17].

Aside from apparently isolated incidents such as the death of Frunze, the break-up of Gurvich and Bukharin and the suspicious suicide of Budyonny's wife, during the 1920s, Kremlin relationships either triumphed or festered through a rather organic process very similar to that which operates in most states today. Political enmities and rivalries existed, cliques of mutual interest and admiration formed and factions of a type appeared, but none of these ruled out the possibility of Molotovs and Mikoyans, Voroshilovs and Bukharins from working together and attending the same social functions. From the mid 1920s to the beginning of the war, however, this was to change considerably as the structure of Kremlin society, the nature of Kremlin living and the circumstances of Kremlin relationships went through a significant period of *perestroika*.

The most immediately obvious change to the material conditions of the Bolshevik elite came in terms of changes to their accommodation. As has been noted, upon initially establishing government in Moscow, arrangements were very *ad hoc* – some families were accommodated in the Kremlin, some in rooms of hotels such as the Metropol and National and others in what were, in essence, mansions seized from the tsarist aristocracy.

Once the search for new elite accommodation began in earnest towards the end of the 1920s, the initial line of those tasked with reforming everyday life through architecture and material conditions – the *byt* reformers of the Union of Contemporary Architects – was that housing itself should reflect and encourage the communal nature of Soviet society, doing battle with 'animalistic individualism' for

[17] Svetlana Gurvich-Bukharina, *Big Parents* episode. The general reliability of Gurvich-Bukharina's account was called into question by Bukharin's biographer and friend of Anna Larina, Stephen Cohen, when I discussed it with him.

the sake of the 'liberation of the new socialist self'[18]. Thus initial new buildings for high-ranking Party members – such as the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, studied by Victor Buchli – were indeed based upon providing minimal 'personal space' (primarily simply for sleeping) for occupants, but allowing for much larger communal areas at the centre of design so that tasks from cleaning to childcare to dining would be undertaken in a very social atmosphere[19].

Just as the process of party employment underwent a radical shift towards the development of schools for cadres at the end of the decade, with the creation of what was essentially a new class of administrators, the development of Soviet housing underwent a similarly radical transformation at the same time. And both shifts marked a significant change for the Bolshevik elite (the 'cadres question' and its effects have already been noted in chapter two).

The first significant change was not only that new accommodation was to be provided to many members of the Soviet elite by the end of the 1930s, but also the nature of that accommodation. By 1932, the notions of contemporary architects about creating changes in *byt* through the communalisation of living had largely died out in favour of a more Stalinist line of architectural thinking, a mode of thought more compatible with the newfound solution to the cadres question. The physical manifestation of a new policy providing for a ladder of achievement and progress through party ranks and recognised party institutions was to create concomitant levels of privilege to reward top party cadres. Incompatible with this new ideal were apartments in buildings such as the Narkomfin house that minimised the private room available to party colleagues. Rather, in a curiously Thermidorean sense, those which had been considered petit-bourgeois in the 1920s – individual kitchens, private living rooms, soft furnishings and rugs on the walls – now marked precisely those items to which an up-and-coming party member might be allowed to aspire.

With Stalin proclaiming that life was to become better now that socialism had been achieved, the vigorous *byt* reform which attempted to reform the Soviet soul

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[18] V. Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, p. 67.

[19] The top Kremlin elite, who are the subject of this thesis, were never particularly put in a situation that required 'communal living', save for the circumstances of having a main kitchen and shared childcare in the Kremlin of the 1920s as already discussed. Nevertheless, since the rejection of the late 1920s architectural *byt* reform in favour of shared living spaces was swift and decisive and came before the building of the first new elite residences in the early 1930s (that is, the various buildings of the House on the Embankment) it is unclear if this at all reflects an unwillingness on the part of the Kremlin elite to live in a communal manner.

through material conditions became rather too caustic to be embraced in the 1930s. Buchli makes clear just how stark the reform was:

> Regarding official attitudes towards the domestic sphere the changes are nothing short of radical. The war on the domestic front and domesticity ceased almost entirely. Journals such as *Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, Byt i Kul'tura* and *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* (all major mouthpieces of the war on domesticity) no longer existed by 1932. Literature on the rationalisation of housework, and most theoretically critical household advice, also stopped being produced after 1932, as well as numerous agitational tracts and philosophical inquiries into the problem of petit-bourgeois consciousness. Concern over the spectre of Soviet petit-bourgeois consciousness warned against by Maiakovskii, Trotsky, Lunacharskii and others ceased to be articulated. This body of criticism contradicted the new broader and 'fuzzier' socialism of emergent Stalinist cadres and denigrated their aspirations to the socialist 'good life'.[20]

The most visible effect of this ideational shift to the Bolshevik elite came in the form of the construction of the new House of Government (*Dom Pravitel'stva*), which came to be popularly called the 'House on the Embankment', across the Moscow river from the Kremlin.

To some extent the luxuries of the House on the Embankment had been presaged by the party long before the Soviet Union's achievement of socialism in the early 1930s. Protocols from Sovnarkom back in 1927, for instance, reveal the desire to build a house for 'workers of the motherland' with lifts, gas, showers and baths (baths hardly being space-friendly) and hot water in all its four hundred apartments[21]. What was unique about the House on the Embankment, however, was that not only was it reserved for the elite, but that each occupant of the house enjoyed a level of personal comfort not seen before. While Sheila Fitzpatrick notes the average living space in Moscow was 5.5 square metres per capita in 1930[22] (dropping to just over 4 square metres by 1940), new elite apartments were some ten times larger – as if to illustrate the particular premium placed on living space, the act of tranferral of one apartment from the state to its new occupant lists its size precisely at "41.82 square

[20] Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, p. 78.
[21] *Oknami na Kreml'*, p. 7.
[22] S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, p. 46.

metres"[23]. The selfsame document also lists over three pages the precise contents of the apartment: 6 electric sockets, 2 airtight fittings with glass, 6 floor lamps, 2 desk lamps, an electric bell with knob, a cool cupboard with key for the kitchen, four burner gas stove, goods lift and other conveniences.

While the list of kitchen equipment for these apartments may seem trivial and unremarkable (particularly from a contemporary point of view where the presence of a cold cupboard is far from the height of luxury), the type of lifestyle that such material conditions promoted marked a monumental shift from 'communal Soviet values'. Where a canteen necessitated eating with one's peers and facilitated socialisation, where even a cramped communal kitchen with an individual primus stove kept for each family involved cooking together if, at times, uncooperatively, a single family being in possession of a four burner stove, a dining room, a place for storing food appropriately and perhaps more critically a steady supply of relatively (for Soviet times) exotic ingredients, together with staple produce, meat and dairy all conspired to allow a comparatively withdrawn existence within the cavernous blocks and courtyards of the House on the Embankment.

Not only, however, did the creation of these new living spaces facilitate and encourage new 'aspirational' Soviet families to keep to themselves, they also provided a mechanism of separating the Kremlin community from Soviet society in general on a scale that had never been seen before.

By the end of the 1920s, the *obshchezhitiye* that had existed in the Kremlin, together with its communal kitchens, crèche and food carts had been supplanted by a more ordered arrangement and a more 'refined' clientele for the fortress at Moscow's heart. Bukharin, for instance, had moved in from the Metropol in 1927, an event of some annoyance to his young friend and future wife Anna Larina who could no longer visit him without a pass or a telephone call from one of the guards. The Kremlin's official guards and staff had themselves developed into a considerable unit – presided over by the commandant Avel Yenukidze, by 1935 there were hundreds of Kremlin staff[24]: guards, cleaners, librarians, drivers, gardeners and mechanics amongst other workers.

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[23] Korshunov & Terekhova, *Tainy i legendy Doma na naberezhnoi*, p. 20.

[24] Zhukov, Yu. N. "Tainy 'Kremlëvskogo dela' 1935 goda i sud'ba Avelia Yenukidze", *Voprosi Istorii*, 9/2000, p. 84 sets the number listed as being under investigation in the Kremlin affair of 1935 at 110, these being but a subset of the total staff with a particular focus on Kremlin library employees.

With the establishment of new housing for Kremlin families located across the river, however, the opportunity arose to create even more of a 'gated community'. While the Kremlin could boast its own cinema and garage[25], the House on the Embankment opened its own cinema named 'The Shock Worker' (*Udarnik*) as well a new purpose-built theatre (aptly named 'The New Theatre'), a dance hall, a new kindergarten, (mechanical) laundry room, dining room, reading hall. More important still – and agreed upon in some of the earliest resolutions of Sovnarkom before the architect Boris Iofan put pencil to draft paper – the House on the Embankment contained the new 'type A' supermarket (*univermag*) GORT which, according to contemporary achives "supplies occupants with products of the highest quality, accepts telephone orders, delivers products to the house in any quantity including bread delivered every morning."[26] If all this was not enough, then a shoe shop was set up on the site at one of the former churches nearby and a hairdresser was available by phone from 1933 as well[27].

As a result of more facilities and goods being available within a stone's throw to the resident of the House on the Embankment than were available to most Muscovites at all, there was little reason for many members of the Kremlin elite to step outside the limits of their artificial society. This is most vividly illustrated in a vignette of Kremlin life by Simon Sebag Montefiore who writes of Stalin riding the newly-opened Kaganovich Metro:

> All were already sitting in their limousines when Molotov scurried across the courtyard to inform Stalin that 'such a trip might be dangerous without preparation'. Kaganovich, 'the most worried of all, went pale' and suggested they go at midnight when the Metro was closed, but Stalin

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[25] For a televisual history of the Kremlin garage from tsarist times to the post-Soviet era, see Aleksei Pimanov's *Kreml'-9* episode entitled "Garazh osobogo naznacheniia".

[26] Excerpt from archival document 'Povishennaia bditel'nost' v nochnie chasi!' of the USSR Sovnarkom as published in Korshunov & Terekhova, *Tainy i legendy Doma na naberezhnoi*, p. 279.

[27] Shoe shortages were especially prevalent in 1930s Moscow – collectivisation and the slaughter of cattle had produced acute leather shortages and artisan's production of shoes was banned by the government in 1931 (Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, p. 45), meaning that access to a cobbling shop was indeed a luxury. As for hairdressers and for some time they might be also attached to individual commissariats – thus the author of 'Maxim Litvinov's diaries' discusses the consternation that greeted the closure of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs' hairdresser where Nadezhda Allilueva had her hair done (p. 40, *Notes for a Journal*, London: Deutsch, 1955). Hairdressing itself was only relegalised as an individual trade in the Soviet Union on March 27, 1926 (Fitpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, p. 44).

> insisted. Three limousines of magnates, ladies, children and guards sped out of the Kremlin to the station, dismounted and descended…[28]

Of course, for any normal Muscovite, passage on a tram or on the new Metro system might be a part of everyday life, but for the Stalin household of the 1930s it was a treat and novelty through the sheer mundanity of trading a limousine for the people's method of conveyance. Bolshevik wives such as Dora Khazan and Nadezhda Allilueva would take public transport and Anna Larina recalls riding on it with Bukharin, but increasingly so, Bolshevik families ferried themselves from point to point via official vehicles. On vacation in the Pamirs, the relatively down-to-earth Bukharin took advantage of a state vehicle and driver for extensive travel.

Indeed, leisure time itself became another area in which the Bolshevik elite were 'set aside' from ordinary Soviet life. If the need for a holiday arose, members of top organizations such as the Politburo might grant each other time to rest, recover and recuperate either outside the city in their dachas, or in one of a number of mansions along the Black Sea – often former residences of the tsarist aristocracy. Mukhalatka and Serebryanny Bor were two popular sites of Politburo 'holiday communities' (that is, clusters of dachas) just outside Moscow, while in the last decades of his life, Stalin chose to live for the most part at his dacha at Kuntsevo, complete with bunker, lift and a series of sentries[29].

The first part of the transformation of Bolshevik lives might therefore be found in the changes to material conditions – an increasing willingness not only to accept what had hitherto been regarded as 'petit-bourgeois values', but to embrace them and a form of everyday life which spurned neither affluence nor individuality had manifested itself in the transformation of living conditions and privilege amongst the elite.

Another product of such a 'reprivatisation' of family life – a necessary consequence of the backdown from communalisation in the kitchen, the laundry and the nursery – was the re-emergence of these rooms and their concomitant functions as being, once more, private women's domains. This shift, when seen in context

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[28] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 156.

[29] For a 'guided tour' of sorts around Kuntsevo, see Aleksei Pimanov's "Dacha Stalina" in the *Kreml'-9* series. In his final two decades, Stalin had given up his more family-friendly dacha at Zubalovo for the Kuntsevo compound complete with guard stations and almost camoflague-green paint.

combined with the dissolution of the ZhenOtdel, the move to establish an employment path for new cadres and the new privileges of the Soviet elite (and their ideological acceptance) all conspired towards bringing a significant shift in the status of the 'woman question' in Bolshevik elite society. Just as the closing of the ZhenOtdel had denied an activist voice to women and the cadres question had closed off the emergence of any latter day Krupskaya or Kollontai, the creation of more private living arrangements ensured that it was quite natural for that member of the family with 'less important work' to reoccupy this newly domestic sphere. While officially the state was not actively disabusing women of the notion that they might be independent activists and role-models for their sex without necessarily adopting traditional gender roles, in practice the decline in ZhenOtdel and the appearance of new, more 'traditional' avenues for women to involve themselves in Soviet society (such as the *Obshchestvennitsa* movement) marked a movement away from a focus on 'female equality' towards a doctrine of 'female complementarity'[30].

As wives themselves were increasingly involved in official (if mostly unimportant) employment, the task of child-rearing and cooking for the elite was not in practice, however, moved back from the state to individuals such as Zhemchuzhina and Voroshilova, but in fact on to cooks, helpers and nannies. In practice, the flirtation of the Soviet state with the communalisation of the domestic sphere had waned, but the unique nature of Bolshevik elite privilege meant that individual Bolshevik wives were not as affected as their counterparts in the rest of society would be by the changes. The wives in the elite that had so materially and geographically grown apart from the rest of the population during the first two decades after the Revolution that the very old-fashioned, almost revisionist, line which had been pursued towards women under Stalinism did not seriously affect them. Perhaps even more remarkably, considering these wives' own mentalities and reflections on their own lives (as detailed in chapter three), the reversion of the state under Stalin back to more traditional tsarist gender roles came as something of a relief – certainly a maternal figure such as Voroshilova seems much more at home in a role as grandparent and children's home chairwoman than she would have been alongside

[30] The ambiguity of women's roles in this period has not been overlooked by researchers. As will be discussed in the next chapter, scholars such as Lynne Attwood note the 'gender confusion' that arose through state propaganda simultaneously promoting images of women as independent workers and of wives and mothers.

Kollontai or Armand in the first years of the Revolution pushing for a true solution to the woman question.

Of course, while many Bolshevik wives seemed to harbour traditional views of marriage and consequently feel relaxed and comfortable with the re-emergence of such values under Stalinism, what cannot be said to have been nearly so relaxing were the purges that were to tear the elite apart. Having examined how material conditions changed the nature and patterns of Bolshevik elite life from the 1920s to the end of the 1930s, it is now necessary to look at the nature of the purges in more detail in order to document the changing social conditions within Kremlin society and how they led to a very different privileged body emerging into the 1940s. What must be considered, in this respect, are not only the stories of those repressed through the purges who were therefore to play no further part in the history of the Kremlin elite, but also how the terror affected those who were to remain an integral part of Soviet elite society.

A great deal of literature exists concerning the nature of the Moscow show trials, the ways in which confessions could be extracted, the persecution of political actors in the Great Terror and the circumstances of life in the Soviet GULag system[31]. There is no need to fully revisit these areas in a study of the terror and the Bolshevik elite, but nevertheless the life of Anna Larina provides for an archetypal examination both of the effects of the terror upon the constitution and nature of the Bolshevik elite and as a typical story of what befell members of the elite who were repressed. Thus, before turning back to the history of the Bolshevik elite proper in the late 1930s it is beholden to provide a brief narrative account of what befell those who lost their place in this society during the late 1930s and there is no better way to examine the factors at play in the life of a 'wife of a traitor' than by drawing upon Anna Larina's own memoirs of her few years of marriage to Bukharin and her own 'journey into the whirlwind' – a path that took her from infamy to obscurity via hell on earth within the course of but a few months.

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[31] See, for example, J. Arch Getty & Oleg Naumov [eds.] *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the self-destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); A. Avtorkhanov, *Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party – A study in the technology of power* (New York: Praeger Universal Microfilms, 1959); Iu. Murin, "Kak fal'sifitsirovalos' 'delo Bukharina'", *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, vol. 1 1995, pp. 61-76; A. Vaksberg, *The Prosecutor and the Prey – Vyshinsky and the 1930s Moscow Show Trials* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990); A. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (Glasgow: Collins/Harvill, 1974); E. Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1995).

1934 was a tumultuous year in the life of Bukharin and Larina for reasons other than their marriage and in the months even before the December assassination of Sergei Kirov that presaged the Great Terror. There were contradictory signs about in the lives of the Bolshevik elite that both suggested a political thaw and invited suspicions of the coming purges.

Bukharin, personally, had undergone a rehabilitation of sorts. At the April 1929 Central Committee/Central Control Commission joint plenum the Party had voted for the destruction (*razgrom*) of the Bukharin 'group' and Nikolai Ivanovich was removed from the Politburo Central Committee in November. Although he quickly repudiated his 'right deviationism' (a position marked mainly by Bukharin's reticence to approve of harsh forced collectivisation measures), it was not until early 1934 that Bukharin was readmitted to the Politburo as a candidate member and entrusted again with the task of leading one of the regime's major news organs – this time, the all-Soviet daily *Izvestiya*.

From this point of view, Bukharin's political life was in the ascendancy for the first time in the history of his romance with Larina when they were wed. There is no indication that Bukharin's political status had any effect on the nature of their courting (that is, there is no reason to suspect the teenage Larina avoided a relationship with Bukharin because he had been expelled from the Politburo and was thus 'politically tainted'), and although Larina was already part of the Kremlin clique, because of her famous father, a marriage to Bukharin marked a step up in Kremlin society and a move one kilometre closer to the epicentre of Soviet power: from the Metropole to Bukharin's Kremlin apartment.

Their apartment was at the end of a long hallway and furnished with the idiosyncrasies of Bukharin's life – some birds in a cage and a butterfly collection amongst a number of other artefacts. This Kremlin, into which Bukharin had moved in 1927 had once served as a barrier between Nikolai Ivanovich and Anna Mikhailovna, but they could now live there together, somewhat cosily perhaps because the apartment was also the home of Bukharin's father – a demonstration that not even the Soviet elite were immune from the extreme dearth of apartment space in Moscow.

Also apparently occupying their flat were a number of bugs beyond the expertise of even Bukharin the amateur lepidopterist. Bukharin had earlier gathered, when a drunk and perhaps off-guard Stalin divulged to him the details of a private

conversation Zinoviev had had with his wife, that the Kremlin apartments were in some way bugged, most probably through the telephone, and this fact was conveyed to the young Larina. She writes "my husband could never shake the horrible impression left by this encounter with Stalin"[32]. Importantly, this meant that the young wife, despite a degree of naivety, knew from the very start of her Kremlin occupancy that her domestic role and her husband's private conversations were liable to be monitored: there was to be no simple separation of the personal from the political for a Kremlin wife. Aside from being a 'studious domestic worker' – to the extent that domesticity was required for a woman with access to the amenities at hand to the Kremlin elite – Larina therefore also saw it as her duty to be one half of a political partnership: for her husband relied upon her for discreetness even at home.

Previous to the terror, the role of a Bolshevik wife had, for the most part, been marked by privilege. But for a few exceptions, it guaranteed a higher standard of living and better access to a secure lifestyle. Viewed within the context of employment, grounds for dismissal had only been severe disruption to the status quo or divorce. Budyonny's wife had shot herself in 1923 and Stalin's wife in 1932, but even the most errant wives – those like Yekaterina Kalinina and Olga Budyonnaya who had run away or were cuckolding their husbands – were only sentenced to live in sham marriages or apart from their husbands. Even children of disgraced parents, like Trotsky's son Lev Sedov, retained some perquisites within the elite.

Come the Terror, however, and this was to change: wives not only were to become political confidantes but also political liabilities and potential 'hostages' for husbands caught in a tight political fix. Although bugging of the Kremlin elite had been practised for over a decade, the first direct victim of recorded material was Kalinin's wife: she was heard denouncing Stalin in a private conversation with a friend and both were arrested. Olga Budyonnaya's downfall was more complicated: Kremlin intelligence ascertained that she was having an affair and 'conducting herself dishonourably'. Stalin felt that this might compromise Budyonny's position and Yezhov was instructed to act accordingly[33]. Arrested in a similar manner was General Yegorov's wife, who was thought to perhaps be a security risk as well because of her visits to foreign embassies. Once again, as a common theme that ran throughout the terror, the personal and political were to be inseparable.

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[32] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 118.
[33] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 213.

For a young woman like Anna Larina, though, despite having a limited awareness of the political intrigues surrounding the Bolshevik elite, there was no need for her to fear for her life in 1934. The only threats to the security of her position were divorce and deep political crisis, and neither of these seemed at all likely to the newlywed.

This was to change somewhat with the assassination of Kirov that December. Although Larina did not believe Kirov's assassination to be an 'inside job' (she states that she was 'not able to think her way through to a conclusion' about his death prior to her imprisonment[34]), its aftermath provoked a crisis of recriminations, security fears and the dismemberment of the elite.

1934 and its 'Congress of Victors' had seemed to yield a relaxation in tensions and the war in the countryside, and measures of NKVD surveillance and repression had eased[35]. Kaganovich considered that "as we are in more normal times, we can punish through the courts and not resort to extrajudicial repression"[36]. Kirov's assassination reversed this thaw, leading both to the sudden re-emergence of the Bolshevik 'siege mentality' not seen at such heights since the days of civil war, and to a series of reactionary counter-measures that were the prelude to full-scale terror. *Pravda* announced a tightening of security provisions on Stalin's direction the same day, including the right for the state to pursue secret trials and interrogations, and these measures were passed by the Politburo as a *fait accompli*[37]. Within a fortnight these measures were being utilised in the arrest and interrogation of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Both figures had recently (like Bukharin) been readmitted to the Party, but had never regained any political clout, having only that January been forced into speeches of self-recrimination as part of the ritual of re-admittance to the elite.

If convicted of "terrorism" in a secret and abbreviated court process under the new December 1 law, Zinoviev and Kamenev could be summarily executed without right of appeal. As it was, they were merely found to be leaders of a 'Leningrad group' of "White Guards and Trotskyites" and sentenced to prison terms. This could hardly have been consoling to Larina or the rest of elite society, however – if the

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[34] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 46.

[35] See, for instance, the sharp dropoff in NKVD arrests for counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet behaviour in 1934 in GARF, *f*. 9401, *op*. 1, *d*. 4157, *ll*. 201-5.

[36] RGASPI, *f*. 17, *op*. 165, *d*. 47, *l*. 3 as quoted in Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. 138.

[37] That is, the 'December 1 Law' was only formally approved by the Politburo on December 3 as somewhat of a forced decision, for its terms had already been rushed to press on the day of Kirov's assassination.

court's conclusion was correct, there was a large group of counter-revolutionaries amongst the top spheres of the Party's Leningrad branch. If not and her husband too might just as easily be caught up under the rather nebulous terms of the new terrorism laws as Kamenev and Zinoviev had been. All that was needed for a conviction was hearsay and innuendo.

Yet despite a serious spike in tensions amongst the Bolshevik elite and the loss of one of their more gregarious and well-liked members, the 'Great Terror' proper was still a couple of years away. In the winter of 1934-35, under one thousand members of Zinoviev's *shcholka* were rounded up and prosecuted, with most only receiving exile for their bad judgment in backing a patron that had fallen out of favour with Stalin. The Kirov assassination reprisals were thus centred around Leningrad and had little direct impact on the lives of Moscow party officials. Another old Bolshevik, Valerian Kuibyshev died in January 1935, but his death appeared natural even if he had been one of the more vocal critics of the NKVD's prosecution of the Kirov case. Perhaps most disturbing for Kremlin families was the precedent that this rounding up of Zinoviev's colleagues suggested: that mere 'connections' with a Party member out of favour were enough to prompt action on the part of the Party's security organs. As one investigator stated: "the proletariat demands the exile of everyone directly or indirectly connected with the opposition."[38] Such a demand suggested that not even friends or family would be safe any more if a member of the elite fell from grace.

Up until the summer of 1935, however, it had still only been those political actors who had been sidelined for some time that had been found guilty of 'moral complicity' in the death of Kirov. With the exception of Kirov, therefore, none of Stalin's own 'clique' within the Central Committee had been seriously affected by the new security laws. This was to change when the security scare moved its focus from Leningrad to the Kremlin itself. Just prior to the Central Committee plenum in June 1935, 110 employees of the Kremlin's 'service sector', including standard employees from maids to library workers (like Kamenev's brother) and members of the security detail, were arrested and charged with being part of a terrorist plot. Unsurprisingly this apparent discovery that Kremlin security had been compromised raised questions concerning the old Bolshevik who was responsible for the Kremlin guard, Avel Yenukidze.

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[38] Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. 157.

Yenukidze had joined the Social Democrats some five years before the Party's schism, known Yekaterina Voroshilova before her marriage, and been 'godfather' to Stalin's second wife. Now he was the secretary of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, presiding over the administration of the Kremlin. Privately, he was known to be somewhat of a womaniser - as Montefiore puts it with some hyperbole: "girls filled his office, which came to resemble a sort of Bolshevik dating agency for future and cast-off mistresses"[39].

With the judgment that Stalin was using Kirov's death to engineer a terror[40], it follows that Yenukidze – the one elite scalp of the Kremlin Affair – was viewed as either expendable or dangerous by those coordinating the political repressions of the late 1930s, although given his relative lack of political influence in comparison to figures like Kamenev and Zinoviev it may be presumed that it was more the former than the latter. The thesis that the Kremlin Affair (and perhaps even the Kirov assassination) was a deliberate ploy on the part of Stalin to destroy Yenukidze seems unlikely though, given the affective relationship of the two. It is certainly far from implausible that with the death of Kirov fresh in their minds, the announcement of a Kremlin plot by Yezhov was greeted with particular concern by those in the elite.

Whether one accepted the Kremlin affair as fact or fabrication, its unmasking brought further destabilisation to the Kremlin elite: an elite either besieged by Trotskyists that had infiltrated some of the most sensitive areas of Soviet society, or pursued by a ruthless Stalin who was not willing to spare even the closest comrades in the pursuit of the Party's cleansing. In either case, both the Kremlin matter and Kirov's death were seen as connected, as Yezhov made plain in his denunciatory speech at the Central Committee plenum on June 6th. In a speech of some half an hour's duration that called for the expulsion of Yenukidze from the Central Committee, Yezhov spent the first two-thirds discussing the testimony of Kamenev and Zinoviev in the Kirov case[41]. The message, if not already made clear by the persecution of Zinoviev's associates following his own arrest was now plainly

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39 Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 153.

40 Montefiore contends that "Stalin had no precise plan for the growing Terror, just the belief that the Party had to be terrorized into submission and that old enemies had to be eradicated" (*Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 144). How Yenukidze, one of "Stalin's oldest friends" (*Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 153) should qualify as a primary terror victim is left to Montefiore's readers to deduce.

41 See pp. 98-99 of Iu. Murin, "Tainy 'Kremlëvskogo dela' 1935 goda i sud'ba Avelia Enukidze", *Voprosi Istorii* 9/2000, pp. 83-113.

evident: guilt by association was to be a central pillar of any further recriminations with the Bolshevik elite.

By the time of the December 1936 Central Committee plenum, even simple communications between political actors could be used as a sign of counter-revolutionary conspiracy. Tomsky (who had committed suicide that August because of the intense pressure investigations had place on him), it was concluded by Kaganovich, was clearly involved with Zinoviev and his 'group' because they had been so close they "went together to pick out a dog"[42]. In short, even trivial associations could land a member of the elite in hot water.

Because of this, families in the late 1930s and 1940s increasingly sought to isolate themselves from 'bad influences'. In some cases, this meant parents forbidding their children from playing with or courting the children of other elite members who were in disgrace, while at its most extreme it meant the complete cessation of communication. Voroshilov, for instance, had been quite close to Bukharin in the 1920s and Bukharin kept with him a revolver that the self-same 'sharpshooter' had presented to him engraved "To the Leader of the Proletarian Revolution", yet by January 1937 when Bukharin was under intense political scrutiny Voroshilov refused to reply to him: when Nikolai Ivanovich attempted to plead his innocence to Kliment Yefremovich, he received only the following terse response: "I beg that there be no further correspondence with me. Whether you [*vy*] are guilty or not will be shown by the investigation. Voroshilov"[43].

As the elite of the 1930s had become more and more disconnected from the rest of society – through their privilege, through the creation of a stratum of cadres and through their exclusive accommodation – alliances and relationships within elite society had become more important. Now, however, political machinations threatened to end any prospect of sympathetic friends and colleagues amongst the elite, which in turn could make members feel completely isolated. Bukharin's final letters to Stalin before his arrest in 1937 make this isolation felt perfectly clearly: "the atmosphere is foul. I *can't* live like this any more, as though I'm plague-infested and forever suspect. With things such as they are, my life is meaningless… I warmly entreat you

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[42] Kaganovich's speech from RGASPI, *f*. 17, *op*. 2, *d*. 575, *ll*. 159-62, 165-67, 169-72, uncorrected shorthand minutes as quoted in Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, pp. 318-320.

[43] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 310.

to allow me to visit you. I would like to come straightaway, but if you do not receive me then it will all be over."[44]

A politician with such a long-standing relationship with Stalin as Bukharin had may have thought his personal connections might present him with an opportunity to avoid the severest measures from coming to pass against him, but many wives of the Bolshevik elite without this connection to Stalin or top Bolsheviks felt even more isolated when their husbands were arrested or under suspicion. Karl Radek's wife, for instance, appealed to Stalin through Bukharin (with no success), while Tomsky's wife wrote the following to the other Nikolai Ivanovich in the Kremlin elite (Yezhov):

> My dear Nikolai Ivanovich:
>
> Please help me find a job. I cannot live without work. Sometimes I feel that I am going crazy. I can no longer go on living *cut off from life*.
>
> I have worked for a long time in the field of public catering and was a member of the Presidium of the Committee on Public Catering. I have also done administrative-economic work. I know how to work.
>
> My eyes are hurting me now (the blood vessels in the pupils of both my eyes have burst), and I can read and write only for short periods of time. Perhaps it will all pass…[45]

This woman, like so many others, fell along with her husband. Tomsky's suicide, rather than providing an end to the investigation into his 'terrorist activities' only confirmed him as a counter-revolutionary in the eyes of those prosecuting the terror: his self-inflicted death had merely prevented the Party from properly examing the case and thus denied it justice. Without a politically active husband, and under suspicion because of her close personal involvement with an anti-Soviet element, Tomskaya lost her job and her links to the rest of society: like Bukharin she felt 'cut off from life'.

This was essentially the first step that each wife of a repressed member of the Bolshevik elite took: complete ostracism from the rest of society. She might keep her job for the first few months, but essentially the process and the suspicions of others made life after a spouse's arrest quite intolerable.

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[44] Letter to Stalin, 24th September, 1936 as published in Adibekov & Anderson "U menia odna nadezhda na tebia", *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, vol. 3, 2001, p. 69. My translation.

[45] Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, pp. 298-9. My italics. For a very different, and less pleading, letter from family members to Stalin, see the note from Litvinov's daughter to Stalin.

Anna Larina herself had already been through much in the months leading up to her husband's arrest. To some extent – judging from the slight disconnect between her own memoirs and Bukharin's recently published final letters to Stalin – it appears that Bukharin had attempted to shield his young wife from many of the worst details of his investigation (Larina does not give details of Bukharin's fractious working conditions at *Izvestiya*, for instance, which is one of his principal topics of correspondence with Stalin), but in many matters the raw suffering of her husband was brought home. In the weeks leading up to the February-March Central Committee plenum of 1936, Bukharin went on hunger strike[46] and refused to leave his room, for instance, while at another stage Larina feared for his mental health when she discovered the ready nature of Voroshilov's aforementioned revolver in the bedroom.

Two months after Bukharin was finally arrested and charged, Larina was moved from his Kremlin apartment and transferred to flat 470 in the House on the Embankment[47] across the river (along with Bukharin's brother and father and his ailing first wife Anna Lukina). She writes: "naively, I did not expect to be persecuted. I was more afraid for my mother. My own worries had to do with finding a job and feeding my baby…"[48] Larina's situation was therefore not very different to Tomskaya's. Like Tomskaya, Larina relied upon Bukharin's state income to keep up the rent that was payable to the Central Executive Committee (CEC), like Tomskaya there had been difficulties with Larina coordinating anything to do with Bukharin's work following his arrest (for instance, the retrieval of his personal effects) and like Tomskaya, Larina was now in need of money but without any prospects of employment. In the end, Larina dispatched her unpaid rental notice to Kalinin, the chairperson of the CEC, but in any case she was not an occupant of the House of the Embankment for long.

The next step along the path of repression for the Bolshevik wife was inevitably arrest. By 1937, the Government House, despite being one of the newest, best appointed and most luxurious complexes in all the Soviet Union was almost a holding

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[46] Of course, much like Tomsky's 'tactic' of suicide to avoid investigation, Bukharin's hunger strike was seen as another obstructionist and un-Bolshevik activity.

[47] According to *Oknami na Kreml'*, p. 248. Another publication (Korshunov & Terekhova, *Tainy i legendy Doma na naberezhnoi*) appears to confirm this apartment number and notes that Larina "occupied one room in the apartment". It also ambiguously notes "Volodya Kuibyshev was in this apartment" (p. 218) – he appears to have moved frequently. Apartment 470 would appear to be on one of the middle floors of the 24th entrance, towards the south side of the building.

[48] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 167.

camp for future political prisoners – some third of residents in the 1930s were eventually repressed, while they could be carefully monitored not only through potential bugs but through the less sophisticated posting of one NKVD official per entranceway.

Larina's time for transfer came in June 1937. She knew that the knock at the door was the NKVD simply because no-one paid the broken family social visits any more[49]. Her internal passport was seized and she was given five choices as a place of exile – Aktyubinsk, Akmolinsk, Astrakhan, Semipalatinsk or Orenburg[50]. Larina protested the decision and was taken in to the Lubyanka two nights later. There she was informed that exile would be 'short-term' on the proviso that she denounced her husband.

Larina was treated quite well compared to many other 'wives of traitors'[51]. A passenger car and truck were employed to transport her and her property to Astrakhan. Larina, having been provided with accommodation and furnishings by the benevolent state like all Soviet officials had scarcely more than a few suitcases worth of personal effects, but used the truck to pack some mementos of her time with Bukharin, including one of his favourite oil paintings and his old suit.

Another difficult decision awaited Anna Larina, like so many *chesiri* and *zhiri*: how to cope with the forced break-up of her family. While she had the option of taking her one-year-old son into exile, Larina chose to keep him with a nanny[52] considering that he would be better off in Moscow, disassociated from his parents undergoing repression.

Arriving in Astrakhan, it appeared that many other 'wives of traitors' had brought their children with them and the town had become the place of exile for many

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[49] This is with the exception of her grandmother, who phoned beforehand. See Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 169.

[50] Aktyubinsk is in northern Kazakhstan. Akmolinsk is the modern Astana, capital city of Kazakhstan, and was established as home to "ALZHIR" (Algeria) – an abbreviation for the 'Akmolinsk camp of wives of traitors to the motherland' in late 1937. It is in the north-east of Kazakhstan. Astrakhan is a well-known port city on the Volga delta at the northwest coast of the Caspian Sea. Orenburg is on the Ural River in the Ural Region on the Russian-Kazakh border, while Semipalatinsk is in eastern Kazakhstan.

[51] The official acronym denoted those related to enemies of the people was 'ChSIR' – chlyoni semey izmennikov rodini: members of the families of traitors to the motherland – which could give rise to the word '*chesir*'. More specifically, a wife of an enemy was known, just as originally, as a 'ZhIR' – zhena izmennikov rodini.

[52] This woman, 'Nanny Pasha', seems to have been the only 'friend of the family' not to desert the Larina house after Bukharin's arrest. She cared for Yura while Larina was busy caring for her husband's own health in the period leading up to his arrest, and stayed with the family after the arrest, having developed a deep attachment to the baby, if not also to Larina herself.

of them. Larina arrived the day after the conclusion of the Tukhachevsky trial, and found herself in a new type of Kremlin community, excised by force from Moscow. She met the housekeeper of Yan Rudzutak, the family of Yakir (tried alongside Tukhachevsky), the relatives of Uborevich, Gamarnik and Tukhachevsky – none of whom she had known prior to exile. The one woman she was familiar with was Roza Radek, wife of Karl.

Considering the trial and arrest dates of many of these other family members, some already in Astrakhan by the time Larina arrived, it appears that Anna Mikhailovna's exile – which took several months from the time of her husband's arrest – was significantly delayed. It is difficult to know whether this was a result of Bukharin and his family being given 'special care' by the NKVD, or simply evidence that the process of dealing with *chesiri* had been more streamlined by the authorities towards the end of 1937. The former hypothesis is perhaps more likely, for again Bukharin's wife was arrested in Astrakhan some two to three weeks after her comrades in misery. The NKVD presented her with a search and arrest order and she was bundled off to Astrakhan prison[53].

In prison, Larina underwent an interrogation process – albeit one that was considerably restrained compared to many interrogations of the time[54]. She was sentenced to eight years imprisonment (followed by exile in Siberia) and conveyed to a camp in Tomsk via transit prisons in Saratov and Sverdlovsk. On the way she shared a carriage with the Tukhachevskys, although once she arrived at her final destination, Larina was no longer accommodated amongst fellow *chesiri*.

Some time after Bukharin's March 1938 trial, Larina was conveyed back to Moscow and placed in the Lubyanka for interrogation[55]. There she was interviewed

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[53] The official NKVD documents of Larina's case are contained within the FSB Archives at the Lubyanka, but access to them is only granted to the immediate family of the repressed. One document that is available to be viewed, in facsimile form, is Larina's search order from Astrakhan which was on display at Moscow's GULag Museum when the author visited in 2005.

[54] See, for example, chapter two in Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* vol. 1 (Glasgow: Collins/Harvill, 1974) for details of various torture methods practised by the NKVD, or consider the bruised and battered Sokolnikov who confronted Bukharin.

[55] The reasons for and date of this interrogation are unclear. It is clear that it took place after Bukharin's trial and execution and the chapter heading in Larina's book gives the year as 1938. With Beria in charge, this would place the interview after 25th November, when he replaced Yezhov as head of the NKVD. Cohen in his preface states simply the year of this meeting as 1939. In either case, it seems to make little sense to have dragged Larina back to Moscow *after* her husband's show trial. Perhaps it was a case of Beria, as the new NKVD head, wishing to review Yezhov's handiwork.

by Beria[56] and fired off a short letter (one part protest, one part entreaty) to Stalin as so many others had done. Though it was not yet a year since her husband's arrest and only months through a years-long imprisonment, after this meeting little was different about Larina's life from any of the other thousands of *zeks* in prison camps throughout the Soviet Union. Larina had lost her husband, lost her family and status and was forced to renounce her past. Her eight-year sentence ended in September 1945, at which point she stayed in officially-imposed Siberian exile.

Larina married again in the camps and had two further children. Her husband was rearrested, after also finishing his term in 1945 and not finally released until the amnesty that followed Stalin's 1953 death. She was to only meet her son by Bukharin again following Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech. Yura, now twenty years old, had been raised in a Stalingrad orphanage and become a student of hydraulic engineering. He only found out then that his father – whom he supposed had been some professor – was Lenin's 'darling of the Party', Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin[57].

All terror stories are terrible in their own way, but Anna Larina's account of the terror ties in extremely well with other accounts from repressed wives and the archival documents remaining from their husbands. The elite's other Nikolai Ivanovich, Commissar Yezhov, went through the same pattern of decline when under the scrutiny of the Party and Stalin; investigations were held into his work, he became unable to perform his duties and unsurprisingly he collapsed first into depression and drunkenness[58], mimicking the way in which Bukharin felt impotent to perform his job at *Izvestiia*. Then his wife, Evgeniia, was rounded upon, with members of her family arrested. In desperation, she wrote to Stalin in November 1938:

> I beg you, comrade Stalin, to read this letter…
>
> Dear, beloved comrade Stalin, oh yes, I may be defamed, slandered, but you are dear and beloved to me, as you are for all people in whom you have faith. Let them take away my freedom, my life, I will accept it all, but I will not give up the right to love you, as everybody does who loves the country and the Party…
>
> I feel like a living corpse…[59]

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[56] Larina could not find out at this stage why it was not Yezhov who was interrogating her.
[57] See Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, pp. 318-322 for details of this first encounter.
[58] Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Yezhov* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002). Chapter 6.
[59] Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner*, p. 169-170.

When Yezhov's time came he described himself as 'in a state of nervous exhaustion' in a letter to Stalin, asking too that the leader talk to him 'for only one minute'[60]. There is, as such, an uncanny parallel with Bukharin's reaction, right down to the types of metaphors used: being in a state of 'living death' ('a living corpse' for Evgeniia Yezhova, living 'cut off from life' from Bukharin) or feeling like one has contracted the plague. Isolation was followed by investigation, investigation by interrogation, interrogation by incarceration, incarceration by death.

While the similar experiences of the Yezhovs and Bukharins in repression themselves paint a stark portrait of the nature of the journey into the whirlwind for elite victims of the Terror, yet another profoundly interesting document exists relating to the mental cogitations and ongoing turmoil of a member of the elite as they fell under suspicion. For during the process of Iosif Pyatnitsky's fall from grace, his wife, Yulia Sokolova-Pyatnitskaya kept a diary – a diary that was later to be confiscated by the NKVD and thus find its way into the archives of the Soviet security services. The now-published record begins shortly before her husband's arrest and follows his wife's mental state through the process.

Early in her account, during the investigation of Pyatnitsky, the mood is already dark:

> I worked, he, not leaving the house, walked around his office without putting shoes on, read Pavlenko's "In the East", I asked him to clean up the magazines from the table, to write, to not think constantly of the same thing in order to not lose his head… I should very much like to die. I proposed it to him (together), knowing that it wouldn't come to pass. He categorically rejected it, having announced that before the Party he was as pure as snow only just fallen upon the ground.[61]

Soon, Pyatnitskaya understood the signs had come that her husband was to be taken away: "On 7/7 I left for work and, when Safonov picked us up at Serebryanny Bor he said 'Tomorrow there won't be a car'. Here I understood that the arrest would take place very soon"[62]. The Black Maria arrived for her husband that night.

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[60] See Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner ,* p. 186 and p. 178 respectively.

[61] Iuliia Sokolova-Piatnitskaia in V. Pyatnitskii [ed.] *Golgofa: po materialam arkhivno-sledstvennogo dela No. 603 na Sokolovu-Piatnitskuiu, Iu. I* (St Petersburg: Palitra, 1993), pp. 21-22.

[62] Sokolova-Piatnitskaia, *Golgofa*, p. 25.

What follows in Yulia Pyatnitskaya's account again closely mirrors what is known of other cases: she retains her job, but under strained circumstances; her family starts to find itself cut off from the rest of society ("Igor was gradually abandoned by his comrades – Samik, Vitya Del'machinskiy – no-one rings him"[63]); her child becomes stressed and taciturn (the self-same Igor stays indoors the whole day, like his father not leaving his room); she herself is no longer 'recognised' in public by acquaintances ("I met O.P. Nogina [V.P. Nogin's wife] on the metro. She looked at me, but didn't greet me and I was the same. Then comrade Lap'er entered the wagon – a rail worker who was well acquainted with Pyatnitsky. He spotted me and spent the whole time looking over to the opposite side from me"[64]). Pyatnitskaya gets angry at her family for having sponged off her husband's good fortune during his days in the Central Committee, but now being unable to provide for her during this time of troubles. Money troubles start to concern her – she seeks out friends for enough cash to get by, but the family still goes hungry. On top of all this, the rent for her accommodation, no longer subsidised by the state, has now become unbearably high and she must default on payments (similarly, Anna Larina, rehoused at the House on the Embankment following her husband's arrest, has to write a letter to the authorities responsible for housing, pointing out the physical impossibility of paying the rent in circumstances where Bukharin's own funds are frozen). Such emotional pressure is brought upon Pyatnitskaya that through sheer stress and by the turmoil that her husband's arrest has brought about, combined with the 'revelations' about him that are emerging from the NKVD's investigation, she comes to doubt her own partner's innocence and entertain the thought that he may have been involved in counter-revolutionary activities after all[65].

The other prominent victims of the Great Terror amongst Bolshevik elite wives were not so readily forthcoming with their tales of the great split within not just the political ranks of the party, but also its social ranks. This split, as has been noted, began before any trial date was set and any charges laid – in the case of Larina and Bukharina they were *personae non grata* for months leading up to the February-March plenum of 1937 at which Nikolai Ivanovich was arrested.

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63 Sokolova-Piatnitskaia, *Golgofa*, p. 32.
64 Sokolova-Piatnitskaia, *Golgofa*, p. 35.
65 Sokolova-Piatnitskaia, *Golgofa*, p. 42.

Soviet Official Policy on Wives of Traitors

It is now known that wives such as Larina and Pyatnitskaya did not simply 'fall through cracks' in the system concerning the treatment of the wives of politically-suspect Party members, and nor were they treated on an individual or arbitrary basis through their exclusion, persecution and confinement. Rather, they became *personae non grata* on the basis of decree. After establishing precedents for the persecution and prosecution of traitors' families as early as mid 1934 (before Kirov's assassination) and bolstering such an order with a decree allowing the expulsion of family members of 'anti-Soviet groups' from three major Soviet cities by mid 1937[66], on 15 August 1937, Operational Order 00486 'On the Repression of Wives of Enemies and Traitors of the the Motherland, of Members of Right-Trotskyist Espionage-Sabotage Organisations Sentenced by the Military Collegia and by Military Tribunals' came into effect[67]. Order 00486 *required* the compilation of dossiers on such wives and called for local and regional NKVD personnel to interrogate family members of those who had been arrested since the beginning of August 1936. As a result of this data, wives such as Larina and Pyatnitskaya could be deemed 'socially harmful' and sentenced to detention for five to eight years. It is unknown precisely how many prominent wives were repressed through the decree, but official figures as at October 1938 put the number at approximately 18 000[68]. Many, such as Larina herself, were to find themselves housed in special camps for wives (ZhIR) and family members (ChSIR) of enemies of the motherland for the term of their incarceration.

The Fates of Other Wives

In the case of women like Budyonny's second wife, Olga Stefanovna Mikhailova, an arrest might be much more connected with recriminations against a husband as recriminations by him. According to Larissa Vasilieva, Olga Stefanovna was arrested "either on the street or at the apartment of the singer Alexeyev, with whom she was

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66 A decree of 8 June 1934 allowed for the detention or exile of family members of serving military personnel who had fled abroad (see Melanie Ilic's "The Forgotten Five per cent: Women, Political Repression and the Purges" in Ilic [ed.] *Stalin's Terror Revisisted* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p. 123), while a Politburo decree of 23 May 1937 allowed for the trial and sentencing of family members of underdesirable elements for five or more years.

67 See Melanie Ilic's chapter "The Forgotten Five per cent: Women, Political Repression and the Purges" in full for more detail on this decree and the effects of the Terror on women in general.

68 Memoranda found at APRF 3/24/366, 78-9, as cited in Ilic, "The Forgotten Five per cent", n59. From late 1938 the terms of wives' arrests were modified and restricted as a result of the study of the impact of 00486.

probably having an affair"[69], Budyonny had their marriage annulled shortly afterwards and she spent her next 19 years in the GULag and prison system. Where Olga Stefanovna's case is most interesting and instructive for the researcher, however, is in the connected texts that are available detailing her arrest and the case against her. Whilst a deposition of sorts was obtained in her case, in the cases of Zhemchuzhina and Larina no indictment came from husbands and the casefiles of these two wives are still only accessible to relatives through the KGB archives. It is worthwhile quoting from the case file of Olga at some length, for it is illustrative of just how the Soviet security organizations could go about assisting in the dissolution of marriages of the Bolshevik elite.

A first document, that Semyon Budyonny allegedly wrote to the chief military prosecutor in 1955 – some eighteen years into his second wife's nineteen year ordeal in camps, a similar amount of time since his remarriage and two years after Stalin's death reads as follows:

> In the first months of 1937 (I forget the exact date) I.V. Stalin in a conversation with me said that it had become known to him that according to information from Yezhov my wife, Olga Stefanovna Budyonnaia-Mikhailova was conducting herself improperly and by doing so compromising me and that we, he emphasised, could see absolutely nothing good coming out of it and could not permit it at all.
>
> If Yezhov's information proved to be accurate, said Stalin, foreigners had drawn or could draw her into their net. Comrade Stalin recommended that I discuss the matter further with Yezhov.
>
> Soon after I had a meeting with Yezhov, who informed me that my wife, along with Bubnova [Andrei Bubnov's wife] and Yegorova [Marshal Yegorov's wife] was visiting foreign embassies – the Italian, Japanese, Polish and the reception at the dacha of the Japanese embassy had gone on until three in the morning. Then Yezhov said that she had been having intimate relations with Alekseev, an artist at the Bolshoi Theatre.
>
> She herself had told me before my conversation with Yezhov that she had gone with some female friends to the Italian embassy to sing for the ambassador's wife, and said that she had foreseen no unpleasant results. When I asked Yezhov what specifically could be described as politically compromising in her behaviour, he replied that there was nothing so far,

[69] Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives*, p. 96.

but they would continue to keep watch on her and that I should mention nothing to her.

In June 1937 I paid a second visit to Yezhov at his request. This time he said that my wife had been seen at the Italian embassy carrying a program of the racing and show-jumping events at the Hippodrome. "What of it?" I asked. "These programs are sold everywhere – they don't mean a thing!"
"I think we should arrest her and interrogate her and make her tell us about her relations with Bubnova and Yegorova. Then if she's innocent, we can release her."

I told Yezhov I saw absolutely no grounds for arresting my wife, since I had been given no evidence of her having committed any political crime. As for her intimate relations with Alekseev (about which I had been informed by Yezhov and the Ministry of Internal Affairs), this was an entirely personal and domestic matter, which might well end in divorce.

In August 1937 when I was out of Moscow on a ten-day visit to the Gorokhovetsk camps, Olga Stefanovna was arrested. I had played no part in her arrest; on the contrary, I had opposed it, since nothing Yezhov told me led me to believe there were any grounds for it. I knew Ministry of Internal Affairs official Dagin personally after working with him in Rostov, but I did not invite him to my house and never talked to him about my wife.

Later, after my wife's arrest and that of a number of cavalry commanders, including Alexandrov, Tarasenko, and Davydovich, I came to the conclusion that Yezhov had organised the whole thing with the purpose of provoking intrigues and rumours that might eventually lead our Party and government to arrest me…[70]

There are a number of interesting points to be made about this account. First, the mention of Yegorova and Bubnova is interesting – though Yegorov and his wife were not arrested until 1938, the trial of Soviet marshals was starting at the time of Yezhov's first meeting with Budyonny. On the evening of the May Day parade of 1937, and hence by the time of the second meeting with Yezhov, Budyonny records having heard Stalin talk openly about the need to 'finish with our enemies because

[70] This translation is from the English translation of *Kremlin Wives*, pp. 101-102, replaced in places exhibiting a certain 'looseness' of meaning with my own translation from the book's Russian edition, *Kremlëvskie zhëni,* pp. 220-222.

they are in the army, in the staff, even in the Kremlin'[71]. Later that month, Budyonny himself voted for the arrest of senior military figures, writing 'Unconditionally yes. It's necessary to finish off this scum' on the voting paper. Yegorov, for his part, also voted yes, adding 'All these traitors to be wiped off the face of the earth as the most hostile enemies and disgusting scum'[72].

By this experience, it must have been quite plain to Budyonny that there was a dangerous political element to his wife's supposed actions - the link between Budyonny and his wife extended into a chain of intrigue when the figures of the ubiquitous malevolent foreigners of the embassies she was visiting and the suspicious Bubnov and Yegorov were added into the story. Stalin was also quite explicit in his statement that the activities of Olga Stefanovna were compromising Budyonny himself. Quite clearly, therefore, a threat was established – Stalin was out to 'finish' Party enemies, such unreliable elements included Yegorov, Bubnov and their wives and Budyonny's wife was involving them all in the upcoming purges.

Also of interest, however, is the treatment of Olga Budyonnaya's alleged affair with Alekseev. While it represented part of a two-pronged attack of the relationship of Budyonny to his wife, a thrust that sought to employ the personal and political to split the couple, it is noteworthy that Stalin did not reveal the matter in his earlier conversation, while Yezhov waited until after outlining Budyonnaya's trips to foreign embassies to present the matter to Budyonny. Budyonnaya's marital infidelity is thus mentioned only as a follow-up to the more fundamental matter of her presence at an embassy function with Marshal Yegorov's wife: seemingly an indication that the matter of Budyonnaya's actions was very much framed in a political setting. More curiously, however, Semyon Mikhailovich did not appear to 'take the hint' and instigate any action against his wife for either of her two infractions. Unless, therefore, Budyonny was able to put up with the notion he was being cuckolded during 1937, the most plausible explanation for him failing to separate from his wife before her arrest is that he did not believe either of the charges levelled against her.

This may very well have been the case for Yegorov also, who so aggressively called for 'scum' like Tukhachevsky to be arrested while failing to separate from his own wife who was under suspicion at the time. What this suggests is that while

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[71] See Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, pp. 196-199 for details of this period. This paraphrase is indicated by Montefiore as coming from Budyonny's unpublished memoirs, kept by his daughter Nina.

[72] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 199.

husbands and wives tended to stay quite loyal to each other despite the Terror around them, and while men such as Budyonny often tended to doubt the evidence presented against family members by Yezhov, the same figures felt themselves compelled – as part of a survival instinct – to join the chorus within the Party's highest organs baying for blood and barely questioning publicly the scandalous list of victims of the Great Terror.

Of course this somewhat impotent and fatalistic position – that the Terror was a massive injustice, but one that could not be reasonably fought against – was compounded even more by the process that went on after the arrest of individuals that had been held under suspicion. Just as important as extracting confessions was for the ritual of Terror justice to be acceded to, so too the collection of denunciations from those arrested was vital to the Terror and its social effects of breaking down Kremlin society.

In order to extract denunciations and confessions two standards lines were commonly employed. One was a plea bargain of sorts: the idea being floated that an admission of guilt was enough to satisfy interrogators who might be able to secure more favourable conditions if it came voluntarily, specifically that an early acceptance of charges may save the accused's family from also being persecuted. A second was the ruse of pretending those one was asked to denounce had already denounced you. This second method was used on Olga Mikhailova to great effect[73]. She wrote to Yezhov that "during the twelve years of our marriage I collected numerous facts indicating that he [Semyon Budyonny] was involved in criminal activities against the leaders of our country, notably Stalin and Voroshilov."[74] and further testified against him to a fellow prisoner planted in her cell.

Of course, Budyonny was not arrested and the denunciation against him was not used. But Yegorov was arrested and a document released at the time of his posthumous rehabilitation in 1956 reads: "The case against A.I. Egorov, former marshal of the Soviet Union and deputy defence minister of the USSR, has been dropped through lack of *corpus delicti*. Having examined the files relating to the case of his wife, it has been established that since the only proof of Egorova's guilt consisted of a note containing excerpts from her husband's testimony against her, this

[73] See Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives*, p. 104.
[74] Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives*, p. 104.

evidence is now invalid and the case against her is dropped by lack of *corpus delicti*."[75]

The important point was, therefore, not simply that wives and husbands could be used as sources to incriminate each other in leading to a 'successful prosecution', but that the *threat* always existed that family members might be exploited in such a way and became even more readily apparent when a close friend, relative or spouse was taken into custody. The most infamous case of a wife being used in this manner was Polina Semyonovna Zhemchuzhina. The arrest and incarceration of Molotov's wife showed that authorities had the power to hold anyone's political career and life to ransom, not merely through threats to their family, but also the threat of denunciation that came with the arrest of a confidante.

In Zhemchuzhina's case, the circumstances of her arrest were connected with her membership of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. While it is true to say that Molotov's party position was under considerable stress by the time of his wife's arrest, it cannot be considered a certainty that Molotova's relationship with her husband was necessarily connected with her internment.

Molotov was first censured by the Politburo for unauthorised remarks by the Soviet ambassador to the United States and then criticised by Stalin for his amendments to the draft constitution of the German Democratic Republic. By December of 1948, Mikoyan notes that Stalin accused both him and Molotov of conspiracy against the leader[76]. Yet the rollercoaster of Zhemchuzhina's career does not closely mirror her husband's – Polina Semyonovna's great rise to the positions of Deputy People's Commissar and Central Committee candidate member were quickly followed by her losing her membership to the Central Committee in March, 1941 and her position in the perfumeries industry in favour of less salubrious posts. Yet Molotov's star continued to rise throughout these same years – in 1939, he was appointed Foreign Minister in time for crucial negotiations with Nazi Germany (on top of his position as chairperson of Sovnarkom), in 1940 the city of Perm' was renamed 'Molotov' in his honour and by a few months after his wife's demotion from the Central Committee in 1941 he was responsible for possibly the most famous speech in Soviet history, addressing the nation to declare that fascist Germany had declared war on the Soviet Union.

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[75] Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives*, p. 115.
[76] Watson, *Molotov*, p. 238.

Whether Zhemchuzhina's arrest is seen as motivated simply by Stalin's distrust of Jewish groups, in particular the Anti-Fascist Committee, whether it is seen as an indictment against Molotov's wife personally for her overly free and open connections with Golda Meir and other 'foreign elements' who had been promoting a Jewish territory in British-mandate Palestine or whether it is viewed as a method of securing compliance from Molotov himself through his wife's incarceration, the events that succeeded the initial investigation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee are not as much in doubt. Following a report by Abakumov on the Anti-Fascist Committee in early 1948, Molotov signed off on the minister's findings that the organization was politically unclean. Stalin approached Molotov and told him to divorce his wife, to which Polina responded 'If the party needs this then we shall get a divorce!'[77]. The couple separated and Polina continued her involvement in Moscow's Jewish circles until she was expelled from the Party over the New Year.

Molotov himself famously abstained from the vote to expel his wife, writing the next day to reverse his decision in favour of a 'yes' vote by *opros*. Although the gesture has been attacked by some as an example of cold-heartedness, Molotov really had no serious alternative other than to submit to the Party's (or Stalin's) will in what was, in any case, a *fait accompli*. His abstention by itself was politically risky and only two months later Molotov found himself removed from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Molotovs' next meeting was to be as notable as their first – following Stalin's funeral, Khrushchev secured the release of Polina Semyonovna, itself somewhat of an acknowledgement that Zhemchuzhina's incarceration was far from a matter of simple 'justice' and much more connected to her role as a pawn in a political game.

These then are the stories of Bolshevik families that were repressed during the years of the Great Terror. It is of course the case that most of the elite survived this period of political repression though, so it is necessary to also examine their narrative. What can be said of the attitude of those that remained to the incarceration and execution of those around them? Such a question proves to be much more difficult to answer, but can be at least broken down into a discussion of what was known and

[77] Watson, *Molotov*, p. 238. There is an interesting contrast between Molotova's 'If the party needs it, then we shall get a divorce' and Krupskaya's statement (almost exactly 50 years previous) "Nu, chto zh, zhenoi kak zhenoi" [ie. if the tsarist authorities require me to be your wife, then I'll be your wife]. If anything these quotations indicate the fact that the 'bureaucracy' and 'officialness' of both marriage and divorce were not altogether respected by the Bolshevik elite.

what official positions have been given about the Great Terror by members of the elite.

In terms of knowledge about the nature and extent of the Terror amongst those that remained unrepressed, it can be said that the presence of Black Marias, the noise of official searches of residences, the changing occupation of official housing (to the point where up to one in every three House on the Embankment residents was 'purged'), contact with those who were under investigation and knowledge about the case against them as reported in the press and detailed at official Party meetings were all sources of information that presented themselves to even the least observant individual. As being guarded and observant was necessary to yourself avoid 'suspicious characters' and thus entanglement in the machine of repression, it would be surprising – especially in such a small community – for most members not to have been even more aware of the nature of the Terror that went on around them. Having said that, it cannot be assumed that most members of the elite knew (especially at the time) that the Terror was replete with the extraction of false confessions and the staging of 'show trials': in most cases an interested party today has available to them a better selection of information on individual cases in the terror than even a contemporary eyewitness did.

In the case of the suspicious death of Sergo Ordzhonikidze, for instance, Anna Larina notes that – despite her and her husband already being in the clutches of the terror – they both believed the official account of the time that Sergo had died of a stroke[78]. Still other members of the Kremlin only found out about the death from the official press, despite living in the same building as the old Bolshevik[79]. In cases of those living under investigation, while it may have been important to know that a member of society was 'plague-ridden' so as not to incriminate oneself by coming into contact with them, it was neither easy nor advisable to delve deeply into the exact nature of the allegations against them. Suspicions might, of course, be raised simply through the large number of supposed enemies of the people being discovered in elite society some two decades after the revolution. More specifically they might be engendered by close friends – who one might also be willing to guarantee had no sort of counter-revolutionary element to their personality – being arrested, yet as can be seen in the Pyatnitskaya case or in the matter of Budyonny's second wife, even a

[78] Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 327.
[79] Eteri Ordzhonikidze, *Big Parents* episode.

married partner might be convinced at some point that their spouse really was legitimately guilty of an offence.

In any case, it did one no sort of service to make personal suspicions public, nor even to dwell upon them privately. That both Voroshilova and Molotov, amongst others, understood this was made clear in the previous chapter through an examination of their approach to reminiscing about these times

There is certainly the element in Molotov and Voroshilova's approaches to the Terror and its discussion that there were 'unsavoury' elements about the period best avoided, yet aside from a general climate of mistrust and tension within the 'unrepressed' section of the Bolshevik elite at the time of the terror, the repression of so many individuals actually had only a relatively minor effect upon the constitution and nature of the Bolshevik elite.

Table 1 - Audiences with Stalin in his office by date[80]

	1930 – Kirov's death	Kirov's death – Outbreak of Great Patriotic War	During the Great Patriotic War	End of War to Death of Stalin.
Molotov	466	1208	657	590
Kaganovich	411	526	57	291
Voroshilov	214	732	188	83
Ordzhonikidze	159	185	-	-
Mikoyan	148	421	269	538
Postyshev	143	21	-	-
Yagoda	128	73	-	-
Litvinov	116	134	3	0
Kuibyshev	104	7	-	-
Zhdanov	87	385	28	233

In work terms, those in Table 1 represent the ten Soviet politicians who had the most private meetings with Stalin in the lead up to the onset of the Terror. Of them, while four were dead by the time of the Great Patriotic War, the top three remained. Furthermore Kuibyshev died naturally, Ordzhonikidze was not repressed and Yagoda himself had only seen a sharp spike in meetings with Stalin due to his peculiar responsibilities as head of the NKVD. Apart from Litvinov – whose attendances in Stalin's office were cut short both through his dismissal as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, but also due to his postings overseas – the remainder of the group, those that

[80] Figures are derived from Stephen Wheatcroft's MelGROSH internet resource, to be found at <www.melgrosh.unimelb.edu.au>.

might be called Stalin's long-term inner circle, remained influential. This clique – Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Mikoyan and Zhdanov – were not simply Stalin's closest work colleagues but also the foundation of that set which would attend dinners with him and evenings at his dacha at Kuntsevo, evenings that Voroshilova was to describe later as being part of happier times, full of 'simple comradely relations'.

In short, while the Terror had some noticeable effect in the constitution of houses such as the House on the Embankment, when it came to the very inner circle surrounding Stalin it proved to be not so serious a shock to this inner circle as it was to others in the Kremlin elite. Whilst experience of the Terror certainly made a virtue of caution in top Party circles, it is difficult to see the process as having any sort of life-altering effect on the way those who survived went about their business as is evidenced by the continuity in their ideological positions and everyday lives to be found in memoirs and personal documents.

If the Terror was not responsible for a marked change in the mentality of those in the elite that survived it, it was – through the sheer fact that it decimated the ranks of the Party elite – necessarily responsible for the changing constitution of the elite as new members rose to take the place of the repressed. Thus a new guard of figures such as Malenkov, Beria, Bulganin, Khrushchev and Kosygin (who between them had never met in Stalin's office before 1930, and met only 15 times prior to Kirov's death) were all amongst the top ten attendees at Stalin's meetings in the post-war years. With their birthyears ranging from 1894 to 1904, while not considerably younger than the 'old guard', all had still been too young to participate in the birth of the Bolshevik movement and most had still been teenagers at the time of the revolution. Not only this, but the new guard represented a body that had risen up through the Party not through exceptional service in the troubled years of revolution and civil war, but rather a more 'bureaucratic' element which had taken advantage of the cadres movement to win administrative advancement through the Party. Khrushchev had, for instance, come to Stalin's attention as a colleague of Nadezhda Allilueva attending the Party's *PromAkademiia* in Moscow.

In social terms, what the persecution of so many Old Bolsheviks together with the advancement of the new guard had created, therefore, was a society that by the end of the 1930s was not only much less homogenous than it had been, but also a society which had learnt the merits of caution and of more formalised relationships (or no relationships at all) with neighbours. These social changes, when combined

with the material changes that took place through the transfer of Kremlin elite accommodation from the *ad hoc* to the structured (in the form of the move to the Kremlin and the establishment of the *Dom Pravitel'stva*) all contributed to the one key structural change that occurred in the Bolshevik elite during this time – the alienation of elite families not only from the rest of society, but also from each other. While the tight-knit circle surrounding Stalin still remained for the purposes of all-night dinners and meetings as a *de facto* leadership group in his Kremlin office, Bolshevik elite society around it had changed quite dramatically during the 1930s[81].

One specific indicator of this fact is a comparison of the Bolshevik wives who were married in the pre-revolutionary period and the 1920s (as detailed in chapter one) to the sorts of marriages that occurred in the 1930s and later. Where pre-revolutionary marriages were either necessarily between conspiratorial couples (such as Krupskaya and Krzhizhanovskaya) or Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik (such as Svanidze and Lukina), by the time of the 1930s a new source of spouses had emerged from members of the elite – those who were neither 'career revolutionaries' nor distanced from the revolution, but rather in the service of the state or somehow already connected with what was a large revolutionary family. The son of Nina Adzhubei (the Kremlin tailor) was to marry Khrushchev's daughter, Rada[82]. Stalin's daughter was, of course, married to Zhdanov's son (Yuri) at one stage, and it had indeed been proposed to her by Stalin that she marry one of Yury Zhdanov, Sergo Beria or Stepan Mikoyan[83]. Martha Peshkova (Gorkiy's grand-daughter) ended up marrying Sergo Beria, but not after first going out with Rem Merkulov, the son of the NKGB chief. Poskrebyshev, Stalin's assistant, married the sister of the Kremlin doctor, Mikhail Metalikov[84]. Semyon Budyonny had himself set some sort of precedent by his marriage to his housekeeper in the 1920s, while some more scurrilous rumours held that Stalin himself had intimate relations with his own housekeeper in his final years[85]. Whilst all these couplings are notable instances of the

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[81] Whilst it is clear from Voroshilova's reminiscences that wives were present at various dinners and evenings of top Bolsheviks, both at the Kremlin and Kuntsevo, where guests partook in drinking, dancing and singing the booziest and longest of dinners under Stalin were reserved for the top male Party members. The changing face of such socialising from the 1930s onwards can be seen as one further area in which wives' presence in the informal avenues of power declined.

[82] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 490.

[83] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 451.

[84] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 235.

[85] More recent claims on post-Soviet television, allegedly supported by DNA evidence, include that Stalin had a child by a woman he met and lived with in tsarist exile.

tight nature of the Kremlin elite, they should not be seen as surprising: it is only natural that a group of individuals in such a comparatively small society set apart from the mainstream should often marry amongst themselves, if only for the fact that a key requirement for most marriages is having socialised with one's spouse first.

The fact that the Soviet elite by the end of the 1930s had increasingly separated from mainstream society is thus borne out by patterns of marriage and inter-marriage (a comparative study of the elite and Soviet society at large will be undertaken in more detail in the next chapter), but in terms of further evidence of the separation of elite families from each other it is useful to back up what is known (and has been described above) about the changing composition of the elite and the effects of the Terror with more solid data. Since private details on the lives of top Bolsheviks – their home life, marital status, addresses and cohabitants – are difficult to find, acquiring information about the community life in different elite accommodation can start to address this gap in data. In this respect, an examination of the new and massive *Dom Pravitel'stva* (House of Government, hereafter referred to by its more common name – the House on the Embankment) built just across the Moscow River from the Kremlin in 1931 for the Soviet elite can provide us with a specific snapshot of more general Soviet elite life. This is particularly the case as life at the House has been well documented both in literary form (see Yuri Trifonov's novella *The House on the Embankment*) as well as by residents-cum-historians who have published information on some famous residents together with more general listings of House residents, especially those who were repressed.

As the House on the Embankment was used to house all manner of the Soviet elite – from writers and actors and other people's artists to scientists like Lysenko to the relatives of high-ranking officials to those officials themselves – the following vignette will focus particularly on the political elite in the House, defined specifically in terms of the Stalinist period as those 140 persons who were elected to the Central Committee at the XVIIth Party Congress in February, 1934. To provide an immediate sense of just how concentrated the Soviet elite were and just how important the House was for their accommodation, according to House records[86], 58 of 140 of these

[86] All further statistics on House membership, except where otherwise indicated, are taken from analysis of the following sources: *Oknami na Kreml'*; Korshunov & Terekhova, *Tainy i legendy Doma na naberezhnoi*; Yu. Goriachev [ed.] *Tsentral'nyi komitet KPSS, VKP(b), RKP(b), RSDRP(b): istoriko-biograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Parad, 2005) and lists of Great Patriotic

Central Committee members and candidate members were at one time residents of the House on the Embankment, while almost one half (69 of 140) had themselves or close family resident at the House on the Embankment. Together with other elite accommodation already mentioned – such as the Kremlin, National and Metropole hotels and the apartments on Granovsky street (particularly after the war) – more than half of all Central Committee members were housed in these few special areas. Given that many of the remainder had responsibilities for party organisations in the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Caucasus, Far East, Northern Region and Leningrad and were thus based outside Moscow for much of their careers, the significance of the House as an accommodator of this elite becomes even clearer. Table 2 provides details on this residency.

War participants and repressed residents of the House compiled by the House on the Embankment Museum and available online at <http://www.museumdom.narod.ru/>.

Table 2 - Residency of 1934 Central Committee Members and Close Family at the House on the Embankment and Repression[87]

	Name	*Details of residency or family residency*	*Repressed (year of death)*
1	AA Andreev	Resident	
2	LP Beria	Resident for a short time following Stalin's death	[tried and executed following Stalin's death]
3	KE Voroshilov	Son Pyotr resident	
4	AA Zhdanov	Sister Anna resident	
5	IA Zelensky	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
6	VI Ivanov	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
7	LM Kaganovich	Brother Mikhail resident	
8	MM Kaganovich	Resident	Committed suicide while under informal investigation (1941)
9	MI Kalinin	Son Valerian and daughter Anna resident	

[87] The sources for this table are as in the above footnote, but something must be said about its construction and the nature of the sources used. For the names, repression status and death dates of Central Committee figures Goriachev's *Tsentral'nyi Komitet* was used. On these matters there is only one discrepancy – that of Grigory Broido – the House publication *Oknami na Kreml'* lists him as having undergone repression as does their list of the repressed. Goriachev's biography makes no such note and puts his death at 1956. On the matter of residency, compiling the table became more problematic – not only are lists of residents incomplete, but with only initials and surnames available for lists of repressed residents it was impossible to guarantee those that simply shared surnames were family members. For this reason, 'repressed with family' notes were only made when it could be reasonably presumed that family members had been involved – either through the sharing of uncommon surnames (such as Mezhlauk, Eikhe, Goloded), the sharing of surnames and a correct patronymic initial for those listed as sent to a children's home (for example, the presence of a VI Zelensky as having been sent to a *detdom*) or other information available (for example, the knowledge of NS Rykova being Nina Semyonovna through Anna Larina's biography or the understanding that AM Lukina was in fact Bukharin's first wife, despite not sharing his surname). The residency of family members is only noted in the residency column where the member themselves was not resident and because of this, the note on 'repressed with family' above and incomplete data it should by no means be assumed that when family are not specified in the table they did not live at the House on the Embankment – in fact, in the majority of cases it can be assumed that where Central Committees were resident, they were resident with their close family. In terms of totals, in a few cases the sense of residency under Stalin may be overestimated by the fact that some family members lived at the house for only a short time while under investigation (for example, Bukharin's wives), by the fact that the primary residence of some Bolshevik families were their dachas and by the likelihood or knowledge that some members such as Andreev and Beria were not living at the House during the 1930s but moved in after Stalin's death. Because of the incomplete nature of records, however, it is also likely that the House museum sources used may simply fail to have a record of certain Central Committee members having lived at the House on the Embankment – in very few cases are the addresses of Central Committee members not included in this table known during this time. Finally it should be noted that the catch-all term 'repressed' is used for convenience sake – in almost all circumstances it denotes that a member was tried and sentenced to the highest measure' of punishment – death by shooting – (as suggested by their death year given in brackets). Wives of those repressed tended to also be shot, imprisoned or sent into administrative exile. Children were generally sent to children's homes.

10	VG Knorin	Resident	Repressed (1938)
11	AV Kosarev	Resident	Repressed (1939)
12	IV Kosior	Brother Stanislav resident	
13	SV Kosior	Resident	Repressed (1939)
14	AI Krinitsky	Resident	Repressed (1937)
15	VV Kuibyshev	Son Vladimir, daughter Galina, sister Galina and sister Yelena resident	[died in 1935 before Great Purges]
16	LI Lavrentiev	Resident	Repressed
17	MM Litvinov	Resident	
18	VI Mezhlauk	Resident	Repressed (1938)
19	AI Mikoyan	Brother Artyom, sons Vladimir and Stepan resident	
20	KI Nikolaeva	Resident	
21	IP Nosov	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
22	GK Ordzhonikidze	Daughter Eteri resident	Died from apparent suicide in 1937
23	GI Petrovsky	Resident	
24	PP Postyshev	Resident	Repressed with family (1939)
25	IA Pyatnitsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
26	IV Stalin	Son Vasily and granddaughter Svetlana resident. Extended family of both wives resident	
27	AI Stetsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
28	KV Ukhanov	Resident	Repressed (1937)
29	NS Khrushchev	Resident	
30	MA Chernov	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
31	VYa Chubar	Resident	Repressed with family (1939)
32	MS Chudov	Resident	Repressed (1937)
33	NM Shvernik	Resident	
34	RI Eikhe	Resident	Repressed with family (1940)
35	VK Blyukher	Resident	Repressed. Died in prison (1938)
36	GI Broido	Resident	
37	NA Bulganin	Son Lev resident	
38	AS Bulin	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)

39	NI Bukharin	Wives Nadezhda Lukina and Anna Larina resident	Repressed with family (1938)
40	GD Veinberg	Resident	
41	NF Gikalo	Resident	Repressed (1938)
42	NM Goloded	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
43	NN Demchenko	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
44	IG Yeremin	Resident	Repressed (1937)
45	MI Kalmanovich	Resident	Repressed (1937)
46	GN Kalminsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
47	NP Komarov	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
48	NA Kubyak	Resident	Repressed (1937)
49	MM Kulkov	Resident	Repressed (1939)
50	SA Lozovsky	Resident	Repressed with family in late Stalinist period (1952)
51	LZ Mekhlis	Resident	
52	VM Mikhailov	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
53	ME Mikhailov	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
54	GM Musabekov	Resident	Repressed (1938)
55	VV Osinsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
56	IP Pavlunovsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
57	NI Pakhomov	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
58	VI Polonsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
59	AN Poskrobyshev	Resident	
60	AP Rozengolts	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
61	AI Rykov	Resident	Repressed with family (1938)
62	AP Serebrovsky	Resident	Repressed (1938)
63	PI Struppe	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
64	IP Tovstukha	Resident	[died in 1935 before Great Purges]
65	MN Tukhachevsky	Resident	Repressed with family (1937)
66	AI Ugarov	Resident	Repressed (1939)
67	NA Filatov	Resident	Repressed (1939)

68	II Shvarts	Resident
69	TA Yurkin	Resident

A number of conclusions are immediately obvious from the data in Table 2. A first is the large proportion of Central Committee residents who fell victim to the Great Purges. Forty five of the fifty eight (78%) resident at any time died through repression between 1937 and 1941. This percentage rises to eighty when Kuibyshev and Tovstukha (who died before this period) are removed from the equation. This ties in closely with the general figures for Central Committee deaths which are shown in Table 3:

Table 3 – Repression of 1934 Central Committee Members by Status[88]

Total repressed 1934 Central Committee members	105 of 136 77%
Repressed 1934 Central Committee who were resident at the House on the Embankment	45 of 56 80%
Total repressed 1934 Politburo members	4 of 13 31%
Total repressed 1934 full Central Committee members	50 of 69 72%
Total repressed 1934 candidate Central Committee members	55 of 67 82%

A few more interesting groups can be added to the above list for purposes of comparison. Firstly it is the general figure of writers and reporters about the House on the Embankment[89] that one third of all residents were repressed in the purges. Although there is no reason to believe this is a deliberate understatement, it compares favourably with other purge figures concerning Party members and elite society. Sheila Fitzpatrick in her case study of the impact of the Great Purges notes a 60% dropoff rate in telephone listings of senior People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry officials from 1937 to 1939 as against a 16% reduction in a control group consisting

[88] These totals are on the basis of which members in each group, who were alive as at January 1937 had been killed as a result of political repression by the start of the Great Patriotic War. For this reason, Kirov, Kuibyshev, Shteingart and Tovstukha are not included in the figures. Ordzhonikidze is included.

[89] See, for example, Olga Trifonova's use of the one third figure on National Public Radio, where the narrator puts the figure at "766 people, one third of the building's residents" (radio broadcast by Anne Garrels, "'House on the Embankment': A Study in Russian History", available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4699979>). Such an estimate can also be found in the introduction to *Oknami na Kreml'*.

of a random sample of individual subscribers to the 1937 *Moscow Telephone Directory*[90].

Armed with all these various figures a distinct pattern emerges: whilst Kosior was the only one of ten full Politburo members of 1934 to be tried and sentenced to death during the Purges, some seventy percent of full members of the Central Committee at this time were repressed with eighty percent of candidate members suffering the same fate. On the next step down in the hierarchy of political elites, some six in ten officials senior enough to be amongst the 163 listed in the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry directory of 1937 appear to have been purged. This figure drops to one and a half in ten when the 'privileged section' of Moscow society are counted[91].

The clear nature of this attrition rate, therefore, is that *aside from the most elite dozen politicians*, the Great Purges were concentrated with a bias towards the most senior of officials. There was a slightly greater chance of survival as a full member of the Central Committee as against a candidate member, but aside from this fact very top officials were more likely to be repressed than senior bureaucrats, who were in turn much more likely to be repressed than Party members as a whole, let alone the general population. What the 'one in three' figure of House on the Embankment victims suggests is that there was very much a gap between the political and non-political elites in the House as well. While political elites such as Maxim Litvinov went to sleep with a gun under their pillow, fearing imminent arrest[92], the majority of the House on the Embankment's residents were not to be victims of the Great Purges at all.

It is this stratification of the Terror together with the atmosphere of the times that explains the distinctly different attitude of various members of the elite to the Stalinist years. Whilst to some extent a reticence by figures such as Voroshilova and Molotov to recall details of the Terror may reflect a personal guilt at having either

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[90] See p. 252 of S. Fitzpatrick "The impact of the Great Purges on Soviet elites: A case study from Moscow and Leningrad telephone directories of the 1930s" in J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning [eds.] *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 247-260.

[91] That is, when those listed as individual subscribers by Fitzpatrick in the *1937 Moscow Telephone Directory* are considered. Fitzpatrick notes ("The impact of the Great Purges on Soviet elites", p. 250f) that less than one in every sixteen families have such listings in the directory and that therefore her sample can be considered 'privileged'.

[92] Mikhail Litvinov refers to his father's actions in this respect in Anne Garrels' "'House on the Embankment': A Study in Russian History".

survived the Great Purges or even contributed to them this alone cannot explain their nostalgia for these years (recalled in phrases such a Voroshilova's that the time was one of a simple life and good comradely relations). Combining the knowledge that the most elite members of Soviet politics (Stalin's 'inner circle') remained relatively unaffected by the Great Purges personally, with the understanding that the capacity for others' victimisation to affect them was severely compromised by the secrecy and closed nature of the times, one can come to better appreciate just how internally fractured Soviet elite society had become by the end of the 1930s: an internal fracture that was concomitant with the severing of elite ties with the general community.

This fracture was very much aided by the combination of an inability to tell with an unwillingness to know: while former House resident Inna Lobanova noted "We knew about everything, but everybody kept silent. It was impossible to talk about what was going on because people were listening in", another resident who had claimed the House was a place of 'fountains and flowers' when quizzed on those that leapt from the windows to their deaths to avoid arrest responded: "We avoided those places"[93]. With NKVD officials posted at each entrance (*pod"ezd*), suspected tapping of phones and even the infiltration of families by the best housemaids in the NKVD it was by no means simple paranoia that kept House residents cautious, quite apart from the 70% attrition rate of top Party officials[94].

While the years of the Terror obviously had an extreme and idiosyncratic effect upon the residents of the House on the Embankment, to some extent they marked also the beginning of an ongoing story in several different areas rather than simply an aberrant period. A first barrier they broke down forever was the relationship of the Party to privilege – by providing new luxurious and discrete apartments built largely on the basis of a rejection of *uiut* reform[95] and communal living, Soviet political operatives became inured to the idea of privilege in a manner that draws attention to the ascetic nature of the Lenin years. This reaction to privilege was not only to affect the extravagance of elite life in the future, however, but to have a real impact on

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[93] Both comments are from Anne Garrels, "'House on the Embankment': A Study in Russian History".

[94] Mikhail Litvinov indeed notes in Anne Garrels' NPR report that two of the housemaids of apartment 15 were from the NKVD, while also claiming that his son Pavel was at one time 'recruited' as a young boy to spy on the family.

[95] *Uiut* reform comes from the Russian work for comfort and might be seen as a subset of *byt* reform that was especially concerned with household conditions and interior design. See Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, pp. 42-44 for a short introduction to the concept and movement.

social and class divisions, formalising as it did the expectation of quality services and servants for what was becoming a very real new 'ruling class'.

With the arrival of the Black Marias to the Moscow embankment politics was also brought into the domestic sphere to a greater extent than ever before and in a form that would never leave: when the nature of one's private friends and enemies, the man one's daughter married, the faculty one's son studied at becoming important they also became intensely political. A semi-fictional account of this politicisation is indeed provided in vivid terms by Yury Trifonov's *House on the Embankment*. Not only does this work impress upon the reader the distinct class differences between the main characters Vadim Glebov and Levka Shulepnikov (both of whom live within the House on the Embankment complex), but its second section recounting the relationship of Glebov with the Ganchuk family and his ultimate betrayal of both Professor Ganchuk and his relationship with Sonya for the sake of career advancement again points to Trifonov's understanding of the tensions between the political and personal as they occurred within elite society. Indeed the novella as a whole conveys the very real compartmentalisation and destruction of elite society that the changes in the House on the Embankment and the devastation of the purges suggest.

Finally, of course, the self same purges had the distinct and clear effect in wiping out approximately three quarters of the Central Committee elite of creating a political space for the introduction of fresh blood into the Soviet political system, and hence a generational split in the Soviet elite. The consequences to Bolshevik society of such a generational split, together with the increasing paranoia and wariness that the decimation of the Great Terror had produced, were a scaling back of large-scale, informal ties between Bolshevik elite members. It is not reasonable to talk of a Bolshevik elite 'court' existing in the Khrushchev or Brezhnev years, not merely because neither leader was not nearly so dominant and 'imperial' as Stalin had been, but also because with the Terror, the war and then Stalin's death the social sets that had established themselves in the first decades after the revolution came to their inevitable conclusion.

The privileged and compartmentalised lifestyles of the Soviet elite, aided by the 'standardisation' of everyday life epitomised by the House on the Embankment were to result in a change in elite culture to a more fragmented and individualistic mode of living. It was not simple nostalgia that drove Voroshilova to write, therefore,

reflecting on those times under Stalin: "What a remarkable time it was. What simple and genuinely good comradely relationships. And now it is the modern day, life in the party has become harder and now there is some strange pain that is in our mutual relationships too."[96]

Having examined the nature and evolution of Bolshevik elite society and, in particular the changing nature of everyday life for Bolshevik wives through the first decades of the Soviet Union, one last major contextual hurdle remains – to place this history within the context of the development of the USSR more broadly. In the final chapter of this thesis, the evolution of Bolshevik elite society – its everyday life, work, politics and mores will be contrasted more directly with Soviet society at large, thus providing a fuller perspective on the roles and uniqueness of the Bolshevik women being examined.

[96] RGASPI, f. 74, op. 1, d. 430, ll. 74-75.

Chapter Six
Bolshevik Elite Society and Society at Large

Following her husband Pyatnitsky's arrest, while still living at the House on the Embankment, Yulia Pyanitskaya-Sokolova recorded this account of a local meeting for 'women house workers' (*domrabotnitsi*) she attended on 7th March, 1938:

> The speaker talked about "our happy free life", about the liberation of women from the kitchen, from nappies, from dirt, about the prohibition on abortion – he said all this to the house workers, who couldn't have children, because they were 'servants'. He told us that "we, Soviet women, don't think about tomorrow like those in England where each day there are 250 abortions and where they have a 'water trust', and explained that tens and hundreds of thousands of women through unemployment or grief threw themselves upon a 'water trust'… Then he moved onto the trial and talked in detail about what harm they had done, how they'd killed people and recalled the words of Yezhov who had apparently told his deputies that for the head of the dead Kirov hundreds of thousands of their camp [ie – enemies of the people] would be killed (it wasn't clear if he said it just so, but that was the general sense, so the speaker clarified). I asked "Just how can there be so many enemies in Soviet power?" (I addressed the housewife sitting next to me), and she replied: "Well, it's as simple as us needing a reason, since we don't read the newspapers" [*da eto tak prosto, chtoby rezon nam byl, my-to gazet ne chitaem*]. There were no questions at all, everyone saying: "It's all clear and understood".[1]

The situation above is so incongruous when considered in the context of this thesis that it appears comical. Firstly, as a speech on women's "happy free life" we are told that the group of women being addressed is in fact made up of household servants (precisely that section of society that was to be done away with according to pre-revolutionary socialist ideological positions) and at least one woman who has

[1] Pyanitskaya diary entry of 7.3.1938 as published in *Golgofa*, pp. 54-55.

been personally denied her freedom by the victimisation of her husband at the hands of the regime (and was to soon herself to be repressed). The women in the audience are in fact those who – as a result of Soviet policies – have come to deal more with kitchen chores, nappies and dirt (without having time for their own children) for the sake of the happy and free lives of others. Secondly, despite an undeniable growth in literacy and 'enlightenment' that went on through the first decades of the Soviet Union, the woman beside Pyatnitskaya concludes that the audience will find reason in the simple-minded account of the Purges put forward by the speaker because they simply cannot know better and do not read the newspapers. Thirdly, in view both of the modern framing of abortion as a pro life/pro choice debate and the fact that abortion had been legal in the Soviet Union from its inception until June 1936, it is extremely curious that the measure of Soviet women's success over their Western counterparts is measured in terms of prohibition of abortion. Finally, and most symbolically, it can be noted that the speaker who talks of 'our happy life' and 'we, Soviet women' – the person addressing propaganda to a group of assembled female workers – is in fact male.

To compare the vignette presented by Pyatnitskaya with the platforms, dreams and developments noted in chapter one a natural reaction might be "has it come to this?". This final chapter will discuss how the 'woman question' in the Soviet Union did indeed resolve itself by the time of Stalin's death, using in part what has been learnt about the nature of the Soviet elite from previous chapters to explain this resolution which, in general terms, is most marked by the return to a more traditional framing of gender roles under Stalin's watch from the late 1930s onwards. Not only will the nature of the shift on the woman question be analysed, however, but the drift of Soviet policy and practice in more broad terms will be highlighted in this chapter as, with an examination of the lives of those in mainstream society, a comparison in the journeys of Bolshevik elite and the mainstream particularly in terms of family structure and women's policy will be possible.

In mirroring the examination of Bolshevik elite women in previous chapters, the changes that mainstream society underwent will be presented in similar arenas: through a look at women in work, a study of women as they presented themselves in society and the changing political nature of the 'woman question' and finally through a consideration of women's everyday lives in the Soviet Union by the time of Stalin's death. Having thus considered the lives of Bolshevik elite women on their own terms

and by comparison with their compatriots in mainstream society conclusive statements may then be made on the basis of all this evidence in the final section of this thesis.

In the final years of the Russian empire, the status of women at work was unstable and ever-changing, both due to the industrial revolution that was beginning in the nation's larger cities and, most immediately, due to the nature of the Great War which Nicholas II was prosecuting.

By and large, even by the time of its collapse the vast expanse of Russia was still dominated by the peasantry, who made up approximately eighty per cent of a population of some 150 million. As a group, peasants were traditionally still very much tied to the land and with it a less developed and quite patriarchal rural lifestyle. Few women had any real influence in affairs involving money or even independence from men and the community culture and even customary law that governed peasants' lives seldom led to positive results for women: they might be beaten wantonly by their husbands ("the more you beat your wife, the tastier the cabbage soup" as one piece of 'sage village wisdom' advised) and even if a separation was granted in a case of abuse were then obliged to pay their husband for lost labour[2]. Because of the backward nature of rural life, women also fell behind when it came to health and education. By the beginning of Nicholas II's reign, childhood mortality in European Russia stood at over 400 deaths per 1000 live births[3] and the death rates of mothers in labour was similarly high. By the end of the last tsar's time in power, a minority of the young population were attending primary school (some 4% of the total population) and of those that did, girls made up under one-third of total enrolments[4].

Despite this unenviable position, the situation for women was nevertheless changing rapidly and generally in their favour. This was in part because of reforms undertaken by state ministers such as Pyotr Stolypin, but mainly due to the beginnings of Russia's industrial revolution and the effects of the Emancipation Decree of 1861. Through freeing serfs from their land and introducing economic opportunities in cities such as Kiev, Petersburg and Moscow, the government had introduced a situation where many peasants left the land to work in urban areas either permanently or

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2 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 91.
3 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 91. The figure given is 432 deaths per 1000 live births for the period 1887-1896.
4 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 92.

seasonally. Initially many of these workers were men who through their outmigration in some respects increased their wives' autonomy and influence in the villages as women assumed more important roles in the domestic economy, while the increased need for wives to communicate with the authorities and their husbands led to growth in women's literacy rates[5].

As the industrial revolution took hold in Russia's major cities, women too started to leave the countryside to take jobs in city factories in much greater numbers. In 1885, women had made up only approximately one in five factory workers, but by 1914 this figure was closer to one in three[6]. Working alongside each other in the empire's new factories far from united the sexes in a new proletarian movement, however. With women and children attracting substantially lower wages from their employers for similar work, unsurprisingly in many cases they undercut men's jobs leading to a good deal of tension. This dynamic created a curious phenomenon in the area of industrial relations – since women's attractiveness to employers was related to their lower wages for similar work, male-dominated labour unions sought to lessen this effect by arguing for equal wage rates between the sexes and limits on women's working hours – both moves ostensibly connected with women's welfare, but in fact borne of a desire to protect men's working conditions. In line with this movement, laws were passed throughout the last three decades of the tsarist system controlling the working conditions of women and children: a 1882 law, for example, set the lower limit for employment at 12 and limited children's working hours to under nine a day, while in 1897 further legislation limited women's work day to eleven and a half hours, while laws came in that set boundaries on night work for these groups as well[7].

In terms of workplace culture, the geographical movement of the population from country to city was greeted by no concomitant movement in attitudes towards women. The ability to find work in cities was hardly emancipatory for most women: they were not only greeted by long hours for lower wages than their male counterparts, but had even less representation in charitable and industrial relations bodies than men and many less outlets for recreation as well: if a woman were to frequent a city tavern, for instance, she might get a reputation as a prostitute, an

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5 Engel notes that "in areas that had substantial outmigration, women's literacy rates were noticeably above the average" (*Women in Russia*, p. 93).

6 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 95.

7 Vincent Barnett, *The Revolutionary Russian Economy, 1890-1940* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 42 lists various laws in respect to women and children, including those of 1882, 1885, 1886 1890 and 1903. Barbara Alpern Engel refers to the 1897 law in *Women in Russia*, p. 95.

industry that many women came to be involved in following their migration from the countryside. As Engel says of the culture of working men at the time:

> Excluding women constituted an important component of this workplace culture, making sharing the shop floor unpleasant, even dangerous, for women workers. Working men sometimes sexually harassed their female co-workers or treated them as if they were prostitutes… Men who embraced the cause of revolution often viewed a negative attitude toward the family, marriage, even women in general as "a necessity".[8]

The most significant shift for women in work was to come with the outbreak of the Great War. By the end of 1916, the war had pulled some 15 million men out of the domestic economy, with almost half of all able-bodied rural men called off to war. The resultant vacuum in the domestic economy was quickly filled by women who rose from occupying 26.6% of all workforce places in 1914 to 43.2% by 1917[9]. While the government sought to keep the female workforce generally confined to 'women's jobs' this policy was simply not sustainable and women broke the 'glass floor' that had been in place in many areas even if they might not reasonably aspire to break the glass ceiling. With men at the front, even the metalworking industry of Petrograd came to have one in five workers as women by the end of 1916[10].

While another factor that had supported women's increasing stake in the economy had been their lower rates of labour militancy than their male counterparts, the privations and difficulties of war led female workers to strike and protest with increased regularity. Beginning in the 19th Century and receiving a notable boost in the 1905 Revolution, women were increasingly involved in political movements and the work of *soldatki* (soldier's wives) in the Great War continued and strengthened this participation. In 1916, a young Zlata Lilina – Grigory Zinoviev's wife – sat down and wrote a pamphlet about their experiences: "Soldiers of the Home Front: women's labour during and after the war", published by the Petrograd Soviet. It was, of course, not simply a book of protest but a book promoting socialist values, but nevertheless the appeal of the revolution to women simply in terms of their domestic economy is clear from its preface:

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8 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 97.
9 Engel, *Women in Russia,* p. 131.
10 Engel, *Women in Russia,* p. 131.

> In truth, the position of the working woman has not only failed to improve, but has grown markedly worse. During the period that her wages increased by 5-6 times the price of goods has gone up on average 10-12 times and in part up to 15 times.[11]

While women had thus traditionally been less militant, their participation on the home front together with the deprivations of war both contributed to them playing a major role in the year of revolution. Major strikes developed in Petrograd on International Women's Day, 1917:

> We could hear women's voices in the lane overlooked by the windows of our department: "Down with high prices!" Down with hunger!" "Bread for the workers!" I and several comrades rushed at once to the windows… The gates of No. 1 Bol'shaia Sampsonievskaia mill were flung open. Masses of women workers in a militant frame of mind filled the lane. Those who caught sight of us began to wave their arms, shouting: "Come out!" "Stop work!"[12]

With other workers joining the throng, after only one week the protest had become serious enough to bring about the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. Thus it could be said that while women made up a rather conservative and less militant section of the Russian population it was to some extent their shift that meant the final nail in the coffin of the Romanovs.

With Great War followed by revolution and civil war then the status of women at work in what was to become the Soviet Union was as volatile as it had ever been. And though women in Russia in labour market participation terms were very advanced along the road to equality, the underlying cultural and legal framework necessary to provide women with true equal rights was non-existent in Russia.

The early years of women's work in the Soviet Union therefore very much revolved around addressing the same economic issues that the tsarist regime had had to come to terms with, but with a need to apply a new socialist façade to women in industry. With Russia's two capitals losing over half of their population and its men fighting for control of the empire in the provinces, in the first years of war

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[11] Lilina, *Soldaty tyla*, Preface.

[12] Account as quoted by S. Smith "Petrograd in 1917: the view from below" in D. Kaiser [ed.], *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917: The View from Below* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 61.

communism, women's participation in the urban workforce was more in need than ever before. With ideological war still raging in the countryside and a need for more 'modern' women to satiate the state's demands for technical work, the opportunity to both break the back of the backward-thinking and backward-working village communities came through the skilling and education of its women. A peasant woman with independence from her husband, education on her duties and responsibilities towards the state and abilities to undertake all manner of work was much more likely to be a positive force within the state from the point of view of its elites, and thus many of the Soviet Union's early reforms cannot be seen simply as promoting a pro-equality agenda, but as motivated by more base economic reasons.

Whatever its motivations, deliberate and specific action was taken by the leaders of the new state with regards to the *zhenskii vopros*. On December 19, 1917, the Workers' and Peasants' government signed off on a decree introducing divorce and alimony to the areas it controlled – an option that was to be taken up by one in seven Soviet couples by the early 1920s[13]. Regulations on the family were cemented by the 1918 Family Code (amended again in 1926), while a 1920 decree made the workers' state the first nation in the world to legalise abortion.

As is frequently seen in the history of women and the Bolshevik state, the abortion law was again a piece of legislation which might superficially be seen as quite 'feminist' or progressive from a modern point of view, but that was in reality more a product of the specific circumstances of the time rather than any ideological drive to give women control over the production of children. In the text of the abortion decree itself, it states "the Workers' and Peasants' Government is conscious of this serious evil [abortion] to the community. It combats this evil by propaganda against abortions among working women"[14]. The decree was thus not produced as a pro-female initiative but as an economic and social reaction by the state: too many women in its judgement were being rendered infertile, infected or indeed dying as a result of unregulated abortion and therefore in the interests of a healthy working population, it made sense to carry out all terminations through the state apparatus. Indeed, considering that the decree was designed to allow safe abortions for women who might then go on to produce children, it was not entirely anti-natalist.

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[13] For the text of the Divorce decree, see Schlesinger, *The Family in the USSR* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 30-32. For the one in seven figure, see Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 154.

[14] Schlesinger, *The Family in the USSR*, p. 44.

While decrees on the family certainly impacted upon women, they did not relate specifically to their place in the workforce. Ostensibly to prosecute change on behalf of women, the party had approved the establishment of the women's departments or *ZhenOtdeli* in 1919 with the structure originally headed by Aleksandra Kollontai. The women's departments did indeed undertake a broad range of activities designed to help women in and out of the workforce: they organised literacy drives, undertook hygiene training in order to help women stay healthy, provided child care for women who needed it and actively petitioned the state to look after female and family interests, while campaigning against individual cases of discrimination or harassment directed at women in the workforce. While the great majority of its workforce campaigned on an unpaid basis, this did not diminish the influence such activities might have on the lives of average Russian women. Through two main journals, *Krest'ianka* (Peasant Woman) and *Rabotnitsa* (Working Woman), the ZhenOtdel reached out to ordinary women in the town and countryside – their print run of over a quarter of a million copies by 1930 could ensure a readership of around one million when it is considered that subscriptions were frequently passed around amongst female members of households.

Nevertheless this audience reflected less than one per cent of the total Soviet population and opposition to the ZhenOtdel was widespread. From its beginnings, certain Party members felt uneasy about a department devoted to the rights of a specific group, some were far from supportive of the goal of female emancipation at any rate, while others either resented the role of the women's movement in workplace politics or decried the women's departments as being full of the more backward elements of society[15]. Since its establishment, monies devoted to the ZhenOtdel by

[15] One clear indicator of this sentiment was the frequent use of the terms '*tsentrobaba*' and '*babkom*' to describe the institution, something that Kollontai complained about in her diary (Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai*, p. 361). The term *baba* was considered such an insulting term for a woman that it had been 'banned from the Russian language' at the First All-Russian Women's Congress in 1918. Konkordia Samoilova noted later that most men considered women's work "beneath their dignity (Porter, *Alexander Kollontai*, p. 362). For a general account of the difficulties the ZhenOtdel faced in its decade of existence see Chapter 15 of Porter's *Alexandra Kollontai* and Chapter 8 of Engel's *Women in Russia*. Despite the antagonism by some Party members towards the 'women's movement', it cannot be said that the state did not address concerns about women's emancipation seriously – rather it was more often the case that moves to strengthen the roles and independence of women were thwarted by the perceived need to attend to issues (frequently economic) seen as more urgent. For more on some of the extensive (and idealist) thought behind how the early Soviet state considered transforming women's lives for the better see the chapter 'The origins of the Bolshevik vision' in Goldman's *Women, the State & Revolution*.

the state steadily decreased and its work increasingly became of a voluntary nature[16]. After Kollontai – its most progressive and powerful leader – was removed in 1922, the appointments of Smidovich, Nikolaeva and Artiukhina to succeed her made for a ZhenOtdel that was not so much badly represented as never powerful enough to lobby the Party for an effective role in prosecuting its agenda. By 1930, the pressure to end the women's departments, combined with the Party's new direction and the relative decline in ZhenOtdel power conspired to bring the system to an end.

In a way then, there are parallels between the journeys of the everyday Russian woman and the Bolshevik elite wife during the first three decades of the 20th Century. Both found rapidly-changing tsarist society provided new opportunities for women, even if they were still heavily dependent upon men: women such as Krupskaya, Lunarcharskaya, Armand, Lilina and Voroshilova pursued their spouses and work outside the area in which they were born and became teachers, revolutionaries or authors, though at the same time heavily bound to the influence of the men in their lives. The revolutionary period saw them temporarily assume a larger degree of control and autonomy: women such as Stasova and Krupskaya assumed control of finances or education policy in some regards, while figures such as Reisner and Kollontai took on new responsibilities as younger women such as Zhemchuzhina used new structures like the ZhenOtdel to get involved in politics and power. By the end of the 1920s, however, much like women more generally in Soviet society, specific routes for women to achieve were being closed in favour of non-gender-specific avenues for success. Thus, as ZhenOtdel was closed down and ordinary Soviet women were forced to work within the 'system at large', Bolshevik wives began to move during this period into Soviet industry in general after reskilling at Party schools.

There is thus another parallel between wives and women in general in terms of work choices: while the end of the 1920s meant the end of specific paths for women in the workforce, it by no means signalled a decline in their participation or even in their relative influence as a sex. While the ZhenOtdel had been in decline ever since its foundation (both in terms of ideological and monetary support), during the 1920s the relative position of women in Soviet political life had improved. From 1922 to 1928, women as a percentage of village Soviet members increased from 1 to 11.8 per

[16] Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 157.

cent. Total party membership for women had risen over a similar period from 8 to 13.7 percent, even as the total membership of the CPSU almost tripled[17]. Curiously though, women's participation rates in heavy industry declined during this same period in percentage terms[18], and they remained much more likely than their male counterparts to be undertaking unskilled or semi-skilled work in industries that attracted a lower wage[19].

What this suggests in practice is that on both the macro and micro levels, opportunities for women to participate in the workforce and politics were as strong as they had ever been, but that while participation rates of the sexes were naturally going to converge due to the increased opportunities available for women in the 1920s, overall power over work life and the political world was still very much in men's hands. Thus apparent paradoxes emerge: in the economy, women rose to 50 per cent of all new workers in the industrial sector[20], yet sectors such as cotton and textiles became even more gender-divided as ever before; in politics, more women entered the ranks of the Party, yet at the Central Committee level, only one woman was elected as a full member at any Congress through this period (first Artiukhina, then later Krupskaya).

That elements of women in the workforce in the Soviet Union more broadly reflected the experiences of top Bolshevik wives is not to say that the two groups were essentially in the same boat. While the decline of the ZhenOtdel forced women such as Voroshilova and Zhemchuzhina to pursue new career paths and while the relative affluence of their husbands allowed wives such as Dora Khazan and Nadezhda Allilueva to pursue higher education the changing nature of the Soviet workforce in general during the late 1920s and early 1930s had much more to do with the chaotic growth of the Soviet economy.

With the end of the New Economic Policy, the first five year plan and the push for forced collectivisation and rapid industrialisation in the Soviet Union, ordinary economic conditions for Soviet families changed quickly. At the turn of the decade, while salaries had increased by 43 per cent recently, a government report contended that expenses had increased by 73 per cent at the same time. Other claims are that real

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17 Engel, *Women in Russia*, p. 164.
18 See Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 in Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, pp. 12-14.
19 See Table 1.4 in Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 16. In 1927, Goldman puts women's average wage as 64% of their male colleagues (p. 16).
20 Between 1929 and 1935. See Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 98.

wages fell by up to fifty per cent[21]. As a result of the serious concomitant decline in living standards, it became increasingly necessary for families – particularly those from the peasantry – to adapt and become dual-income households in order to survive. Aided by the thirst for labour that an industrialising society which had just declared full employment exhibited, women flooded into the workforce – indeed, in 1932 and 1933 when nearly 400 000 men exited the national economy, women still increased their participation by over one million[22].

As women more than doubled their participation in the national economy during the first two five-year plans[23] there was, of course, the risk that their presence in the paid economy would undercut their capacity to raise children and take care of domestic matters. While birth rates in Russia (especially when considered in conjunction with the decline in infant mortality) were comparatively high by the early 1930s when compared to the last years under the tsar and western capitalist nations, the mid 1930s still saw a policy shift in favour of 'traditional' lifestyles for Soviet women, emphasising their roles as mothers and supporters of the family. This shift was particularly precipitated by the new family policy of 1936 which once more made abortion illegal in the Soviet state except where the mother's life was at risk. The new law appeared to have an immediate effect in raising birth rates: the 1935 rate of 30.1 births per 1000 rose to 39.7 by 1937, but from then onwards declined again as the war approached[24]. Whether caused by economic mobilisation due to the impending conflict, by the rebirth of illicit practitioners of abortion or other factors, crude attempts at raising motherhood USSR-wide were therefore not entirely successful.

It is difficult to compare general Soviet society with the experiences of the Bolshevik elite with regards to the changing policy of the 1930s towards women and the family. Not simply because the wives of the Bolshevik elite represent such a small sample, but also because Soviet policy itself lacked clarity. After all, closely following the successes of the five year plans in moving women into the workforce, by the mid 1930s women in the Soviet Union were being encouraged to revere again

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21 Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, pp. 101-2.
22 Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 266.
23 Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 269.
24 Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 179. Schlesinger provides alternate figures in *The Family in the USSR* (pp. 312-3), but still notes the decline in infant mortality, the relatively high figures compared to the West and the higher birthrates when compared to tsarist Russia. Attwood deals with the effects of the law and its coverage in women's magazines in Chapter 9 of *Creating the New Soviet Woman*.

their status as mothers and guardians of the family. Thus by the advent of the Stakhanovite movement, journals such as *Krest'ianka* and *Rabotnitsa* were establishing two parallel archetypes for women's behaviour. On the one hand they over-emphasised the success of female Stakhanovites, often women who managed to significantly overachieve in female-dominated industries (such as textile production or as milkmaids), but also ambitious women in a whole range of arenas, such as the pilots Marina Raskova and Polina Osipenko. Stakhanovite women though proved to be poor role models for the new Soviet women – having chosen to devote themselves to work rather than family life. On the other hand, Soviet society offered an alternative path: that of the *domokhoziaika* ('female home manager') or *obshchestvennitsa* ('civic woman'). The wife of the model worker was encouraged to devote herself to home and husband, to provide a 'cultured' life for her husband; a well-managed and clean home for him, so that he might devote all his energies to wage labour. In this way, the state produced in tandem the 'Stakhanovite woman' – someone who had chosen work over family under the mentorship of their dear father Stalin – and the 'Stakhanovite wife', who had chosen a path very similar to that of the traditional, pre-Soviet wife and mother. Although the two roles were very different, both congealed themselves around the presence of a dominant male figure – either Stalin himself or a wife's husband[25].

Given the paradoxical widening of women's options within the Soviet Union combined with the strengthening of male dominance over their choices, it is hard to evaluate Bolshevik elite women from this perspective, suffice it to say that they too took on a variety of roles in the 1930s, but tended to be increasingly seen in supporting roles. As has been seen, of those wives reskilled at the beginning of the 1930s, none rose to positions of great prominence though many pursued careers successfully. Polina Zhemchuzhina encountered what might be described as a glass ceiling, if not for Stalin's intrigues having most probably provided her support up the career ladder in the first place. Yevgeniia Feigenberg, Yezhov's wife, involved herself in editing and journalist work but was, like Zhemchuzhina, the subject of official scrutiny that led her eventually to commit suicide[26]. Dora Khazan, Andreev's wife,

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[25] For this dual approach to women's roles as outlined in Soviet propaganda see the section "Gender Confusion in the Stalin Era: 'Completely New People', or Traditional Wives and Mothers?" in Lynne Attwood's *Creating the New Soviet Woman*.

[26] Feigenberg edited the journal *SSSR na stroike* (The USSR in Construction) for a time as well as working on a number of other journals. Jansen and Petrov provide sketchy details of this work and

rose to be a successful manager, but no higher. Yekaterina Voroshilova perhaps best fits the paradoxical model of the 'new Soviet woman': on the one hand she pursued a career as a curator and archivist, but on the other she supported her husband and family and indeed became the director of a children's home in Moscow after the war.

The War and Its Impact

The war itself was to have a hideous impact on the population at large, though it affected the Bolshevik elite to a lesser degree. Just like the Great and Civil wars, the Great Patriotic War again held conflicting promises for the evolution of women's roles in Soviet society. On the one hand, the serious need for workers on the home front meant that the ongoing recruitment of women into the paid Soviet workforce continued unabated. While women had made up some quarter of the national economy's employees in the 1920s, rising to almost four in ten by 1940, by 1945 the 16 million-strong female workforce in the USSR represented 56% of the national total[27]. Though this number declined as the postwar situation stabilised (to 46% in 1955), from the end of the war until the end of the Soviet Union approximately half of the total Soviet workforce continued to be female.

Despite most workers by the time of Stalin's death being women, the quality of work and wages earned by women was still not on par with men. The war had highlighted this aspect of the Soviet division of labour as well: despite being less divided on gender terms than Western societies of the time, the Soviet Union still had less than one million women deployed at the front[28]. Of over ten thousand Heroes of the Soviet Union from the Second World War, less than one hundred were women[29]. Of this small number, many were from the aviation regiments of Marina Raskova while many others were involved in partisan detachments and gained their awards for atypical military behaviour. Zinaida Portnova, for instance, was responsible for

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also explore her final letter to Stalin and the circumstances of her suicide on pp. 169-171 of *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940*. One interesting sidenote about the episode is that Yezhov testified the note in which his wife detailed her wish to suicide was passed on to him from Zinaida Ordzhonikidze. Ordzhonikidze was therefore privy to both the 'fall' of the Yezhovs and her own husband in the mid 1930s yet kept silent about both in her published account.

27 Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, Table 11, p. 166. It should be noted, as Lapidus does, that the death rate from the Great Patriotic War was so great, however, that even by the late 1950s women still constituted some 55% of the total population.

28 Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*, p. 137.

29 Kazimiera Cottam details the lives of these women and others in *Women in War and Resistance: Selected Biographies of Soviet Women Soldiers* (Nepean: New Military Publishing, 1998).

poisoning over one hundred Germans (against the Geneva conventions) while working in a canteen in German-occupied territories[30]. Perhaps the most famous female heroine of the Great Patriotic War was Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. The *komsomolka* and *partizanka* had been captured by the Germans while conducting sabotage against them, tortured and finally executed without betraying her compatriots. As reported in *Pravda* when asked of the whereabouts of Comrade Stalin, she had replied that he was at his post[31].

It is fair then to say that while women's direct military role in the Soviet Union was limited in the Great Patriotic War, even when they were described as heroes in the press their acts of heroism were often characterised in a way set apart from the heroics of male fighters. Portnova's heroism was on the home front and in dealing with the Germans when captured, while Kosmodemyanskaya's fame lay in her suffering as a martyr at the hands of the Germans and her spirit of loyalty towards the motherland. Neither were tales of storming the barricades or running beserk and killing dozens of fascist aggressors. Lynne Attwood notes that this characterisation of female fighters extended to fictional accounts as well. In the tale 'Tonya Leskai', published in *Rabotnitsa* magazine, the eponymous heroine is not at the frontlines but a partisan avoiding capture by the Germans. As she is found, she throws herself on the ground, embracing it 'tender and maternal, snuggling up to it as though it was a mother'[32], later refusing to talk under interrogation, singing instead the 'Song of the Motherland' to her German captors. Childlike innocence thus combines with loyal suffering and an almost maternal devotion to the state in these new archetypes of the Soviet woman, projecting a 'new Soviet woman' as confused as ever in the Soviet Union. Notable though was that these new heroes fictional and real were very young, frequently teenagers: this was the first generation that had been born into the Soviet Union and knew no other society.

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[30] Portnova could not be officially rewarded for her illegal poisonings, but was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union medal posthumously, having shot at least one of her captors while trying to escape from Gestapo interrogation later in the war. See Cottam, *Women in War and Resistance*, pp. 374-7 for her story.

[31] Kosmodemyanskaya's story is still heavily contested, though the manner in which it was exploited for propaganda purposes is more clear. See the works of Elena Sinyavskaya, particularly in *Argumenti i fakti* for details of more specific research on Zoya, her mother's book *The Story of Zoya and Shura* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953) for a more mainstream recount or Cottam's short biography (*Women in War and Resistance*, pp. 296-301) for a summary.

[32] Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*, p. 141.

Women on the home front were similarly presented with a somewhat paradoxical account of the expectations of them. On the one hand, they were to be fighting battles on the home front, working as men had worked. Female tractor drivers were 'soldiers on collective farm soil', with the harvest a battle 'like that at the front'. Even as the Nazis were pushed back, reconstruction work was called for from an 'army of female building workers'[33]. On the other hand in mid 1944 the first medals were introduced for women as mothers. Starting off with a mother who had successfully reared five children being awarded a Medal of Maternity 2nd Class, the mother who managed to rear ten children became a *mat'-geroinia* (mother-heroine), all apparent evidence "of Stalinist concern for children and mothers, and for the wellbeing and prosperity of the socialist family"[34].

It is difficult to contrast the work and attitude of Bolshevik elite women to those present in Soviet society at large during the war period simply due to a lack of detailed information on the lives of the elite during this period. Where the revolution and civil war had led to great shifts in the lives of the elite, however, the Great Patriotic War which was, comparatively speaking, more intense and bloodthirsty for the general population, seems to have had a much lesser impact on top Bolsheviks.

Many of the women and younger children of top Bolshevik families were evacuated to Kuibyshev, amongst them the Molotovs and the youngest Mikoyans. Schooling and childhood continued almost as normal for these young members of the elite. Montefiore records Vano and Sergo Mikoyan playing 'government' in their time at Kuibyshev, while the archives contain a letter back from Svetlana Molotov to her father. In her missive, Svetlana updates her father on her reading and studies, noting that she has had to write an essay on Dicken's *Dombey & Sons*[35]. Meanwhile, in what might have been her first letter back home to her husband, Zhemchuzhina writes (much less legibly than her precocious daughter) that her husband is to think 'only of our motherland and the life of it', ending by incongruously kissing him 'endlessly many times' (*bezkonechno mnogo raz*)[36].

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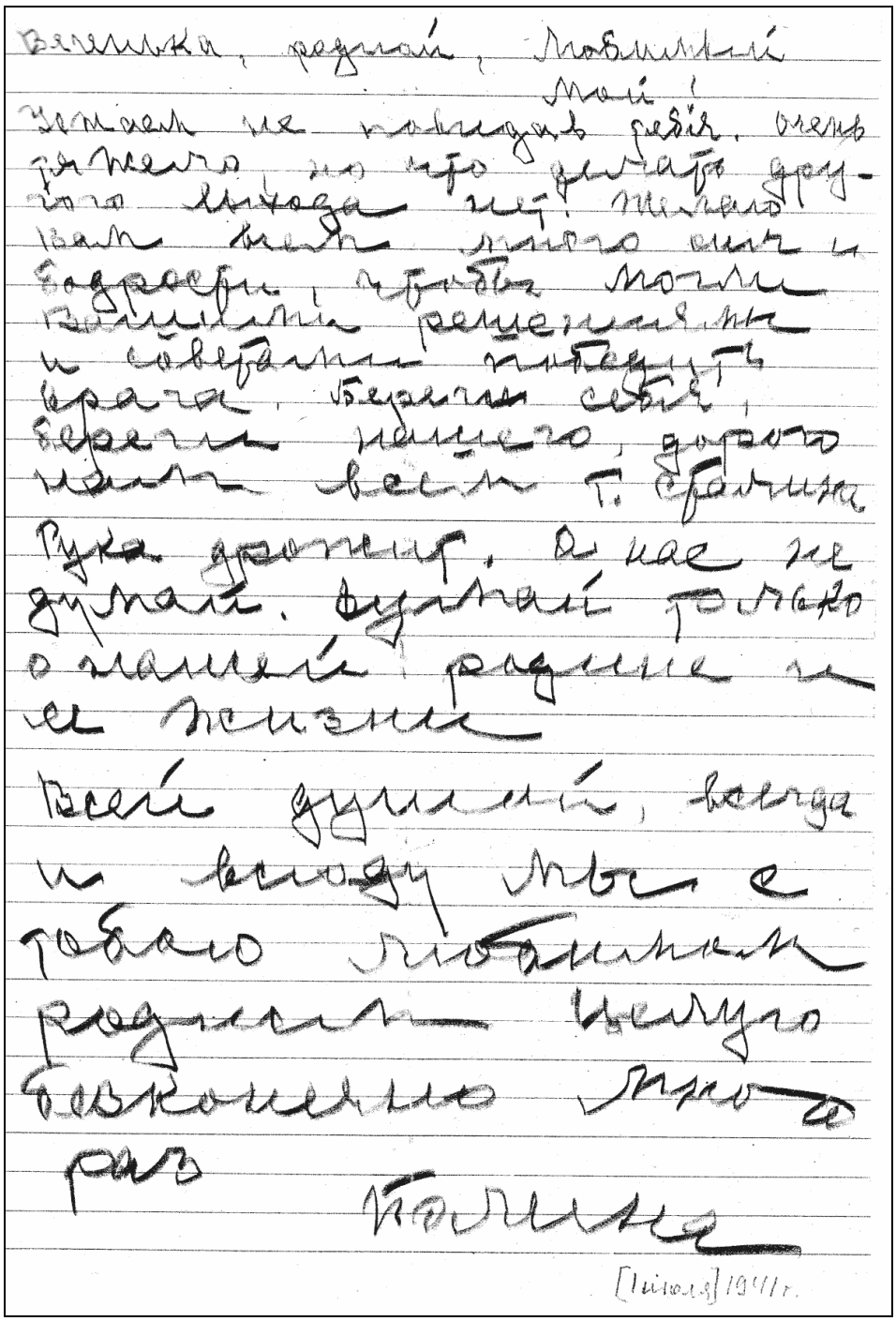
33 Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*, p. 143, 145.

34 Quote from *Krestianka*, no. 7, 1944, pp. 4-5 as translated by Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*, p. 147.

35 RGASPI, *f.* 82, *op*. 2, *d*. 1593, *l*. 12. Letter of 21/9/1941.

36 RGASPI, *f.* 82, *op*. 2, *d*. 1592, *l*. 11. Letter dated by archivists as "[1st July] 1941". A copy of the letter is included in the text just by means of illustration. Particularly notable in the handwriting of some Bolshevik wives is a tendency for low legibility, spelling and grammatical mistakes. While Krupskaya and Zlata Lilina exhibit hands that appear the product of a good education, Voroshilova demonstrates a neat hand, if one prone to the occasional error. Zhemchuzhina has the worst writing

Figure 1 – Letter of Zhemchuzhina to Molotov, early days of war.



Despite the fact that the war is referred to (often obliquely) in such missives, there is thus a sense of life continuing within the elite community almost as normal.

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of any Bolshevik wife whose orthography was viewed in the archives and this is circumstantial evidence to the suggestion that she had a difficult time socially fitting in to Bolshevik circles due to her being seen as simultaneously aloof, but also of relatively 'poor stock' (despite the apparently classless new society).

Of the Voroshilov clan, Kliment Yefremovich and his eldest son 'went to the front', while their children Nadya, Tanya, Klimushka and Volodya were evacuated to Chelyabinsk. The two girls worked for a time at the Kirov factory there, suspending their studies, while their adopted son Timur (one of Frunze's children by birth) wrote to his father that he was desparate to finish fighter trainer so that he could play an active role in the war. Tanya, his sister (and Frunze's other child), urged her brother to be 'more cold-blooded' about his work and not allow youthful enthusiasm to cost him. In the end he died during combat on 19th February 1942[37].

Other children of the Bolshevik elite suffered a similar fate. Most famously, Yakov Stalin was apparently 'sacrificed' by his father who exchange him as a prisoner-of-war for high-value German prisoners, but other elite family members fell in the field of battle more conventionally. Of those approximately 70 families of the 1934 Politburo detailed in the last chapter, some 25 had family members who participated directly in the Great Patriotic War[38]. Of these, it appears the Zelensky, Mikoyan, Stalin, Petrovsky, Komarov, Kubyak, Kulkov, Osinsky, Kaminsky and Broido families all lost children, while others must surely have suffered losses of different kinds. Nevertheless, with the consideration that seven times this number had been devastated by the Great Purges, the war itself was less of a comparative imposition on the lives of the Bolshevik elite. Indeed if some accounts of the lives of sons and daughters of top officials are to be believed, the war at times brought some relief.

During the war, figures such as Vasily Stalin and Leonid Khrushchev were more free to pursue delinquent ways. Leonid Khrushchev was court-martialled for a drunken William Tell episode gone wrong, while Vasily managed to kill a Hero of the Soviet Union fishing with aircraft rockets before finally being dismissed from his air regiment's command for 'hard drinking, debauchery and corrupting his regiment'[39]. Vasily's younger sister Svetlana meanwhile pursued a relationship with the screenwriter Alexei Kapler. Beria's son, Sergo, on the other hand bucked this trend by

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[37] All this information is taken from Voroshilova's retrospective account of her family in the war, in an entry from 1945 as presented in the typed copy of her notebooks (Voroshilova's Diary, pp. 1-4).

[38] Again the same caveats must be made about this data as appeared in the previous chapter – in some cases it is impossible to ascertain whether those that shared family names with Politburo members and are listed as war participants from the House on the Embankment were in fact related. The data upon which this figure is based is taken from the Museum's internet site, <http://museumdom.narod.ru>.

[39] Montefiore, *Stalin: Court of the Red Tsar*, pp. 399-403.

pursuing a more responsible path: he had been asked to accompany his mother and Svetlana into exile in Georgia but instead procured work in a Moscow intelligence school through his father's contacts[40].

Bolshevik elite wives had a more staid role in the war, however. Many appear to have had no formal tasks assigned to them as such, instead being given the primary task of looking after their families in exile (as Beria's mother had been requested to do for Stalin's daughter and her own son). While each family had its own unique circumstances, it appears that Voroshilova's life during the war may not have been dissimilar to that of many Bolshevik elite wives. Fortunately for the researcher, she documented her full employment history including for the time of the Great Patriotic War:

Table 1 - Yekaterina Voroshilova Employment History, 1941-1946[41]

FROM	TO	CAPACITY	PLACE	AUTHORISATION
8/1939	8/1941	Head of the office of socio-economic studies and assistant to the director of studies	Higher Party School of the CC, Moscow	Decree No. 7 of the Higher Party School of 7.9.1939
12/1941	1/1943	Assistant head of the Gorkom department of propaganda and agitation	City of Kuibyshev Gorkom	Decree of the Kuibyshev Gorkom Bureau of 12.12.1941
2/1943	9/1946	Head of the office of socio-economic students	Higher Party School of the CC, Moscow	Decree No. 36 of the Higher Party School of 10.4.1943

As can be seen, Voroshilova was not officially employed from August to December, 1941. It can be speculated that she stopped working in Moscow earlier than August at any rate as the evacuation of the Kremlin elite in which she was involved occurred soon after German forces crossed into the Soviet Union. When she did begin work again it was in middle-ranking position within the Kuibyshev Party structure. When the battle of Stalingrad had ended in February, 1943, Voroshilova returned from exile to resume her old life again.

[40] S. Beria, *Beria, My Father*, p. 73.
[41] Information is from the list compiled by Voroshilova for the award 'for devoted work', RGASPI *f.* 74, *op*. 1, *d*. 420, *l*. 41.

With no members of the Bolshevik elite killed in battle, few family members sacrificed in war, a relatively comfortable and stable evacuation of families and even the presence of hijinks amongst elite children, it is clear that – unlike in the Civil War of some two decades earlier – by the time of the Great Patriotic War the Soviet elite had very much assumed a position that set them apart from the trials and trevails of the population at large. To read of the wartime activities of Sergo Beria or Svetlana Molotova juxtaposed with the account of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, Zinaida Portnova or even a more ordinary girl such as Nina Kosterina[42], it is obvious that whilst war may have very different impacts on different individuals, the Soviet elite by the time of the Great Patriotic War were very much removed from the common Soviet experience.

As has been seen from the last chapter, the separate nature of Bolshevik elite experience had arrived long before fascist invasion through a period of consolidation, privilege and terror that had taken place from the end of the 1920s through to the beginning of war. With the war over this disconnect between ordinary lives and the lives of the elite continued and expanded. The conclusion of fighting had brought with it a mammoth task for the Soviet Union as a whole – a huge death toll, scorched earth, 25 million homeless citizens, many of them newly-created orphans and a demographic imbalance where women outnumbered men by 13 million[43]. Yet the personal battles ahead of individual members of Soviet elite society were limited: they might return to their homes, their families and their pre-war lifestyle by and large.

Perhaps attesting to their age or perhaps to the shift of the image of the Soviet woman from 'revolutionary comrade-in-arms' to (in large part) 'supportive companion', those Soviet elite wives discussed in this thesis fulfilled a much less dramatic and obvious role in the top echelons of Soviet society as they had in the pre-war years. There was no longer a place nor a need for a devoted companion such as Krupskaya to work conspiratorially with her husband to ensure his rise to the top, career pathways were set such that the likelihood of another female people's commissar rising to the top through not only her own ambition, but her social

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[42] Kosterina was a young Muscovite whose diary was published (in a redacted form) in the postwar period and might be read in English in a translation by Mirra Ginsburg (*The Diary of Nina Kosterina*, New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1968). For an account of a female fighter on the front lines, see Cottam's translation of the diary of Zoya Smirnova-Medvedeva in *On the Road to Stalingrad: Memoirs of a Woman Machine Gunner* (Nepean: New Military Publishing, 1997).

[43] Attwood, *The Creation of a New Soviet Woman*, p. 150, 161.

connections to the leadership, was limited. Never again would a young woman be given the urgent task of wondering whether to elope in a revolutionary fervour from Siberian exile to Moscow with her Georgian comrade as Zinaida Gavrilovna Ordzhonikidze had done. Nor was the Khrushchev era to require the enormous sacrifice and devotion that wives such as Anna Larina and Yulia Pyatnitskaya were to be called to display on behalf of their husbands.

In many ways then the interwar lives of the Soviet elite was unique, but in many other ways it provided the foundation and consolidation of Soviet life, both in terms of the nature and structure of the Bolshevik elite and of the position of the Soviet Union towards the *zhenskii vopros*. Having examined the nature of the Bolshevik elite, the evolving role of Bolshevik elite wives within it and its relationship with Soviet society at large then, some final conclusions about the nature of the woman question and the privileged few in the Soviet Union may now be drawn.

Conclusion

Two central questions of this thesis might be presented as follows: 'was the Soviet Union successful in its goals of producing a new society with a new woman?' and, to recall Herzen, 'if not then who (or what) is to blame?'. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, while the new society that socialism promised had failed to live up to its promises in the Soviet Union by the time of Stalin's death it was a complex failure. Similarly, while many institutions in the Soviet Union ultimately prevented a successful realisation of the new woman, it was more than simply multiple organ failure which contributed to the death of the socialist ideal: rather, one has to question the personalities of individual men and women involved in the Bolshevik elite as well as consider the nature of Bolshevik society more broadly to discover the full reasons for the breakdown of Soviet women's policy. This conclusion will summarise the complexities of the failure that the previous six chapters have detailed and by doing so will suggest further questions and avenues of research that arise from this study.

In chapter one, the incongruity of an elite group of intellectual middle-aged Marxists conspiring to bring about a new society full of new women was discussed and the idea that such men should hardly seem likely bringers of women's liberation is valid. Yet in examining the lives of pre-revolutionary women such as Krupskaya and Voroshilova a counterpoint to that idea emerges: it was not simply figures such as Lenin and Stalin who were 'ideationally compromised' by their own personal attitudes towards women and family life, but it was also Bolshevik elite women who proved to be far from ideal archetypes of the new Russian woman. This was not due to some unjustifiable failing on their own part, but as a result simply of the pre-revolutionary circumstances and influences upon Bolshevik elite wives. While a lack of educational opportunities prevented early Bolshevik wives from achieving the scholarship of their male counterparts, a lack of social opportunities practically barred them from playing an equal public role in the prosecution of revolution. Not only this,

but a dearth of appropriate female role models also contributed to the creation of a Bolshevik elite wife that was far removed from the independent and emancipated woman of Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?*. While forming successful and long-lasting unions, therefore, both the nascent romantic attitudes (which manifested themselves, amongst other things in a rather bourgeois attitude to charity work) that wives like Krupskaya clung onto, together with the fundamental power differential in their marriages, contributed to a poor setting for the foundation of a new Soviet woman in the guise of the Bolshevik elite wife. A wife who was, in many respects, part secretary part confidante for a Bolshevik leader could hardly claim to be emancipated. Where couples such as Armand and Lenin or Dybenko and Kollontai enjoyed a more equal partnership, the nature of circumstances and the difficult political conditions for women in the Party both conspired to make it difficult for the 'new woman' to get ahead.

Adding to this difficult start for the Bolshevik wife was the nature of pre-revolutionary socialist theory regarding marriage and the family. While the emphasis for many 19th Century socialists had frequently been working through the challenges of a class-based, rather than gender-based, revolution and since writers such as Bebel, Chernyshevsky and Engels were distanced from the need to implement pragmatic solutions, frequently pre-revolutionary solutions to the 'woman question' had been couched by socialist thinkers in either utopian terms when it came to imagining women's role in a future state or even by largely avoiding difficult issues like the problem of concomitant workforce participation and child-rearing altogether.

Despite these difficulties it was seen that, largely due to the fragmented and conspiratorial nature of Bolshevik politics in the years prior to 1917, wives such as Krzhizhanovskaya and Krupskaya enjoyed a degree of authority in revolutionary circles, holding key financial and communications positions within the underground Bolshevik network.

From relatively unpromising beginnings, both in terms of the material conditions of the revolutionary movement, but also due to the shortcomings of individual Bolsheviks, the foundation both of Soviet revolutionary society and of its women's policy continued in an ambiguous fashion. On the one hand, revolution certainly ushered in new opportunities for Bolshevik wives – for the first time women such as Kollontai and Krupskaya held important postings in the new administration,

while more inexperienced revolutionary wives such as Zhemchuzhina and Voroshilova pursued semi-independent roles in the ZhenOtdel. The existence of women's departments and new laws giving women greater property rights, equal pay in the workforce and more support for families also provided some succour to those striving for gender equality. Yet at the same time, as was noted in chapter two, the motivation behind the Soviet approach to women was still their exploitation as an untapped resource for the Soviet economy, while in terms of political power no generations of female leaders were to carry on the work of early pioneers such as Stasova, Nikolaeva, Krupskaya and Kollontai past the 1920s.

It was therefore the case that the first years of revolution provided an uncertain first step towards the resolution of the 'woman question' in the Soviet Union. On the one hand, policy decisions were often *ad hoc*, temporary and formed on the basis of pragmatic rather than ideological concerns. Policy towards women was frequently guided by an instrumental rather than supportive approach, seeing the female sex as a potential resource to be utilised by the new Soviet state. On the other hand, however, whatever the motivations behind policies such as maternity leave, literacy drives, the legalisation of abortion and the institution of alimony, the very existence of such endeavours necessarily provided some women with opportunities that they had never had under tsarism. While the ZhenOtdel was a body the control of which allowed the Bolshevik elite to regulate and manipulate propaganda and policies directed towards women[1] it nevertheless could accomplish real and positive outcomes for Soviet women and indeed provided Bolshevik elite wives with significant opportunities to advance the fortunes of their sex in the new Bolshevik state.

As was noted in chapters three and four, the evolution of women's roles and Soviet family policy continued to lurch ambiguously through the 1930s and 1940s, both in the area of women at work and in the way wives presented their roles as supporters of 'great husbands'.

On the question of women in work, the need for an enlarged workforce to meet the labour demands of industrialisation at the end of the 1920s finally saw

[1] For an extensive examination of this aspect of the ZhenOtdel, see Carol Eubanks Hayden's thesis "Feminism and Bolshevism: The *Zhenotdel* and the Politics of Women's Emancipation in Russia, 1917-1930" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979).

unemployment levels decrease for Soviet women[2] while the advent of the Great Patriotic War saw the greatest demand ever for Soviet women workers. While women became the dominant sex in the Soviet workforce[3] they still did not enjoy similar positions of power as men, however. It was seen in chapter three that the formal influence of Bolshevik wives through their employment was significantly diminished from pre-revolutionary days through three main changes. Firstly, the creation of the Soviet state had legitimised involvement with the Bolsheviks and undermined wives' roles as trustworthy actors in a small-scale, conspiratorial organisation. Secondly, some ten years after the revolution, the creation of a network of cadres had diminished the opportunities available to family members to pursue high-ranking careers merely because of blood ties, as it created a more formalised process for establishing a career in the Party system. Finally, the dissolution of the ZhenOtdel in 1930 removed a significant organisation for women within which Bolshevik elite wives had been performing important roles.

Bolshevik elite society, meanwhile, once and for all jettisoned its links with mainstream Russia from the late 1920s onwards. Through the consolidation of the cadres system, the development of career paths through party schools, the increased willingness of the elite to accept a privileged rather than ascetic existence, the creation of the 'infrastructure of privilege' from Party shops to buildings such as the House on the Embankment, through the death of *byt* reform that had focussed on removing 'bourgeois ostentation' and embracing communal living – through all these processes that gained momentum throughout the 1930s, Bolshevik elite society saw its structure and nature consolidated: politics had become a career, politicians had become part of a society set apart and elite workers were finally told to not be ashamed to enjoy the fruits of their success.

Bolshevik wives for their part appeared to embrace this outcome: faithful partners such as Krupskaya, Voroshilova and Ordzhonikidze wrote of their husbands hagiographically and presented their relationships in biographical form less like

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[2] By 1930, women in the Soviet Union made up 54.6% of all unemployed, despite being a minority in the labour market in the first place (Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, p. 17). In part this was due to the large proportion of women who were in the 'unskilled' section of the workforce. The economic stimulus of the First Five-Year Plan began to cut into this number of unemployed, however, a process that was then considerably assisted by the circumstances of the Great Patriotic War.

[3] Something that occurred, according to figures published by Gail Lapidus, sometime during the Great Patriotic War (see Table 1.1, *Women in Soviet Society*, p. 166). At the same time, however, women made up only 20% of the total membership of the Party (*Women in Soviet* Society, p. 210).

marriages of equals as friendships between great men and the women privileged to help them. In the case of Kuibyshev's sister, the familial bond she held with Valerian was not used to provide any evaluation of her brother's private life while Zinaida Ordzhonikidze demonstrated in a similar manner a significant reluctance to write about her revolutionary life with her husband, or to consider her contribution to their Bolshevik partnership worthy of publication. Not only were elite marriages presented as being very similar to the traditional bourgeois partnerships they had allegedly succeeded, therefore, but the very importance of the domestic work that wives of the elite undertook supporting their husbands was downplayed in their autobiographical accounts.

As was noted in chapter four, while wives such as Ivy Litvinova and Aino Kuusinen bucked the trend, Bolshevik elite women were also very protective of their husbands and their husband's legacy. Thus, for instance, Anna Larina took it upon herself to rehabilitate her husband Bukharin, both formally through the Soviet courts and informally through writing her memoirs for the court of public opinion[4]. Krupskaya protected Lenin similarly, through attempting to control his written legacy and also through looking after him in his final stroke-induced illness: a position that led her to an infamous clash with Iosif Stalin. Despite being active supporters of their husbands, through their writings and the archival documents they left behind it has been seen that Bolshevik elite wives presented the archetypal revolutionary partner as a largely passive force within a marriage: women liable to follow their husbands as they travelled the fronts of the Civil War, to prioritise their husbands' work over personal projects and to even have their fates intimately linked with those of their husbands.

The closure of ZhenOtdel and the marginalisation of prominent female leaders such as Kollontai and Krupskaya proved to be ominous first steps in the regression of Soviet women's policy that so many commentators have noted. Yet the criminalisation of abortion and the institution of Soviet mother-heroine awards can not be viewed, in this context, as either a serious departure from previous Soviet policy or even as a case of a deliberate policy shift set in motion by Stalin alone.

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[4] For an account of Anna Larina's Gorbachev-era struggle to rehabilitate her husband see Stephen Cohen's introduction to *This I Cannot Forget*.

Rather, such moves were a natural if extreme extension of nascent pro-natalist ideas within the Soviet elite, not merely borne of pragmatic concerns about the ongoing security of the state nor simply of socialist ideals concerning the flourishing of a new generation but also of the quite conservative pro-family and pro-marriage mentality of the individuals within that elite. This should not be surprising given so much of Soviet policy-making was reactive rather than pro-active: without a serious and long-term commitment to specific policies for the emancipation of women it was a simple for the Bolshevik elite to default to a set of social norms with which they were familiar.

Aiding this ideational regression was Bolshevik pragmatism and a measure of failure in progressive experimentation. Kollontai's visions for childcare and maternity leave were not realised because of economic cost while the pre-revolutionary dream of many to remove the burden of domestic life from women through the communalisation of cooking and cleaning was considered not only impractical but unfeasibly expensive. The creation of a hierarchical party together with the need to provide incentives to workers had also made shifts such as that in *byt* reform towards the end of the 1920s more inevitable – a party that encouraged workers through the granting of privilege could hardly continue to attack workers for living in privileged circumstances. In these ways, the Party line became less radicalised year by year in terms of its family and women's policy.

As chapter five noted, with each year the Bolshevik elite also became more alienated from society at large and from each other. The emphasis on individual privilege and the undertaking of top Bolsheviks to enrich themselves marked first steps in this process, while the intrigues and terrible human cost of the Great Terror solidified it. With deep political divisions making Soviet elite families suspicious and cautious of each other (let alone of society at large) an inducement was set for withdrawal from society while the sheer renewal that purging three quarters of top Bolsheviks necessarily brought about meant that the Party after 1937 was no longer so clearly structured around a series of Old Bolsheviks who were eminently familiar to and with each other. Through an examination of the residents of the House on the Embankment, not only were the motivations and circumstances that led to the alienation of elite and mainstream Soviet society uncovered, but it was confirmed that while the Terror seriously affected the composition of the elite broadly speaking, the very top Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union emerged relatively unscathed from the

process. In a similar manner, and as confirmation of the distancing of elite and mainstream society, it was discovered that the Great Patriotic War in terms of the disruption to elite life and casualties within the ranks of top Bolsheviks was a significantly less traumatic process for the very 'cream' of Soviet society.

While chapter five considered the increasing estrangement of the Party's elite from mainstream Soviet society, chapter six delved into this comparison more deeply, especially concentrating on the development of laws and institutions governing women's policy in Russia from tsarist times to Stalin's death and on the effects of official policy and historical events on the average Russian woman. The increasing contrast of Bolshevik elite wives' lives with those of women more generally in the Soviet Union was attested to in terms of the social and working lives of women and even the effects of war upon the average Soviet woman. However, while war and terror played their part in the increasing distance between elite and mainstream society, much like the regression of Soviet women's policy, the process of distancing was if not inevitable then predictable from a Party system which had always borne the marks of conspiracy and exclusivity.

Much of this thesis has not been so much about untangling the elite as an institution or unravelling the intricacies of motivations and debates concerning Soviet family and women's policy, however. It has, rather, been about producing a narrative tapestry – an ethnographic study of sorts – that might provide a greater understanding of the nature of Bolshevik elite society and, more specifically, of its key female members. It is quite impossible to summarise these women's lives for any sort of conclusion – as has been noted right through this thesis, while there were clear similarities between the environments, backgrounds, motivations and ideas of Bolshevik elite women the main 'characters' of this thesis led very different lives and indeed some were linked by little more than the fact they both were married to Soviet husbands. Nevertheless, both the narrative and analytic sections of this thesis do raise further questions that may be worthy of future discussion, some hypothetical and some practical.

A chief question, and one to which this thesis provides some answers, is to what extent the regression of Bolshevik policy and Soviet elite society from the 1930s

onwards was simply a Thermidor[5] brought about by the unique leadership of Stalin and to what extent the return to more traditional 'bourgeois' ways of life was a product of systemic or institutional failures. In establishing the ambiguous and frequently old-fashioned approach of Soviet couples to the woman question and the long-standing reticence of the Bolshevik elite to embrace either a communal lifestyle or one that closely resembled that of mainstream Soviet society, the actions of the elite as illustrated in this thesis suggest that while Stalin may have been instrumental in specific policy shifts and particular changes in the composition of the elite (for instance, through the Great Terror), it was ultimately the nature of the individuals in Bolshevik elite society more broadly that inclined the Soviet experiment towards regression in the case of women's policy and disconnectedness from the mainstream in the case of the elite as a community.

Following on from this principle question a number of connected queries also emerge. For instance, given the underlying practical inequalities demonstrated in pre-revolutionary marriages and the lack of a strong ideological commitment to overturn women's second class status in revolutionary thought, to what extent was the regression in the official Soviet position towards women on display in this thesis an inevitable product of circumstances and ideas that pre-date the coming to power of the Bolsheviks? Having established that the personal attitudes of top politicians in the Soviet Union to a large extent mirrored their political approach towards women's issues, is this link similarly apparent in the cases of other states and does it therefore preclude an ideologically uncommitted group from achieving practical reform in areas such as social policy? Given that the geographical closeness, shared wartime and peacetime experiences and community living of the Bolshevik elite served to distance them from the population at large over time, to what extent is this distancing – and therefore the creation of a power elite – a natural consequence that arises when close political communities are established? Finally, with the establishment of a tight-knit and privileged political elite by the time of Stalin's death where partners of top Bolsheviks had less political influence than ever before and where regular Soviet women found difficulty achieving high ranks within the Party-state structure, was

[5] See Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* for a development of the concept of Thermidor.

there any real possibility through the following decades of the Soviet Union achieving serious political reforms to the benefit of women and family?

All of these questions are points for further research, their answers lying outside the scope of this thesis. What the preceding six chapters have established, however, is not only the richness and diversity of the lives of top Bolshevik women in the first decades of revolutionary society and not merely the link between private lives and public policy, but also a perspective on Bolshevik elite women which can extend both our canvas of understanding about the Soviet Union's approach to the woman question in its early years as well as our appreciation of the everyday lives, ideas and motivations of members of the Bolshevik elite. It is only in the context of the creation of this rich tapestry of interwoven lives that it has been possible to uncover a more complete and holistic understanding of the circumstances and actions of those individuals which came together to form Soviet elite society.

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