

1 From duty to pleasure?

Motherhood in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia

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This chapter considers the changing construction of motherhood in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. It is divided into two sections: the first section considers the Soviet approach to motherhood through an analysis of the official state journal *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva* ('Questions of Motherhood and Infancy'), between 1926 and 1937, during which time the main elements of the Soviet attitude to motherhood were established. The second half considers the transformation in attitudes towards motherhood set in train by the collapse of the Soviet state. My research is based on two sources: a review of the contemporary Russian press, and interviews with women of child-bearing age, which were designed to gauge how far the change in the ideological climate has been reflected in the subjective perceptions of ordinary women.

Methodology

In terms of the review of the press, the form of analysis which was used to study the two eras - Soviet and post-Soviet Russia - was somewhat different in each case. *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva* was a mouthpiece for state policy with regard to motherhood and infancy, and I treat it as such in this chapter. The discussion of this journal is thus a study of state policy and its official representation. By contrast, in the post-Soviet era, there is no 'official' state position on motherhood. I have therefore attempted to capture the main strands of contemporary opinion as presented in the press through studying a representative cross-section of the print media between the period 20 July 1996 to 10 August 1996. In total, I monitored over twenty papers, including the main national newspapers and the Moscow local papers, and analysed all articles which in one way or another related to the subject of motherhood.² In 1995-6 three new women's magazines were launched: the Russian editions of *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping* (*Domashnii ochag*), and *Motherhood* (*Materinstvo*), and I included the September issues of these magazines in my analysis. I also included issues of the monthly magazines *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka* ('Woman Worker' and 'Peasant Woman', respectively), the

two most popular women's magazines of the Soviet era), published between January and September 1996. Issues of *Sostial'naya zashchita* ('Social Protection') for this period were also included since this publication considers questions relating to social protection of motherhood.

Between 1996 and 1998 I conducted detailed interviews with thirty-three women of child-bearing age, the youngest of whom was 19 and the oldest 40. Whether or not these women had children, I worked from the assumption that all of them would have given some thought to **the** 'maternal question'. Eleven of the women I interviewed were relinquishing mothers (women who had given up their children for adoption), as I was particularly interested in the motivation of such women during the transition era. As a whole, the women interviewed were in a variety of different situations - childless, married, single, cohabiting, and so forth. My questions focused on the women's motivations regarding motherhood, and their perceptions of the 'prerequisites' of this in the transition era.

The construction of motherhood in early Soviet Russia

The specialist journal *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva* ('Questions of Motherhood and Infancy') is an excellent source through which to examine the development of the Soviet conception of motherhood and childcare. The journal was established in 1926 with the goal of medical enlightenment of the population in questions of reproduction, through the transmission of the latest scientific information about pregnancy, birth and child-rearing. At the same time, however, it served as a means through which the state transmitted its policies; indeed, this function gradually began to dominate during the Stalin era. What were the main priorities of the nascent Soviet state? The emerging politics of motherhood and infancy can be examined under three headings. First, reproduction was seen as a *state junction*, for which women should be rewarded. Second, in line with this, the state was concerned with the quality of future generations. This implied that women's bodies were valuable vessels in which the state had a legitimate interest. Third, children, once produced, should be brought up as communists. Early plans to socialise childcare completely were abandoned for practical reasons, but the quest to ensure control of child-rearing continued. In place of the development of 'child colonies', the state sought to develop a special alliance with mothers, whose care was to be supplemented by nursery provision. This, however, was at the expense of fathers who were symbolically excluded from the state-mother-child triad.

Motherhood: 'the highest form of service'

In the first issue of *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva*, V. Lebedeva (1926) wrote that 'motherhood is the social function of women - this is our watchword'. The aim of the Bolshevik government, in Lebedeva's

opinion, was to 'grant women equal conditions at work, take from them the burden of housekeeping and child care' so that they would no longer be 'tired and downtrodden'. In the absence of such reforms society hindered 'a woman's very nature, her maternity*'. This article highlights three key Bolshevik positions with regard to maternity: first, that motherhood was not a private matter, but a social one; second, that motherhood was the 'natural' destiny of women; and third, that it was a function which was to be facilitated and rewarded by the state.

If motherhood was a social function, it followed that it should be exercised in accordance with the needs of society (and, as is well known, according to Leninist doctrine, it was only the Communist Party which was capable of discerning where the interests of society lay). In the mid-1920s, however, there was still some room for debate within the Party over what sort of motherhood would best serve Soviet society: 'conscious' or compulsory. In the first year of the journal an article by Rachmanov (1926), entitled 'On the road to conscious motherhood', advocated the use of birth control: pregnancy should be a deliberate choice. He claimed that across the world 'a shift' was occurring: 'men don't want families and women don't want to give birth'. This was also characteristic of many builders of communism in the USSR, for 'it's better to climb mountains unburdened'. In such conditions, the author concluded, children would fare best when they were wanted. Rachmanov was thus appealing to the idea that builders of communism understandably had other priorities. Others, however, did not take such a lenient view of the difficulties of Soviet mountaineers. Levi (1927), for example, focused on the medical profession, warning that 'medical workers are falling behind' in their 'execution of the maternal function". He produced figures to show what he saw as the lamentably low birth rate among female doctors and nurses, and their over-use of abortion. His stern warning about the backwardness of medical workers was clearly grounded on the assumption that it was a woman's duty to give birth as often as possible.

Paradoxically, once industrialisation began in earnest and many women were taken up with other tasks, the authorities gradually attempted to close off the option of any kind of individual choice with regard to motherhood. This manifested itself most clearly in the area of abortion. Given the unreliability of other forms of contraception available to Soviet women at the time, this was often used as a form of birth control. In 1930, however, the journal reported that women would only be able to have abortions after obtaining permission from a specially created commission.³ In 1935 it was announced that abortions would henceforth have to be paid for, and the following year they were banned.

The journal treated the 1936 ban on abortion as an issue related to women's health. Nogina (1936) noted that the number of abortions had begun to decrease, and the birth rate increase, before the adoption of the law: that is, the journal attempted to argue that the law had simply

confirmed an existing tendency. Failed underground abortions became more common, however; Nogina (1936; 1937) reported that women were turning up in hospital with life-threatening complications. Meanwhile, she noted that in the first month after the ban on abortion many doctors still 'found all sorts of unimportant reasons through which they obtained permission for an abortion' (Nogina, 1937). Another article, entitled 'We will precisely and unerringly implement the government decree on the banning of abortion' (Levi, 1937), dealt in detail with the experience of one Moscow clinic and argued that it was necessary to reduce further the number of abortions carried out on medical grounds. Schizophrenia, tuberculosis and heart defects were only to be considered grounds for abortion in the most extreme cases, while syphilis was completely ruled out as grounds for an abortion. Nogina, meanwhile, wrote with pride about how the birth rate had doubled in comparison with the year before, not because of the ban on abortions, but because 'our women are not afraid to give birth because the Soviet state assists them at all stages of motherhood' (Nogina, 1937). At the same time, however, reporting of the rapid building of new maternity units made it clear that this decree put pressure on the maternity hospitals which were not ready for this upsurge in births (Nogina, 1936; 1937). This pressure was also felt in industry, as can be seen from the publication of articles with such titles as, 'The experience of organisation of breast feeding rooms and breast milk collecting points in factory workshops' (Tsykhanskii, 1937).

Since motherhood was a duty to the state, it was logical that it should be rewarded. At the same time as the ban on abortion, therefore, a number of rewards for motherhood were introduced, including, in principle, the liberation of pregnant women from the prison camps (in practice, however, far from all of them were released). These rewards above all concerned mothers of several children. A woman was entitled to become a heroine mother only when she was the biological mother of ten or more children -step-children, adopted children and children who died were not taken into account. The title 'hero father' was not introduced. The state gave the title and the money to the mother, and thus developed a direct relationship with her as the producer of the children, and the man was excluded from this relationship as an insignificant figure (if not as a competitor for the woman's loyalty). Meanwhile, the status of the mother was increased in relation to that of the woman worker: as Kaminskii proclaimed 'the word "mother" is the most respected, motherhood is the highest form of service to one's people and state' (Kaminskii, 1936).

Kaminskii's words echoed those of Lebedeva (1926), writing in the first issue of *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva*. This serves to underline the continuity of policy with regard to motherhood during the NEP (New Economic Policy) and Stalin eras. Beginning with Trotsky ([1937] 1972), commentators have tended to treat the ban on abortion as part of the 'Thermidor in the family', a symptom of the reactionary subversion of the

revolution by the Stalinist bureaucracy. They have therefore seen the policy of the 1930s as qualitatively different from that of the earlier period. But it is important to stress that since the revolution access to abortion had *always* been regulated; it was never treated as a woman's 'right'.⁴ This is not surprising given that, as should be clear from the above account, the Bolsheviks never saw motherhood as a private matter. It was a social function, and, as such, the state had the right to regulate it. The ban on abortion was in this sense a continuation of past policy — it was only the severity of the regulation which distinguished it from the earlier approach.

Protecting the genetic inheritance; controlling the 'living machine'

As well as being concerned with the number of children women produced, the state was also interested in the quality of future generations. This implied that the state had an interest in the 'protection' of women's bodies. A significant proportion of articles in the journal were therefore concerned with promoting what was perceived to be healthy living. This continued a long tradition: the Bolsheviks added only an ideological twist to the pre-revolutionary practice of the Russian intelligentsia for whom medical enlightenment of the (mainly peasant) population had always been a key concern. The main difference between the approach of the Bolsheviks and that of their philanthropic predecessors, however, was that the former extended beyond the propagation of best practice into active control of women's behaviour. Such control was justified on the grounds that women's bodies were the incubators of the new generation of communists.

A typical example of interest taken in the conduct of 'future mothers' was an article by Professor Durnovo, entitled 'Heredity and the new generation', which examined the negative consequences of the destruction of the Civil War on the offspring of the current generation (Durnovo, 1926). This did not fail to mention other negative influences on future generations such as abortion and sexual disease. Having an abortion before the first child was claimed to be a potential cause of sterility. Meanwhile, in other articles written during the same period shocking evidence of the prevalence of syphilis in rural Russia was presented. Although such discussions were obviously in part motivated by genuine medical concern, they also legitimised the proscription of certain types of behaviour deemed to be undesirable by the state. This can be seen, for example, in an article by Grigo entitled 'The work of Soviet power in the area of sexual enlightenment of the female population'. Grigo emphasised the need to protect young women from depravity entailing disease and early abortions 'in order not to upset the living machine: the human being' (Grigo, 1930: 18). The wording here made it clear that the female 'human being' was perceived as just another asset of the Soviet state.

A series of other issues were also considered in terms of their implications for the genetic inheritance of the country. For example, a number of articles looked at the harmful influence of women returning to work too early after childbirth. This was said to be bad for the woman's health and hence for her capacity to work and give birth to healthy children in the future - an idea which was soon to be brushed away amid the fervour of Stalinist industrialisation. Similarly, a scheme to provide medical support and occupational training to homeless women who were pregnant was justified on the grounds that this would improve the quality of their offspring. In fact, however, the author notes that in general the only women who found work as a result of this training were trade union members (Davydov, 1927).

The interest of the state did not stop at 'protecting' future mothers. There was a 'correct' way to do most things, and this included giving birth. For example, a number of articles were published regarding the practice of midwifery by the different peoples of the USSR. The aim of these articles, however, was to harmonise the practice of midwifery through the introduction of one, correct system. This did lead to the abolition of some peculiar practices such as that, for example, existing among certain Caucasian people in which the concern of women to 'preserve their dignity' meant that they removed as few clothes as possible during childbirth, and that the older women who were present gave them virtually no help and, indeed, hardly came near them (Raukhvager, 1926; Yushkevich, 1930). But at the same time, other practices, some of which look progressive from a contemporary point of view, were also condemned. This applied, for example, to the Crimean Tartar practice of giving birth in a squatting position, even though the authors who wrote about it noted how easily these births usually proceeded, with the mother drinking coffee and chatting with the other women present almost immediately afterwards (Bukh, 1927).

While in the 1920s the state concentrated on obstetric enlightenment,⁶ in the 1930s it increasingly used coercive force to achieve its ends. By 1935 the possibility of giving birth outside state institutions was completely closed down. Young midwives were charged with finding underground *povitukhl* (folk midwives) and, in the spirit of the time, denouncing them to the authorities (Nogina, 1935; Bryukhanov, 1935). This regulation of midwifery, though it no doubt partly stemmed from concern for the health of the mother and child, also served firmly to quash the idea of childbirth as a private, individual experience. It would henceforth only be conducted under the watchful eyes of the state.

The formation of the communist citizen

Not only was motherhood designated as a state function, child-rearing was also deemed to be a public rather than a private matter. Such was the

Bolshevik hostility to the private family that initially the full socialisation of childcare was advocated by many prominent Party members. Aleksandra Kollontai in particular promoted such ideas, arguing that:

The old family, narrow and petty, where the parents quarrel and are only interested in their own offspring, is not capable of educating the 'new person'. The playgrounds, gardens, homes and other amenities where the child will spend the greater part of the day under the supervision of qualified educators will, on the other hand, offer an environment in which the child can grow up a conscious communist.

(Kollontai, (1919) 1977:257)

By the time *Voprosy materinstva i mladenchestva* was established, however, it was recognised that the infant mortality rate in state institutions was too high, rising to 90 per cent in some cases (Lunts, 1926). This, it was believed, was partly due to the deficiency of breastfeeding in these establishments. Wet nurses were recruited among homeless mothers, but there were never enough of them, and hence alongside breast milk children were fed a variety of inadequate (and often noxious) supplements (Al'tgauzen, 1926). Meanwhile, Lunts and other writers also recognised the problem of what they called 'hospitalism', by which they meant that children raised in institutions were deprived of emotional interaction. In addition to these deficiencies, state childcare was also more expensive than that within the family. Given all these problems, the rhetorical question 'nursery or child-colony?' was eventually resolved in favour of a combination of maternal and nursery care. It should be stressed, however, that this acceptance of the role of private care represented a compromise with reality rather than an ideological change of heart.

Thus, for pragmatic reasons, from its inception the journal promoted the 'natural' role of mothers in the upbringing of children. The emphasis on motherhood, however, left the question of the formation of future citizens in private hands. The compromise with mothers was always a slightly uneasy one, and this tension was dealt with in two ways. First, mothers were to be brought under the improving influence of the state, and, second, children were to receive supplementary (and possibly corrective) socialisation at nurseries. The former was precisely the goal the journal was created to serve and its contributors dutifully stressed the idea of the state as the benign protector and champion of mothers. As Shustova enthusiastically proclaimed, 'The Soviet state having announced that the protection of motherhood and infancy is a state task ... has broken the bonds of oppressed motherhood, joyless and lifeless infancy; with its last strength the exhausted proletariat has achieved state protection of motherhood and infancy, which preserves the mother for the child and the child for the mother' (Shustova, 1927). 'State protection of motherhood and infancy' (*okhmatmlad* in the characteristic Soviet abbreviation of the

time) was the perfect vehicle for securing greater influence over mothers and their children. This can be seen, for example, in articles that dealt with the further development of state policy with regard to motherhood and infancy, many of which explicitly linked this to social and political control. An article by Krist (1930), for instance, dealt with the creation of local mutual aid funds for mothers. This, it was argued, would help to strengthen ties to the local area, thus helping to develop state control over the movement of citizens. Meanwhile, an article by Grossman (1930) argued for the elimination of differences in the social protection of mothers and infants in different regions, which the author claimed was essential for the implementation of Party policy. Uniformity was a necessary precondition of effective control.

But in spite of the efforts of the authorities to foster a close relationship with mothers, they remained wary of parental discretion: the journal published a number of articles which highlighted the negative influence of parents, not only on the health of their children, but also on their psychological development. In line with this continued suspicion of the private sphere, the idea that parental care should be combined with the public nurseries was a constant theme of the journal. 'The struggle for nurseries' was partly based on the idea that the staff would inculcate communist as opposed to religious values, though after the beginning of the industrialisation programme the 'liberation' of women workers from their children became an increasingly important justification. A typical example of the arguments advanced in favour of nurseries is provided by an approving article detailing the practice of *kolkhoznitsy* (female collective farm workers) at one collective farm during the harvest. After the establishment of the nursery, the women began to leave their children (including those still being breastfed) at the nursery at five o'clock in the morning, and to pick them up at around ten in the evening (Zal'kindson, 1927). This was perceived as a positive means of ensuring the female workforce was used rationally and fully: instead of using one woman to care for one child, forty could be cared for in the nursery. During industrialisation twenty-four-hour factory nurseries were established for the same purpose.¹¹

During crash industrialisation the campaign for nurseries became so important that between 1933-4 the journal changed its name to 'Nursery'. By this stage, the journal was giving increasingly open expression to the subordination of the individual to the state. Children were to be brought up not for the parents' benefit, nor for their own benefit, but for the sake of the country. And they should love not their parents, but their country. Therefore, as the President of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Russian Federation, D.E. Sulimov, put it in a speech to a meeting of nursery employees, it is necessary to create an environment in which the child feels from an early age the care the socialist state has given him'

(Sulimov, 1934). At this time the magazine also began to assert that nurseries offered a qualitatively better form of care than children could have at home. It is clear, however, from the mass of material in the journal relating to the 'future improvement' of the nurseries, that infant mortality within these establishments continued to be high (Shaburova, 1934). Moreover, thieving flourished: Shaburova related how children's food, clothes and the material intended for their nappies was stolen by nursery employees. In the discourse of the time this was no longer simply stealing but the 'machinations of the class enemy'.

It should be noted that the history of the 'struggle for nurseries' again casts doubt on the idea of a conservative reaction in family policy during the Stalin era. Although plans for full socialisation of childcare were abandoned for practical reasons, the Stalinist authorities became determined to take as many children as possible from the care of their parents for as long as possible, even when this meant the children attending substandard institutions swarming with thieves. This can hardly be seen as part of a resurrection of the family.

The marginalisation of the father

One very important consequence of the state alliance with the mother, and the attempt to wrest as much control as possible from the parents via nursery provision, was the virtual exclusion of fathers from childcare. The role of fathers in raising children was mentioned very rarely. When fathers featured in the journal it was usually in a negative capacity, in connection with abandonment of children or alimony. A prominent theme of the journal in the late 1920s and early 1930s, for example, was the abandonment of children and the social reasons for this. Klimovskaya (1930), in an article entitled 'Everyday features of the abandonment of children, based on material from Perm children's home', cited cases in which women chose their husbands over their children, or where they left the child with its father, who then took it to the police and declared it abandoned. All this was clearly directed against men. At this stage the women themselves were not blamed; they were seen to have the right to relinquish a child. Indeed, another line of propaganda was the idea that mothers had to be freed from the burden of their children, something which, it seems, a number of women achieved through abandonment.

In 1934, however, the official attitude to relinquishing mothers changed and women became criminally responsible in cases of abandonment, which was considered to be a crime comparable with murder. The legal responsibility of fathers remained akin to that of responsibility for property; in this way, the father—child bond was symbolically relegated to the level of a financial obligation. Meanwhile, the redundancy of fathers was continually underlined by the emphasis placed on the links between mother, state and child.

The rise and fall of *okhmatmlad*

After the end of the Stalin era, some of the more coercive aspects of the practice of *okhmatmlad* were abandoned. The ban on abortion, for example, was lifted in 1955. Nevertheless, the broad outline of policy remained the same until the end of the Soviet era. Motherhood continued to be glorified as the highest duty to the state, while the state monopoly on obstetric services was strengthened. The continual exhortation of the Stalin era was softened, however, and was replaced by less conspicuous normative pressure to conform to certain standards, which included having a family of at least one, or preferably two, children. The continued emphasis on collective duty rather than choice was reflected in the failure of the Soviet state to supply adequate contraception to its people: the 'second contraceptive revolution' of the 1960s passed the Soviet Union by, for the simple reason that it was never treated as a priority (Vishnevskii, 1998: 128). Children were considered to be important, however: an institutional infrastructure of infant and childcare was gradually developed, and a state network of nurseries and kindergartens set in place. Indeed, it was in the 1980s, amid concerns regarding the birth rate, that policy of maternal protection reached its fullest development. Maternity leave and child benefit was increased to levels which made child-rearing on the state rather than the individual man quite feasible (although mothers could not survive on state benefits; they had to work to cure their independence). In this period, the number of children born outside marriage began to increase significantly.

The collapse of the Soviet state changed all this. Motherhood is no longer viewed as a state function, and correspondingly state support for it has been reduced. Meanwhile, in the light of the shifting political priorities, nurseries and kindergartens are no longer regarded as an important state service. The post-Soviet state is no longer concerned to insure it has a role in the socialisation of young children, whom it is happy to consign to the private sphere. The authorities are also not so worried about ensuring full female labour participation - indeed, a fall in this is seen by some policymakers as the best solution to unemployment. What does this shift in attitude imply for the institution of motherhood in the Soviet era? The following sections examine this question through an analysis of the popular press in 1996, and interviews with women of child-bearing age.

'Only you need your child': an analysis of the contemporary press¹³

The following analysis of the treatment of motherhood in the contemporary Russian press is based on my monitoring of newspapers and magazines in 1996. I did not select the themes that are discussed in

advance - the areas of interest that I identify below emerged from my analysis of the data. Clearly, there was a subjective element to this, and the themes that are identified can be seen as the product of the interaction between a 'living author' and a 'living text' (Stanley, 1985). But, overall, the treatment of motherhood in the publications that were studied tended to follow similar lines - the standpoint of 'international' magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, for example, did not differ significantly from that of Russian magazines, perhaps because of the effort the managers of such publications expend in studying the nature of local markets.

The first point to note regarding the treatment of motherhood in the press is that it clearly reflects the fact that maternity is no longer a state function. In place of a concept of duty, there is a new emphasis on individual choice, responsibility and even pleasure. This can be seen, for example, in the treatment of large families. In the past, having a large number of children was viewed as unquestionably positive; it was a heroic service to the motherland. Now, given that responsibility for reproduction has been transferred to the private sphere, it is viewed in a very different light. A number of authors treat it as ill thought out and self-indulgent behaviour - as a route to poverty which places an unnecessary burden on the social services. Others stress that it is only possible in present conditions if the husband is capable of earning enough money to support the family and the wife is able to economise. Given the new pluralism in the press, however, this is not a unanimous opinion, even though it is a dominant one. There are those who are more optimistic and stress the potential pleasure to be gained from motherhood whatever the financial situation. This, for example, is the attitude of the author of 'You don't have to be Venus to give birth in the sea surf, who claims that 'women in our group are not afraid to give birth. Three children is the norm' (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 7 August 1996: 1). The increasing emphasis on pleasure can also be seen in articles relating to the upbringing of children — although the work involved in motherhood is not denied, greater emphasis is placed on its enjoyable aspects. The break with the past implied by this is highlighted by the title of an article by Anna Leont'eva: 'Less heroic exploit, more maternity' (*Krest'yanka*, no. 3, 1996: 36). Such articles clearly highlight the reconceptualisation of motherhood as a private experience - the pleasure is private, as is the financial responsibility.¹⁶

The gradual privatisation of the maternal experience has opened up a discussion over women's control over their bodies: if they are no longer seen as incubators retained and rewarded by the state, then they clearly have greater rights. Thus, for example, while in the Soviet era strong pressure was put on women to get married and have children when young, now the more liberal press treats the decision to defer having children with greater sympathy. As the author of an article called 'When the mother is over 40' comments:

Many people think that only at this age is it possible to feel the full joy of motherhood, because it is at this age that a person becomes fully mature, when the value of all other pleasures - parties, cinema, sex, professional achievements and so on - is already known to be small in comparison to the possibility of communication with a little one, with your own child.

(Materinstvo, no. 1, September 1996: 108)

Unsurprisingly, however, the pro-Communist press is critical of the fact that women have begun to defer motherhood until 'abnormally' late, leading them to have fewer children or to forgo the experience altogether. Meanwhile, the rest of the press continues to see early motherhood as the best option - unless, of course, it is too early, in which case it is deemed to be a problem.¹⁷ Certainly, the tone of much of this shows that the prescriptive proclivity of the Russian press has not been eroded overnight, but at the same time some sections of the press are beginning to accept the validity of individual preference in relation to parenthood.

The greater emphasis on individual choice can also be seen in relation to the discussion of childbirth itself. The state monopoly and rigid control of the obstetric sphere is no longer in operation, and it is therefore possible to discuss alternatives. For example, in some sections of the press, options for improving the experience of childbirth - such as giving birth in water, at home, or with the participation of the father - are discussed. The coverage is less coy and more informative than in the past, and is often accompanied by colour photographs. There are, however, some exceptions - one article, for example, referred to menstruation as 'the womb's tears for the child that wasn't conceived!' (*Rabotnitsa*, 4, 1996: 34). Other articles engage with childbirth in typical old-Soviet style - as an unavoidable form of suffering which confers on every woman who goes through it the status of a heroine:

The men get all the joy of the event and women get all the rest. ... Eternal fear, blood, sweat, tears, the difficulty of producing the first milk, the night cries of babies with dirty nappies, weakness - you can't even lift a kettle, let alone a baby ... in the words of one doctor 'Well, love, birth, it is always a tragedy. We'll manage it.'

[Sobesedmk, no. 28, July 1996: 8-9)

None the less, although some of the attitudes of the past persist, the idea that women have the right to make decisions over how to give birth has begun to take root.

In some other post-communist countries women have been liberated from the demographic demands of the state only to be subjected to the moral strictures of the church - most notably in Poland where abortion has been banned since the collapse of communism. This has so far not occurred

in Russia. Nor, it seems, is abortion a particularly contentious issue. None of the papers in the period of my review contain anti-abortion articles. The attention paid to contraception also suggests that the idea that sex and reproduction can be separate issues is beginning to gain ground.¹

While the retreat of the state has begun to hand women potential control of their bodies, it has also cleared the way for the reclamation of the institution of fatherhood. The general sentiment of the press in this connection can be summed up thus: 'Fathers, return to the family!' The space created for the individual father by the retreat of the state is explicitly recognised in an article entitled 'A secondary role':

Today our Russian post-Soviet fathers have gained the chance to occupy an appropriate place in the family. As soon as the economy became market-oriented, it required the development of traditional male qualities, and a man obtained the possibility of returning to his normal and natural role. His destiny is now in his own hands. ... He can (if he wants, if he gets up from the sofa and makes an effort) provide for his family. Now he himself must take responsibility for the children, and not delegate it to Big Daddy: the state.

(*Materinstvo*, no. 1, September 1996: 91)

The author of this article, Lina Tarkhova, stresses that, 'the role of the father is designed for an active and responsible man'. She is optimistic, claiming that the Russian family is becoming more similar to that of the Protestant tradition 'where the role of the husband and father is especially important' and much larger in comparison to the Orthodox tradition (ibid.: 91). What is interesting about this article is Tarkhova's emphasis on the *potential* of men to play a greater role: whether they will actually stir themselves to substitute for Big Daddy is an open question. This highlights one of the key areas of tension in Russia's new pattern of gender relations.

Tarkhova seems mainly concerned with the question of financial provision, but other commentators have a wider concept of paternal participation. The other strand to such discussion is the idea that men should play a greater role in the upbringing of children, feeding, washing and caring for them in the same way that women do. Even more striking is the attention given to the idea that fathers should be present at the birth of their children, which, it is argued, strengthens the biological link between father and child. This represents a complete break with Soviet obstetric practice, which ensured that men were not allowed to see their wives or their children until five days after the birth, as well as with Soviet discourse which placed very little emphasis on the father-child link. For example, an article entitled 'I was the first person you saw', argues that, 'when the fathers are allowed to play an active role in childcare they become equally good baby-sitters as the mothers'. The article provides a mother's moving description of the formation of this bond: 'it was simply born and it said,

"hi Daddy" (coming from my ... belly into daddy's trembling hands)' (*Krest'yanka*, no. 8, 1996: 32). Another indication of the new importance placed on fatherhood is the attention given to new reproductive technologies designed to help men who are suffering from infertility. The scars of the past are still visible, however, and many articles are devoted to tales of egotistical, cold and absent fathers. But single mothers no longer stand alone as the victims of indifferent partners - the phenomenon of the single father, left by his uncaring wife to care for their children, has also entered the popular consciousness. In a complete reversal of usual gender stereotypes one article, entitled 'How the Pope of Rome became a single father', examines the experience of an abandoned man. The mother of the children fits the usual press profile of the irresponsible father: '[His] six children do not object to his new marriage. The main thing as far as they are concerned is that their future mother shouldn't be a heavy-drinking brawler' (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 7 August 1996: 6).

Although the possibility of fathers returning to the family is welcomed, there is some ambivalence about the desertion of the former 'father' of all Soviet children - the state. Many articles imply that the post-communist state has reneged on what still tend to be perceived as its parental responsibilities. This is underlined, for example, in an article entitled 'A good deed lasts for two centuries', about a priest and his wife who organised a shelter for abandoned children and the elderly. The author asks the rhetorical question, 'How can such a large family be provided for? The state gave no help. Private individuals and enterprises helped' (*Moskovskii novosti*, 28 July-4 August 1996: 23). What is usually noted in such articles is the insufficiency of state support, and the consequent fall in the birth rate and increased incidence of child poverty. For example, Eduard Grafov relates a sad tale of a girl called Arina who died of hunger because her father had not been paid for several months: '80 per cent of parents give their children all they can. But how much have they got to give?' He then proceeds to examine the gloomy statistics regarding the incidence of child poverty (*Vechemyaya Moskva*, 7 August 1996: 1). The subject which above all induces a craving for state action, however, is the perception that Russia is facing a demographic crisis. The fact that women are refraining from having children is often noted. One article, for example, claimed those women who wanted children were being forced to flee Russia: 'Future and potential mothers all try to marry abroad, to emigrate, to run away and who can blame them? People don't want to starve and don't want their children to starve. Everyone saves themselves as best they can' (*Sotsial'naya zashchita*, no. 3, 1996: 135). Another article painted a grim picture of depopulation, which in the author's view resulted from the state failing to provide work for women: 'In these conditions [the mass unemployment of women] it is difficult to decide to have a child. According to surveys only 24 per cent of women plan to have children and of these 41 per cent want to have only one' (*Pravda-5*, 3 August 1996: 3).

Most authors at least imply that such problems are created by the state which is seen to have deserted parents: 'Society must finally recognise its responsibility for the creation of the best conditions for increasing the population. It must share responsibility with parents' (*Sotsial'naya zashita*, no. 2, 1996: 99). Such calls to action are often couched in national terms, with the Russian nation replacing communism as the altar of maternal sacrifice. A typical example is an article entitled 'How many Russians are left in the world?', which lamented that, 'Russia has entered a period of demographic collapse: mortality is higher than fertility ... Russians have become a divided and dying people. It's a pity that it's like that' (*Sobesednik*, 28 July 1996: 4). This highlights the fact that the changing politics of motherhood is closely tied up with wider political struggles in Russia: were either nationalists or communists to triumph, the control of the bodies of 'future mothers' could once again be seen by those in power as a legitimate concern of the state.

Fears regarding the future of Russia are also reflected in the treatment of the symbol of the nation. Mother Russia. In the Soviet era, Mother Russia was portrayed as a monumental and heroic figure, an exacting standard against which the citizen-children were measured (and inevitably found wanting). In contemporary Russia, by contrast, she is portrayed as suffering, weak and unattractive, while her child (the future of Russia) is hunted by evil forces. This hunt is graphically described by Aleksandr Prokhanov in an article entitled 'We are from Russian civilisation':

Our country - like a future mother, who as a result of feeling the first movement of her child, calms down, loses her beauty, avoids any superficial fuss, concentrates on her internal life, on the mysterious growth [inside her] - not feeling ashamed that it was called 'stagnant', gathered its resources to pour into its future extraordinary child, and prepared itself for the birth. ... As in the story of King Herod (for Orthodox Christians, Yel'tsin is equivalent to King Herod), murderers searched for this future hero and saviour and mercilessly crushed the screaming mother.

(*Zavtra*, no. 31, August 1996)

The main exception to such tragic musings on Mother Russia is the treatment of the soldiers' mothers, which recalls earlier Soviet maternal imagery. These mothers, it is argued, 'must' stop the war in Chechnya. A whole issue of *Moskvichka* (no. 17, 1996) was devoted to this theme, and was rich in 'heroic' maternal imagery. Nearly all those who contributed thought that mothers had a special role to play, summed up especially well by a deputy of the Ingush state Duma, who argued that politics must be performed with clean hands, 'what can be cleaner than women's hands, mothers' hands?' Meanwhile, Eset Gorchkanova, the leader of the women's movement in Urus-Martan in Chechnya, appealed to Russian

mothers: 'Dear Russian women, take your sons from Chechnya and we will take our sons' - a plea which implies a boundless maternal authority.

Soviet propaganda and iconography was built upon pre-existing ideas regarding the significance of motherhood, and its centrality to the life of every woman. Such ideas continue to be expressed, as does the notion of the mother as the guarantor of world order. A good example of both these preoccupations is provided by Ekaterina Kozhukhova, writing in *Riibotnitsa* (no. 2, 1996): 'A Russian mother knew that the hour would come when God would ask her not what kind of boss she was at work, not how well dressed she was, nor what were her life achievements, but what kind of mother she was.' She also pointed out that the main beam supporting the traditional Russian house was known as the *matitsa*, a word derived from the Russian word for mother: 'the Russian woman spiritually preserved the [integrity of] the family and the fatherland'. In this sense, motherhood is still perceived as the natural and special mission of women. In contrast to this, one article (*Materinstvo*, no. 1, September 1996: 25) links the symbolic status of the mother in Russia with the popularity of *mat*, the Russian sub-language of curses, implying that the mother is both revered and hated. Igor Martynov argues that the increased use of *mat* is related to greater freedom and the sexualisation of society (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 27 July 1996: 4). This suggests that with the increasing emphasis on women as sexual beings, the emphasis on their maternal potential is weakening.

A common perception in the press is that hand in hand with the increasing sexualisation of Russian society has come a rise in violence: both tend to be viewed as unwelcome products of liberalisation. It is therefore not surprising that a major preoccupation of the press is the cruel and unjust treatment of children found in articles concerning abandonment; child murder, including that carried out by mothers; child prostitution; the sale of children; and other forms of criminal use of children by parents or guardians. For example, a typical article discussed illegal adoption, arguing, 'This is one business which the crisis won't ruin. In Russia there is a trade in children and there will continue to be a trade in children. As the criminal argues, "It is better to be sold to kind people than to be killed by your own mother" ' (*Moskovskii komsomolets*, 7 August 1996: 2). It is notable that the theme of adoption occurs more often in relation to discussions of the trade in children than it does in relation to infertility. Such issues were not discussed in the Soviet era, and in the rare cases when they were mentioned it was as cruel and bizarre exceptions.

Meanwhile, a relatively familiar subject from the early Soviet period -the means of dealing with orphans and abandoned children — also features in these discussions. Particular prominence is given to children's 'family' homes of the type in which abandoned children are given a 'mother' — in the best case a spinster with no children of her own — and a place in a house where she acts as their guardian. These articles reveal the extent to

which the private family has been rehabilitated: institutional care-givers are now praised for mimicking the family. 'Fathers' for these homes are not envisaged, however. It seems that fathers, in comparison to mothers, are still seen as something of a luxury.— Having said this, however, one of the articles in *Krest'yanka*, a magazine which is notable for the amount of attention it gives to fatherhood, does publicise the existence of a children's home headed by a man, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan who is quoted as saying, 'All 56 battles [in Afghanistan] are mine. And 57 children are also mine.' He can 'talk to each child as if he were his only [child], and he was his natural and only father'. The veteran claimed to find it 'incredibly interesting' (*Krest'yanka*, no. 8, 1996: 12).

Infertility is another new topic for the press. Although, as mentioned above, there is still a tendency to view motherhood as a universal and central part of any woman's life, those suffering from infertility are often advised to concentrate on other interests in life. Other suggestions are to adopt children, or, for example, to marry a single father.— At the same time, however, there is still a tendency to privilege biological motherhood over social motherhood. For example, an article entitled 'new maids' - about women who have chosen to become 'old maids' - is very negative about the behaviour of such women, some of whom adopt only daughters. The author of the article writes about this scathingly, arguing that this is not true motherhood because it doesn't involve bringing a new child into the world (*Rabotnitsa*, no. 9, 1996: 34). In cases where disputes arise between a surrogate mother and the biological mother, the journalist's sympathy usually lies with the latter. This attitude is clearly visible in an article by Tat'yana Gur'yanova and Tat'yana Ressina on this topic. They begin by asserting, 'Isn't it a joy for the mother to know that the child, even if it was carried by another woman, sometimes a complete stranger, is genetically a continuation of her line?' They then note that the views of the husband of the surrogate mother are not considered when the baby is handed over 'and thank God! ... the infertile couple ... at any moment risk losing the child with their own blood, which it has been so hard for them to obtain' (*Moskovskii komsomolets*, 18 June 1996: 7).

This review of the contemporary press makes it clear that a transformation in the approach to motherhood has occurred within Russian society. In particular, it is increasingly seen as an individual choice, responsibility and pleasure. The extent to which the state should support parents is a matter for debate, but the father is no longer viewed as a competitor with the state. He is perceived to have a legitimate place in the family, which has likewise been fully rehabilitated as an institution. None the less, motherhood is still privileged over the notion of parenthood, and a tendency to view motherhood as the destiny of women persists. The pro-natalist bias of the press is also still very much in place, as can be seen in the continuation of the Soviet tradition of seeing biological parenthood as

superior to social parenting, and the regularity with which despairing articles about the birth rate are published.

Motherhood, fatherhood, parenthood: the views of contemporary Russian women

The previous section leads us to ask the following: 'Are these changes in the public portrayal of motherhood, and the shift in state policy, reflected in the subjective perceptions of women?' Assessing this question presents some methodological problems; for although it is possible to chart changes in state policy and public discourse regarding motherhood, it is difficult to assess what impact these had on women in the past, and therefore to discuss the nature of any shifts which have occurred in the post-communist era. For example, it is clear that there has been a shift from the idea of motherhood as a duty to the state, towards the idea that it is an individual's choice and responsibility. What is harder to assess, however, is whether women themselves perceived having children as a civic duty in the Soviet era. Regardless of the propaganda directed at them, the idea that women did not see having children as an individual choice seems hard to sustain. Why, if this was the case, was the abortion rate so high? And if women meekly accepted their duty to be mothers, why was all the propaganda necessary?

Given such difficulties, it is not very easy to compare past and present attitudes of women. What I propose to do here, therefore, is take one 'hot issue' of the post-Soviet era - the role of the father - and examine how women are dealing with this. As mentioned above, by the end of the Soviet era, state support for mothers was reasonably well developed. In addition this, Soviet society was becoming less traditional and more tolerant. It is thus becoming progressively easier for women to 'go it alone', and in the 1980s the number of children born outside marriage rose sharply. Indeed, within this environment single motherhood became quite socially acceptable. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the two-parent family has become the new ideal, and fathers have been expected to fill the void by the state. Moreover, in line with the opinions expressed in the press, there is a widespread perception that it is now financially impossible to have children without male support, especially given the erosion of state benefits. This, for example, was a typical comment of one of my respondents, Raya, who was born in 1962. She has one daughter, but relinquished her son after his father left her in the fourth month of her pregnancy. She claimed, 'in an economic sense, it [motherhood] was easier before'. ... Now a child means that the wife won't work, that the husband one will work: that is, that there will be some deprivation in many areas. To divide one pay packet in two will be pretty difficult.' This comment highlights the beginnings of another potential cultural shift: the idea

that it is impossible to be a working mother. This possibly reflects the decline in pre-school provision, and also the fact that a whole section of the economy - the new private sector, where the highest wages are often to be found - does not honour the maternity leave provisions, which guarantee that a woman can return to her job within three years of having a child. In the light of such problems, having a man may seem to some women to be a prerequisite of having children.

Meanwhile, at an ideological level, the idea that two-parent families are a 'good thing' is in the ascendant." This had certainly had an impact on some of my respondents. They had for the most part grown up during the 1970s and many of them recall that to become a single mother at that time was acceptable. Indeed, some of them had even planned on it, as the following quotations reveal:

As a child it definitely seemed to me that if the role of the man was ... simply to create the child biologically, then it's really strange, why do you have to live with him afterwards? You've also got to get on with him, wash his socks, and it's not even clear what you get out of it. Not everyone wants that.

(Irina)

Yes, I always thought that I didn't need a man, a husband, no way, I just needed a child.

(Marina)

Both these women had, however, markedly altered their views with time. Irina is now married with one child which she had with the help of ferriJin treatment, while Marina is also married with a child which she had within wedlock. They commented:

Then I began to want to involve a man in this thing, and it suddenly seemed to me that it is unfair and it is not in everyone's interest [that men are not included], for a man, because nobody needs him, for a woman, because she is overworked, and for the child, because it would be better for the child to be able to communicate with a father. In addition, the economic situation has changed. And, also, I began to meet these sorts of men in real life, the good men, who, as I found out, want this themselves.

(Irina)

And then I thought - well, OK, I do not want a husband, but did I ask the child about that? Did I ask him whether he needs a father or not? If, for example, I asked him and he said that there was no need (for a father) then that is another thing. And, also, if something were to happen to me, my mother is not very healthy, so, then, would a child

have no close relatives in this situation? While ... [with a father] he will have a father and this father's parents.

(Marina)

Obviously, the role of personal factors in these changes in perception cannot be ruled out, but they have none the less taken place within a conducive environment: these women have moved with the times.

There is a big problem with the putative return of the father, however. Are men ready for the new role which they are expected to play? Many women would answer a categorical 'no' to this question, believing that single motherhood is still preferable to involvement with a man. Vera, a single mother and founder of a self-help organisation called 'Only Mummy' comprised of fifty single mothers, was unequivocal in her response when asked whether she thought it was important to have a man around as a father for the child:

Trousers? You don't need trousers. That is, the sort of man who's simply in the house, but he doesn't give anything to the children, not money, not joy, nor a feeling of protection, you don't need that sort -you're better off without.

Lyudmila, a woman who loved her job, was opposed to marriage and as yet had no children, had a similar opinion:

What do you need that sort of husband for if he can't even stand beside you? One of my friends got married, and he (her husband) couldn't even stand up in the registry office; he was so drunk that he fell down.

Similarly, Nina, who was married with eight children, when asked why her mother had not married for a second time, replied: 'What's the point of getting married - to be beaten? Once is enough.' Galya, meanwhile, who had adopted a daughter because of infertility, spoke approvingly of the conscious decision of one of her friends to go it alone:

She had already lost hope of getting married, and decided to have a child. [Her] mother was in shock at first [but] now she's resigned to it. N. was coming to this [idea] for two years and now it's matured. She's already 29.

These sceptical views of the benefits of having a man around provide some explanation of why, despite the prevalence of the idea that it is impossible for women to survive alone, the proportion of children being born outside marriage has not declined since the 1980s.

This does not mean, however, that some women do not suffer for the lack of a man. With only one exception, all the mothers I interviewed who had given up their children at birth had done so either for economic reasons or because of a lack of support (whether from the father or a wider social network). Many relinquishing mothers and those who planned to relinquish but then re-thought had ended up having an unwanted child as a result of a 'struggle for a man'. One woman, Nastya, had given birth to not one but three children in the (fruitless) struggle to catch the same man. She ended up relinquishing her third child after the father cut off contact with her. As Raya, the relinquishing mother quoted above (p. 47), recognised: 'The idea came into my head that perhaps it happened so that he wouldn't leave ... that if I have a child he'd stay with me, and all that.' In other cases where either the child is important in its own right, or the mother has the resources to support herself and her child, the 'struggle for a man' will result in single motherhood, as it did in the case of Vera, the organiser of 'Only Mummy'. This, however, can be difficult. The state no longer has a policy of trying to keep mother and child together as an 'indivisible whole'. The implications of this are illustrated by the story of Tamara who was planning to relinquish her daughter at birth. On seeing the child, however, she felt a 'maternal instinct' and changed her mind. All the same, she was obliged to put the child into state care with the option of taking her back within a year since she was a student with no money and nowhere to live and keep the child.

The above discussion implies that the new family ideal in which the man plays a key role does not as yet match reality. Women are continually disappointed by men, something which can result in a mother relinquishing her child if she does not have sufficient support, or can lead to single motherhood. This is not surprising, given that the Soviet state had usurped the role of men in the private sphere to such an extent that it had all but ceased to exist. The retreat of the state, meanwhile, though it may have contributed to raising women's expectations, has not had an immediate impact on male behaviour. As Tarkhova implies in her interesting reflections on fatherhood, it is getting men 'off the sofa' and inducing them to 'make an effort' which is the problem for would-be female partners (*Materinstvo*, no. 1, September 1996: 91). In this sense, the future of motherhood, fatherhood and parenthood is still in the balance, with the gulf between the new ideals and the existing reality likely to do little to resolve the gender tensions bequeathed by the Soviet state.

Notes

- 1 The journal changed its name several times during the pre-war period. Between 1926-32 it was published under the title *Okhrana tnaterinstva i mladenchestvt* ('The Protection of Motherhood and Infancy'); the 1933 issues and the first three issues of 1934 were entitled *Yasli* ('Nursery'), while for the remainder of 1934 it was known as *Materinstvo i mladenchestvo* ('Motherhood and Infancy'). Between 1935-41 it was published under the title, *Voprosy*

materinstva i mladenchestva ('Questions of Motherhood and Infancy'). I use the latter title here because it is the library catalogue listing.

I The following publications were monitored: *Argument? i fakty, Dochki-maleri, Izvestia, Komsomol'skaya pravda, Kul'tura, Kuranty, Megapolis-ekspres, Moskvichka, Moskovskaya pravda, Moskovskii komsomolets, Moskovskie novosti, Pravda, Pravda-S, Nezavisimaya gazeta, Rabochaya tribuna, Semeinyi soviet, Semya, Segodnya, Sobesednik, Sudarushka, Trud, Vechernii klub, Vechernyaya Moskva, Vek, and Zavtra.*

3 These commissions already existed, although in the 1920s their function had been to decide who would receive *free* abortions.

This point has also been recently made by Fuqua (1996: 19), Vishnevskii (1998: 127), and Wood (1997: 106-7). Wood notes that Lenin castigated 'neo-Malthusianism' as 'a tendency of the egotistical and unfeeling bourgeois couple' and rejected all teachings of family limitation (Wood, 1997: 107), while Fuqua and Vishnevskii note that the 1920 decree legalising abortion was explicitly written with the aim of protecting the interests of *the collective* rather than the individual woman. Abortion was still noted in the decree to be 'an evil for the collective' (Vishnevskii, 1998: 127). [SA] See, for example, Seltskii (1927).

In the 1920s the folk-healers were the subject of hostile propaganda campaigns, with posters boasting such slogans as 'the folk-healer will cripple your health'. In the posters peasant women, symbolised by headscarves tied under their chins, were typically shown risking their health with the *babka*, while conscious workers, their scarves tied behind their heads, were shown visiting the clean, Bolshevik clinic (Bernstein, 1998). [SA]

In fact, however, though inadequate feeding may have been part of the problem, infant mortality among foundlings consigned to the (not so tender) care of peasant wet nurses was lower than in state institutions. A 1930 article with this question as its title came down firmly in favour of the former option (Erman, 1930).

See, for example, Mitina (1926) and Klimanova (1926).

The long hours themselves were nothing new. As Barbara Engel notes, in the pre-revolutionary period peasant children born during the busy summer months - known as 'the time of suffering' (*stradnaya pora*) - were far less likely to survive, since their mothers took them into the fields with them while they worked, leaving them unsupervised in the shade and returning to them rarely for brief feeds (Engel, 1994: 49).

With the launch of the first five-year plan childcare itself was to be put on an 'industrial' footing: for example, one article of this era argued that it was necessary to transform factory nurseries into 'another form of workshop, a nursery workshop for the factory' (Feder, 1931).

The importance attached to the provision of uniform socialisation can be adduced from the recognition that even class enemies required nurseries: Kopelyanskaya (1934), for example, in an article typical of the purge era, earnestly stressed the need for nurseries to be established in prisons. 'Only you need your child' was a comment that I heard, made by a doctor in a Moscow clinic. To my mind, it sums up the official attitude to motherhood in post-communist Russia.

See, for example, 'Put my mother in prison' (*Vechernyaya Moskva*, 7 August 1996: 1).

This is an attitude which is often manifested in relation to the decision to have any children at all. As one article put it, 'in order to decide to have a child it is necessary not only to be brave, but also not to be poor' (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 1 June 1996: 1).

- 16 The retreat of the state is also highlighted by the discussion of new private means of protecting the rights of children - such as the conclusion of agreements regarding alimony, prenuptial agreements and the like. See, for example, Elena Mushkina in *Vek*, no. 31, 9-15 August 1996: 12.
- 17 See, for example, *Sem'ya*, no. 31: 6.
- 18 Examples of this are the article by Anastasia Pleshakova, 'A person is bora' (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 1 June 1996: 1), and Marina Kupratsevich's, 'You don't have to be Venus to give birth in the sea surf, an article about giving birth in the Black Sea (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 7 August 1996: 1).
- 19 See, for example, Marina Korchagina in *Nezai'simaya gazeta*, 23 July 1996: 8.
- 20 It should be noted, however, that some authors have begun to rebel against the idea that the mission of Mother Russia is to save the world. As one author ironically notes: 'Enough of [this idea that] we carry the world on our shoulders! If we move away it won't fall down!' (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 27 July 1996: 4).
- 21 Other examples of the preoccupation with cruelty are the articles, 'Put my mother in prison' (*Vechernyaya Moskva*, 7 August 1996: 1); 'Hunting butterflies with a knife', an article about a schizophrenic mother who killed her sons with a knife (*Sobesednik*, 30 August 1996: 7); and 'Concentration camp in Pervomaika', a story of serious parental neglect (*Trud*, 3 August 1996: 2).
- 22 An example of this is an article entitled 'Mamka, mama, mamochka' (*Moskovskii komsomolets*, 26 July 1996: 4).
- 23 For example, an article entitled 'A twist of fate' relates how an infertile young woman began living with a single father whose wife had been killed in a car accident (*Domashnii ochag*, September 1996).
- 24 For a more detailed examination of the women's motivation for decisions regarding motherhood, see Issoupova (forthcoming).
- 25 It should be noted that Irina Tartakovskaya's review of the press in 1984 (this volume) revealed a diversity of views regarding single motherhood. *Izvestka* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya* may have favoured the two-parent family, but the youth paper *Komsomol'skaya pravda* glorified the single worker-mother.

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