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The Historic Role That Soviet Women Played in Defeating the Nazis in World War II

How the West Ignores Women as Actors in Otherized Societies: An Unraveling of the Logos of the Soviet Amazons

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In light of the International Women's Day celebration, below is an article that exposes the role of women during the Second World War that has been hidden from the mainstream media.

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Due to Western ethnocentric views, the woman soldiers, sailors, and pilots of Russia and other otherized (demeaned, alienated, vilified, and demonized) societies, such as China, Iran, Libya, and Syria, remain invisible while Western women serving in Western military forces are lionized as showpieces of equality between the sexes.

This text provides a sociological overview of one of the largest known events in history involving woman combatants: Soviet women in what is ethno-geocentrically referred to in the West as the "Eastern Front" during the Second World War (or the Great Patriotic War, as it is called in Russia, Ukraine, and the republics of the former Soviet Union). By itself or sui generis, the role of Soviet women in defending places like Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia refutes any views that women are only able to fight in Western military forces because of the myth that they enjoy a certain level of equality. This text, however, goes beyond such a rebuttal by endeavouring to explain the logos behind the mobilization and creation of Soviet woman combatants by examining the roles of societal events, governmental policies, and ideology. Its goal is not only to illustrate that the achievements of women in otherized societies are ignored, but to also challenge the views that woman (unlike men) are simply maternal creatures tied to life that cannot form a large presence in the armed forces.

The Women of the Blessed versus the Women of the Wretched of the Earth

In regards to social rights, “The cause is effect: you are rich because you are white; you are white because you are rich,” according to Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Similarly, with regards to women’s rights the cause is effect: you are strong because you are a man; you are a man because you are strong.

When pictures of Lieutenant Helen Seymour of the British Royal Air Force (RAF) coming out of her Eurofighter Typoon jet in Gioia del Colle, Italy emerged in March 2011, during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign against Libya, it was hailed by the media as a triumph for women in the world of military affairs and combat. The British would showcase how woman had made a great leap forward when Lieutenant Seymour was announced to be one of only ten female pilots using the RAF’s Typoon or Tornado jets. *The Guardian* would explain in an article titled “Woman pilot in Libya combat mission” (March 23, 2011) by Nick Hopkins the following: “Women have been flying fast jets in the RAF since 1994, but no more than 10 are flying the Tornado or Typhoon at the moment. However, the number is on the rise, and about 12% of personnel in the RAF are now women.”

While London’s *Evening Standard* in an article titled “Top girls – the women patrolling the sky for the RAF” (March 25, 2003) by Jasmine Gardner would give a historical overview of women in the RAF:

> And, like [Lieutenant] Julie Gibson who was the RAF’s first operational female pilot in 1990, [Lieutenant] Kirsty Moore who became the RAF’s first woman on the Red Arrows team in 2009 and [Lieutenant] Juliette Fleming who is one half of the first all-female Tornado crew with her weapons systems officer, Squadron Leader Nikki Thomas, Seymour’s “first” has made us stand to attention.

These media reports that projected the concept of equality among the sexes and the overall theme of women in combat deserve sociological attention, including scrutiny through the use of the plethora of research methods that fall under the school of critical discourse analysis (CRA). This text aims to flush out the ethnocentric and exceptionalist attitudes and notions that are behind the ideas that women in what can be called largely Western or Western-oriented societies, such as in the United States of America or the State of Israel, have reached a level of equality to fight alongside men. The achievements of women in the armed forces of countries like Libya, which was ironically being bombed by the RAF at the time, and the People's Republic of China largely goes unnoticed in the West. Through an exercise of historical sociological analysis that examines Soviet women as combatants and the logos that allowed them entry into the world of warfare, this text aims to show that woman have not only played historically important roles in combat, but to also demonstrate how the role of women in Otherized societies in not acknowledged in the West.

The Soviet Amazons

Although the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was a patriarchal society at its roots, unlike their counter-parts in Western Europe and North America, women in Soviet society were far more involved in societal development outside of the home, commerce, statecraft, nation-building, and, finally when the time came, warfare. These women were much more intimately involved in their country's defence and frontline combat than the woman of any other combating society in World War II or the Great Patriotic War as it was called in the USSR. Moreover, Soviet women went to the Eastern Front to fight against Germany and its Axis allies in direct combat roles that included bomber pilots, tankers, machine gunners, infanteers, and grenadiers. 800,000 women went directly to the Eastern Front, which was really a mere fraction of all those who volunteered and wanted to go (Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998). 520,000 of these women served as regular troops in the Red Army, while another 300,000 served in combat and anti-aircraft formation (Krylova 2010). By 1943 about 8% of Red Army personnel were women, which meant that almost one out of ten people in uniform was a woman, and at World War II's end (1945), young women composed 70% of all Young Communist soldiers (Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998; Krylova 2010). This was a period in which many Soviet fighting women rouse to fame and became Heroes/Heroines of the Soviet Union, from the Ukrainian sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko to the pilot Nadezhda Popova, another Ukrainian, who served in an infamous bomber regiment called the "Night Witches" by the Germans. This was also not the first time that the Germans faced women from Russian/Soviet society; in the First World War the Germans had fought the Women's Battalion of Death led by the famous Maria Bochkareva/Botchlareva (née Frolkova) from Siberia (Botchlareva 1918). The performative acts of masculinity and femininity were challenged by these Soviet warriors; war and violence were clearly not an exclusive male space with such a large female Soviet presence.

The logos behind the Soviet woman combatant and what made her are broadly tied to the revolutionary ideology of the Bolsheviks and a stream of succeeding historical events that are tied to upheavals and conflict in the Russian Empire and succeeding USSR. Firstly, as a result of the long period of fighting the number of men in Russian/Soviet society had steadily been decreasing. Added to this were the country's expanding industry and its need for workers. This allowed large numbers of Soviet women to take the places of men in traditionally masculine jobs. Structurally women in the Soviet Union were integrated into the work force (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Clement 1979; Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998; Field 1968; Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997). Before the rise of the

Bolsheviks there was a famous proverb in Russian society, *ne zhenat, ne chelovek*, which meant “not married, not human” (Stites 1978:8). This changed with the Bolsheviks who at least ideologically saw marriage and the bourgeois family as entities tied to the exploitation of woman. The communist ideology of the Bolsheviks was also radically open to the emancipation of woman and their integration into political life. Bolshevism introduced new laws and programs aimed at integrating and resocializing women while making them politically, socially, legally, and economically equal to men in a militantly socialist society. Clement (1979:*xii*) calls this “the great Soviet experiment in female emancipation,” which she describes as “one of the most far-reaching efforts to free women ever undertaken.” Several back-to-back wars and internal war also had added to the political activation of women and later to the massive mobilization of woman when Germany attacked in 1941; these events start with the Crimean War then proceed with the Russo-Japanese War, the First World War, and the Russian Civil War and end with the entry of the Soviet Union into the Second World War in 1941. All these things were the variables that produced the social environment needed to unleash the potential of the Soviet woman as women-at-arms or female warriors fighting Hitler’s forces. With the end to the long period of conflict and the increasing ideological pragmatism of the Communist Party, however, the momentum that led to the creation of the Soviet woman soldier or *zhenshchina-boets* slowed down and saw some reversals (Krylova 2010). Demographics and female reproductive capacities and fertility ultimately undermined the socialist/communist program to mobilization the woman citizen.

At least in romanticized views, the traditional role of women in the Russian Empire, before its replacement by the Soviet Union with the rise of Bolshevism, was confined to the domestic space and can be summed up as “keepers of the hearth” (Bisha *et al*. 2002). The historian Hayden ([1979] 1984:2) writes that most women in the Russian Empire had very little control over their lives and that countless songs and stories in their culture(s) were about “young women being sold in marriage to strangers and brutally used as little more than household slaves by their husbands and in-laws.” There, however, was much more to the collection of Finish, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, Caucasian, Lithuanian, German, Turkic, and other ethnic women that comprised the ethno-linguistic mosaic of the Russian Empire. Although it was barely recognized, women historically were among the most noted authors of Russian literature in the imperial period (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Tosi 2007).[1] The involvement of women from their society in war was also not unheard of. Women like Varvara Bakunina accompanied her husband in 1796 to the Caucasus as the Russians fought to annex Dagestan, Armenia, Karabakh, and the region around Baku from the Iranians after Iran restored its control over Georgia (Bisha *et al*. 2002). Women in Russia also fought in wars as far back as the War of 1812 against Napoléon Bonaparte’s Grande Armée; the most famous account being those of the memoirs of Nadia/Nadezhda Durova who served in the Russian Imperial Army and retired as a cavalry captain (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Meyer 1991). Under Catherin II an entire woman’s military company was put together composed of “noblewomen and the daughters of Balaklave Greeks [from Crimea]” (Meyer 1991:219).

War, Liberalization, and the Emergence of the Woman Question

The Crimean War (Eastern War; 1853-1856) against the Ottomans, Britain, and France arguably opened the doors for civic improvement and modernization in the Russian Empire through what are called the Great Reforms (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Hayden [1979] 1984; Stites 1978). It was during the Crimean War that Russian women for the first time served as

military nurses and as a result then went on to work in the fields of professional medicine, teaching, and aid work (Bisha *et al*. 2002). Although the bulk of the female population were specifically not targeted, the programs of the Great Reform recognized that to modernize Russia the country's entire population needed access to government services and programs, such as legal bodies (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Hayden [1979] 1984). This actually prompted a staggering amount of peasant women to use the newly established peasant cantonal courts, which alarmed supporters of the patriarchal family (Bisha *et al*. 2002). It also led to women attending lectures at St. Petersburg University in 1859 and to the establishment of secondary schools for women in 1860, which were available to all social classes in theory (Hayden [1979] 1984). The "women's question" (called the *zhenski vopros* in the Russian language) emerged in this period, as a result of Russia's defeat by the Anglo-Franco-Ottoman Triple Alliance and was brought to the forefront by intellectuals like M.L. Mikhailov (publishing in *Sovremennik* from 1858-1861) who argued for education programs as the key to the emancipation of women" (Hayden [1979] 1984).[2] During this period of liberalization the universities were slowly opened up to women on the basis of the need of professionals and to prevent upper class women from coming back to the Russian Empire with radical ideas from studying in foreign universities; women's educational institutes would also be setup in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa (Hayden [1979] 1984). Only briefly from 1891 to 1894 would women be barred from universities (Hayden [1979] 1984).

The feminist movement in the Russian Empire began to decline in the 1890s, because it had successfully reached its objective of opening up education women as upper and middle class women gained more access to education (Hayden [1979] 1984).[3] It is also important to note that these opportunities were limited to the higher classes and that the feminist movements were classist and represented the upper and middle class women, who make a small fraction of their society's female population, and did not represent the peasants and working class (*narod*).

The defeat of the Russian Empire at the hands of the Japanese in East Asia during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) proved to accelerate the trends and demands for civic reform. It proved to be a turning point for all Russian society, including the empire's non-Russian majority and women (Mandel 1984). During the war women organized feminist groups dually opposing the war with Japan and demanding equal rights (Edmondson 1992). The country's autocratic system under the Romanovs would be dented and political liberalization and mobilization would sweep the country. This would provide one of the initial impetuses inside the Russian Empire for the socialist/communist activities that had been sweeping European societies further west. The unfolding of these events, including their effect on women, can be summed up in the following words:

> In the political realm, the forces of reform, revolution, and conservatism first met in violent confrontation in the revolution of 1905-1906, an event to which Russia's loss in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 contributed significantly. Nicholas II was forced to create a legislative body, albeit one with limited power, to break the revolutionary coalition. From 1906-1914 the Duma, the new Russian legislative assembly, regularly included the questions of suffrage for women and the improvement of the legal and civil rights of women among the issues it debated. Among the political parties that emerged from the revolution were several explicitly feminist organizations, reflecting a split among politically active women between those who advocated separate organizations to promote issues of importance to women and those [women] who believed that real equality for women could be achieved only through a social (and socialist) revolution (Bisha et al. 2002:10).[4]

The “women’s question” would mature as an increasingly important issue as feminists, radicals, and liberals all looked for ways to find a solution to the problems of women in the Russian Empire (Hayden [1979] 1984; Stites 1978).

The debates and experiences of this period would later be reflected in the Soviet Zhenotdel or Women’s Bureau/Department inside the Communist Party. According to historical research, “[t]he program and methods employed by the Zhenotdel to improve the status of Russian/Soviet women derived basically from two sources: the theory and traditions of the Western Marxist movement and the experience of Russian liberalism and radicalism in the eight-year period preceding the 1917 revolution” (Hayden [1979] 1984:*vii*). Broadly, these views were a philosophical continuation of the arguments of Enlightenment thinkers, like François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire) and Denis Diderot for legal equality, and Charles-Louis de Secondat (Baron Montesquieu) about the role played by education in gender inequality (Goldman 1993).

Divisions between socialists/communists and non-socialists/communists would also emerge by the time the Great War or World War I (1914-1918) erupted. A great schism between the Bolsheviks and the feminists inside Russian/Soviet society would result:

> The remaining feminist organizations plunged wholeheartedly into support for the war effort, hoping thereby to gain new supporters for their cause of women’s rights by demonstrating their loyalty and usefulness in [supporting the state] to win the war. The hypocrisy and opportunism of their actions have been aptly described by Richard Stites: ‘All over Russia, feminists who before the war had warned that only women’s suffrage would save mankind from the scourge of war now intoned hymns for victory.’ This chauvinist behavior on the part of the feminists was presented by the Bolsheviks as decisive proof of the bourgeois character of the feminist movement (Hayden [1979] 1984:80).

The Russian Civil War resulted in broad efforts to mobilize woman as militant communists and to enlist in combat support positions for the Red Army (Hayden [1979] 1984). Although women played a predominately secondary role in direct combat, during the Russian Civil War the role of women in the Red Army as partisan fighters was sensationalized, romanticized, and celebrated by the Bolsheviks to encourage women to embrace communism; the defence of Petrograd — the new Soviet name for St. Petersburg — against the White Army involved numerous women and the putting down of the Kronstadt uprising involved 1,300 Red Army women; the women’s theoretical-based publication *Kommunistka* reported that in 1920 about 1,850 Red Army women were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners by the White Army and foreign armies from places like the US, UK, Canada, France, and Japan assisting them (Hayden [1979] 1984).

The Emancipation of Women and the Soviet Use of Marxist Theory

Early Marxists have been faulted for a lack or deficit of sex and gender analysis. This does not mean that Marxist theory is totally void of any meaningful analyses of gender and sex or is theoretical incompatible with them. Theoretically, it is the opposite. *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Friedrich Engels and *Women Under Socialism* by August Bebel, which were both published in the 1880s, make the Marxist position on patriarchy very clear.[5] Before this Engels and Marx, either separately or in collaboration as co-authors, also published several works concerning the exploitation of women in capitalist societies in the 1840s.

Firstly, the criticism of the so-called "community of women" (the concept that all women in a utopian futuristic communist society would become sexually available to all men) by Marx and Engels as "thoughtless communism" is interpreted as some type of support for patriarchy by their critics, when both social thinkers actually opposed it on the grounds that it "would reduce women to a piece of communal and common property and would represent merely a passage from marriage (a form of exclusive private property) to general prostitution to the whole community" (Hayden [1979] 1984:29). What Marx and Engels are criticizing is the transformation of women from being the property of one man to the property of all males and not women being given the choice to have sexual relations with whosoever they please; the two Germans were not criticizing the ability of women to have agency in sexual affairs, but the lack of agency they would have as part of some type of futuristic harem. *The Communist Manifesto* also clarifies the fact that they believed that the "community of women" already existed under capitalism (Engels and Marx [1888] 2012). This reduced women to property and led to monogamous marriages, unequal rights between spouses, and marriage as a means of concentrating capital (Luryi 1980).

Secondly, Marx and Engels are critiqued for saying that because of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution the domestic function of women as mothers and wives was affected and eroded. Engels wrote that industrialization and capitalism were breaking the family apart; he wrote the following in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*:

> When women work in factories the most important result is the dissolution of family ties. If a woman works for 12 or 13 hours a day and her husband is employed either in the same establishment or in some other works, what is the fate of the children? They lack parental care and control ... this can be seen by the increase in the number of accidents to little children which occur in the factory district (Field 1968:9).[6]

Statements like this have been evaluated idiosyncratically to criticize Engels and Marx. Such critiques fail to take a holistic account of the duo's work. The two argued that the domestic and genderderized roles of women, including their oppression, were a result of the proto-type of the class struggle and one can find constant references to the oppression of women by capitalism in their works (Field 1968; Hayden [1979] 1984). Boston University sociologist and Harvard Russian studies expert Mark Field (1968:8-9) writes:

> Marx and Engels regarded the division of labor between men and women for the procreation of children as the first division of labor. Engels postulated that the first instance of class antagonism to appear in history arose from the antagonism between men and women in monogamy and that the first example of class oppression was that of the female by the male, and was caused by the existence of private property. Seen through the prism of the Marxist optic, the battle of the sexes was regarded as the prototype of the class struggle—man appropriated and enslaved women as his means for the production of "legitimate" heirs to whom his private property could be transmitted. Hence the institution of monogamy, the strong sanctions against the adulteress (but not against the philanderer), the double standard (in favor of men only), the existence and encouragement of prostitution, and the stigmatization of the unmarried mother and her offspring (the "natural" or illegitimate child).

Moreover, the following passage should also vindicate the two Germans from accusations that they ignored women in their theoretical work:

> The implications, of course, [of the notes of Marx and the text of Engels about the family] were quite clear. Women had not always played a subordinate role in human society; thus there was no reason to believe that there was anything "natural" about the inferior status of women in modern society. If women had not always been oppressed in the past, they need not continue to be oppressed indefinitely into the future. According to Engels, 'That woman was the slave of man at the commencement of society is one of the most absurd notions that have come down to us from the period of Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.' Similarly, the idea that the individual patriarchal family had existed since the dawn of history was equally discredited [for Engels and Marx] by the discovery of matrilineal kinship systems: '…all written history so far takes as its point of departure the absurd assumption, which became inviolable in the eighteenth century, that the monogamian individual family, an institution scarcely older than civilization, is the nucleus around which society and the state gradually crystallized'" (Hayden [1979] 1984:33-34).

This passage is important because it not only challenges the notion of the patriarchic state, but it also challenges the biological deterministic views that condemned women to a natural state of inferiority. Both Marx and Engels considered the emancipation of women historically inevitable (Buckley 1985). From the Marxist theoretical standpoint, patriarchy will not be eliminated until there is a classless society.

Marxists saw the "woman question" as a part of the larger issues of social justice and equality (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997; Rosalind1998; Stites 1978). They did not see the inequality of sexes as outside of the same realm of exploitation that workers faced. The prostitution of women was even called inhuman and a particular expression of the general prostitution of all workers to capitalism by Marx (Hayden [1979] 1984). Finally, Marx even quoted the French philosopher François Fourier by saying that the extent of women's emancipation was the natural measuring stick of general emancipation in a society (Hayden [1979] 1984).

The contemporary family was seen as a bourgeoisie construct, under which the man controlled the woman in every way and she was forced to be dependent on him, that would melt away (Engels and Marx [1888] 2012; Field 1968; Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997). Marx stated:

> However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women […] creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and the relations between the sexes (Field 1968:10).

A higher family, where all were brother and sister, would form according to the early Marxists. Marx called this the "new family" and the Bolsheviks called it the "family-society" (Field 1968; Goldman 1993). It would be this concept of transcending the old family, and thus dissolving marriage, that would be central to the Bolshevik project to emancipate women in the USSR. It is these theoretical views that in part made joining the communist movement in its revolutionary stages an act of both personal and sexual liberation for many young women (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997; Stites 1978).

Marxist Ideology in Practice under the Bolsheviks

When they took power, one prominent Bolshevik leader would say that their revolution would be remembered in human history for actively involving women unlike the French Revolution (Stites 1979:317). Prior to the Soviet social engineering programs, historical records contain little evidence, aside from Peter the Great's so-called Westernization/Europeanization programs, of direct government attempts to openly determine the role of women in Russian/Soviet society (Bisha *et al*. 2002; O'Malley 2007).[7] The takeover's effects on woman can be summed as thus:

> [It was] the first time in modern history that the government of any modern nation officially announced its intention to carry out a full-scale program for women's emancipation. At a time when women's movements in the West limited themselves primarily to demands for a broader political enfranchisement of women, the fledgling Soviet government granted women full and equal political participation at all levels of government. Moreover, the Soviet regime in addition proposed a radical transformation of women's conditions of daily life, which would include the establishment of a broad network of social services designed to 'socialize' women's household labor, liberalization of marriage and divorce laws, and the setting up of 'affirmative action' programs for the purpose of drawing women into government, political organizations, trade unions, factory management, and the professions and skilled trade. This was the most radical program for female equality advanced by any national government in modern times (Hayden [1979] 1984:iv).

Dedicated communist ideologues like Inessa Armand and Alexandra/Aleksandra Kollontai, who was chosen by Lenin to run the Commissariat for Social Welfare, would establish the Zhenotdel for women (Clement 1979; Hayden [1979] 1984). Along with the Komsomol (Youth Branch of the Communist Party) and the Communist Party, the Zhenotdel would come to form one of the three most important organizations of communist power in Soviet society. It is worth quoting Clement (1979:*ix*) about the life of Kollontai, who was a remarkable Soviet revolutionary and thinker:

> She participated in the campaigns for female emancipation and she made a contribution to the literature on the woman question by exploring the relationship between sexuality and liberation. Yet Kollontai vehemently denied that she was a feminist; rather, she saw herself as a Marxist revolutionary who sought freedom for women as part of the freeing of all humankind from the control of capitalism. Thus she set herself apart from these other members of her generation who pursued reforms for women, becoming instead a socialist...

Before the Bolsheviks came into power, wife-beating was officially sanctioned by customary law and the dominance of women by their husbands and fathers was upheld by the imperial state (Hayden [1979] 1984; Stites 1978). In the words of Hayden ([1979] 1984:2), "a wife was obliged to obey her husband as the head of the family, to abide with him in love, honor, and unlimited obedience, and to render him every satisfaction and affection." Nor could women fully work and getting a divorce was nearly impossible for a woman (Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997; Stites 1978). Women could not even practice law if they had degrees, except in Siberia, until the Bolshevik takeover (Hayden [1979] 1984).

As an application of Marxist theory, marriage laws were changed by the Bolsheviks starting in 1917 with the view of establishing legal and social equality (Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997). In 1918 the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet (VTsIK) ratified the Complete Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship which "constituted nothing

less than the most progressive family legislation the world had ever seen" (Goldman 1993:51) Under Soviet law women and men were now legally equal and couples could now pick the surname of either spouse, only civil marriage was recognized, divorce could be obtained upon simple request by either partner, both men and women had equal responsibility for their children, mutual support for one another was required in cases where one partner could not work, and neither partner was compelled to move around the country with the other (Buckley 1985; Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997 ; Stites 1978).[8] As early as 1930, the Soviet judiciary even clarified that common residence was not needed for a married couple (Luryi 1980). Property laws, which favoured men where now erased by wiping out the concept of illegitimate children; all children born within or outside wedlock had equal status and were entitled to full support by both parents (Buckley 1985; Goldman 1993; Pushkareva 1997). Women also retained full control of their earnings and both sexes kept all of their own property (Goldman 1993). These new laws probably even encouraged more intermingling among the different ethnic groups of the Soviet Union. With the exception of the Yucatan in Mexico from 1923 to 1926, the USSR was the only country in the world with full freedom of divorce (Stites 1978). Furthermore, it should be noted that Soviet laws were formulated through an internal Bolshevik consensus between more radical-minded and more conservative-minded members, otherwise M.A Reisner suggested that children even have rights to manage property and N.A. Roslavets from Ukraine objected strongly to registered marriage as opposed to "socialist freedom" (Goldman 1993). De facto unions would also receive the same rights as registered marriages in 1925 (Goldman 1993),

Women were given the right to vote in 1917 (Pushkareva 1997). They had the rights to employment and education, the rights to govern and manage the state equally with men, and encouraged to be active citizens who would better themselves to help society and not be uneducated chattel subordinate to their society's men. Three major publications for women, along with women's pages (*stranichki*) in most publications were organized (Hayden [1979] 1984)[9]

The new Soviet Land Code adopted in 1922 abolished all private property, but allowed for the peasants to maintain reformed agricultural communes that were democratized through a new voting system that included women and women, regardless of age or in-law status, were also given ownership rights within the commune's family units (*dvor*) which no longer rested on their husbands or sons (Goldman 1993:152-163; Pushkareva 1997). Women actually began to attain "undisputed authority" in rural society (Pushkareva 1997).

Women were encouraged to work in factories and outside of the home and as a result the stereotype of the house wife does not appear to be prevalent in Soviet society (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984). The economic independence of woman was pivotal for ensuring the emancipation of Soviet women; women were to be employed and to work. This was not only a communist idea. The early feminist movements in Czarist Russia were involved with charity work, even they as non-communists began to move towards ideas that it was important to make women economically independent (Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997). One such project was Peter/Petr Lavrov's "Society of Female Labour," which aimed at reducing prostitution by allowing women to support themselves and their children through opening up employment opportunities (Hayden [1979] 1984). Soviet sociological studies also found a link between prostitution and unemployment (Goldman 1993:119-120)

The Bolsheviks recognized that woman still had to do a double-shift through what was called a double-burden of public and private work (Buckley 1985; Field 1968; Goldman 1993). Their

national project intended to transfer household work from the private sphere to the public arena by turning unpaid household work into paid communal work, such as by creating communal dining halls, having nurseries, and public laundries (Buckley 1985; Field 1968; Goldman 1993; Pushkareva 1997). This was grounded in Marxist ideology; *The German Ideology* outlined domestic communalism as a precondition for women's emancipation (Goldman 1993). Maternity leave was also introduced to make sure women would not have to choose between biological reproduction and their work outside of the home (Goldman 1993; Pushkareva 1997). The historian Goldman (1993) calls many of these policies a result of "war communism" due to their connection to industrial output, which depended heavily on Soviet women.

The 1885 Criminal Code of the Russian Empire designated abortion as murder and banned it and the Bolsheviks originally forbid it too, but it was still widely practiced in Russian/Soviet society and the Russian Group of the International Union of Criminologists in the city of St. Petersburg called for its decriminalization in 1914 while the Soviet Supreme Court even acknowledged the pervasiveness of abortion by exonerating a mother who was found guilty of murder by a lower court in early 1920; it would be legalized in November 1920 by both the Soviet Health and Justice Ministries as a means of protecting women from hurting themselves by trying to conduct their own abortions or being exploited by abortionist profiteers (Buckley 1985; Engelstein 1991; Goldman 1991, 1993; Stites 1978).[10] Fertility was important for Soviet officials; the subject of abortion always saw tensions between those who saw it as a public issue of population and women who did not want extra children.

Social Statics and Social Dynamics: Tradition versus the Woman Proletariat

There was a break with tradition in Russian/Soviet society, which started due to capitalism and industrialization. When the Bolsheviks took over Russian/Soviet society, the country's industrialization would be amplified until it reached a rapid pace during the Stalinist era. They first implemented their industrial programs through a process called "labour militarization" during the internal fighting. The ending of the Russian Civil War, however, ended a period of prolonged fighting that started with World War I and allowed many men to return to the Soviet workforce at the expense of working women (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984). A large chunk of the female workforce would become unemployed in 1921 under the New Economic Plan, but the number of women would gradually rise throughout the 1920s (Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998; Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984). In 1924 about 27% of Soviet industrial strength would be composed of women (Hayden [1979] 1984:248). Before Soviet industrialization, women had been slowly flocking to Russian industrial factories so that by 1895 they composed 25% of industrial labour and 40% of the textile sectors employees inside the Russian Empire (Hayden [1979] 1984:44). This trend was a result of the lower wages given to women and because they were less likely to strike. As the country industrialized, the long period of conflicts would increase the need for working woman. For example, Russian/Soviet women composed 43.2% of industry in 1917 as a result of the First World War (Meyer 1991:214). The shortage of men also led to the pronounced feminization of the agricultural sector and the advance of women into such traditionally male jobs as messengers, porters, mail carriers, streetcar conductors, truck drivers, railway workers, and metalwork; in Moscow alone there were 115,000 women working in industrial jobs, with 20,000 in metal factories (Meye 1991:213).

The emancipation of women, however, required more than industrialization: "The Bolsheviks recognized that the oppression of women was deeply rooted in the traditional way of life of the Russian people and that it would be necessary to institute fundamental changes in basic

social relationships, such as marriage and the family" (Hayden [1979] 1984:*iii-iv*). Ironically, and maybe in misogynistic terms, the private space — which was associated with women and the family — was disliked and even loathed in the socialist/communist normative system unlike in capitalist societies. This standpoint was the consequence of the Soviet emphasis on the "civic family" of the state and loyalty to the country and the public versus individualism, the private, and the family. The Soviet model actually looked down on much that was traditionally considered feminine:

> Yet while Soviet culture gave prominence to the female worker and political activists, it also projected another image of women as unenlightened [under feminine gender scripts], caught up in private and domestic matters, and therefore unable to play a full role in society. Private life, and, by implication, traditional female concerns, were dismissed as being of little relevance unless they could be integrated into the new [socialist/communist] social structure, and even then women's social responsibilities [as citizens of the state] were expected to take precedence over her family (Hodgson 1998:136).

Marxist morality now aimed for "the destruction of marriage regulations, which creates the illusion that the laborers' communist collective can consider the interests of two married members as separate and isolated from it" (Hayden [1979] 1984:171). The identification of both marriage and the family as being root causes for the oppression of women was also reflected by the biographic background of many pre-communist female radical activists as middle and upper class women who had to struggle and resist the state-sanctioned authority of their parents and husbands in Czarist Russia (Hayden [1979] 1984). Moreover, under Bolshevik ideology, the concept of illegitimate offspring was archaic (Goldman 1993). Albeit Lenin and certain Soviet leaders had diverging views, a communist ontology of sexuality was disseminated — at least with some success — amongst Soviet society which aimed to have sex recognized as a natural and legitimate act that was neither shameful nor sinful nor tied to morality (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Stites 1978). Additionally, because of all the fighting in this period and due to the shortage of men, single mothers were not uncommon either. Because the Soviet government wanted to raise the birth rates, it did not allow for the demonization of woman with bastard children; structurally it encouraged adultery and helped normalize single-motherhood (Goldman 1993).

Ironically, a lot of the most progressive Soviet laws about women's working conditions were opposed by women or made managers fear hiring them (Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984). For examples, the laws forbidding pregnant women from working at night were protested by pregnant women who said that they were being segregated (Hayden [1979] 1984). Soviet daycare programs were actually met with alarm and bitter resistance by many women and men (Hayden, 1979). When husbands started beating their wives over the issue, the women's branch of the Communist Party organized very effective "social courts" to stop the violence that were displayed in public to make spectacles of the violent men (Hayden [1979] 1984). Maternity leave also made many managers in Soviet factories reconsider hiring women (Goldman 1993). Soviet officials countered this by decreeing that women and men that possessed the same skills had to be terminated in equal proportions, pregnant women or women with infants on maternity leave could no longer be fired, women with children less than a year old had to have employment priority, single women could not be thrown out of their quarters, and women who lost their jobs were still entitled to keep their children in factory daycares (Goldman 1993).

Male resistance to the communist emancipation of women also persisted throughout the

USSR, particularly in the Caucasus, Volga, and Central Asia (Hayden [1979] 1984). Clashes between traditional ways of life and Soviet social engineering took place. Inroads, however, were made.

A major issue of resistance and resentment against Soviet policy involved traditional dress codes in Russian/Soviet society, especially in the peripheral regions. The traditional veils of the Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim worn amongst what were called "the women of the East" were targeted by Soviet policy and there are cases in the Caucasus were groups of women would gather and publicly throw off their veils; at one noteworthy meeting in Moscow a delegation of seventy-four Soviet women belonging to the so-called "Eastern nationalities" appeared all covered in their traditional dresses, from head to toe, and then suddenly removed their traditional coverings (Hayden [1979] 1984; Stites 1978). Traditional dress and religious veils were seen by the Zhenotdel and Communist Party leaders as symbols for female "isolation and untouchability" (Stites 1978:333).

Total War and the Soviet Amazons

Total war has always had an interesting interplay with gender scripts. Hodgson (1998:135) writes that "[w]ar, it can be argued, puts men and women back in their proper places [defined by gender scripts]." Inversely, Meyer (1991:208-209) points out in his work on Russian women in World War I that gender stereotypes can be turned on their heads as many men prove to be "sensitive, averse to violence, brutality, and killing," while many women are provided the opportunity "to prove themselves as fighters." Paradoxically, while men felt "an unaccustomed lack of power and freedom of movement," Sandra Gilbert described the First World War as a liberating experience for women, which replaced feelings of powerless in the world (Hodgson 1998:135).

The mobilization of Soviet women against the invading German Wehrmacht can be explained as a synergy of identity, metaphysical concepts of womanhood based on both a mix of tradition and the revolutionary ideology of the state, and finally survival. The scholar Hodgson (1998) believes that it was the traditional view of women and femininity as "moral beings" and the Soviet mobilization of women as "civic beings" that prompted Soviet females to join their male counter-parts in the Soviet military and impelled many of the same Soviet women to demand combat roles. She argues that a figure like Olga Berggolts (Bergholz) became the wartime poet laureate of Leningrad, because she was a woman, the traditional view of women as moral voices in Russian and Soviet societies, and the pragmatic widespread call to arms used to mobilize Soviet men to protect their country's women and ultimately the "Motherland" (Hodgson: 1998).[11] She also acknowledges that the civic responsibilities of women in Soviet society brought about by Soviet socialism were integral to this:

> According to Elshtain, women in wartime are portrayed as 'civic beings' responding not just to family demands, but to social claims as well. Soviet women were, however, expected to satisfy these dual demands in peacetime. Perhaps this might suggest that Soviet society perceived itself to be, if not actually at war, then constantly preparing for war. Elsewhere after the 1914-1918 war women had been expected to return to the [gendered] domestic sphere from their brief spell as 'temporary citizens' (Hodgson 1998:136).

In her work Hodgson (1998:135), herself an expert of the Russian language and Russian

women writers during World War II, writes about the existence of "the wartime poetry of some women who served at the front" and its reflection that war's effects on Soviet women as liberating, as well as traumatic, from "their assumption[s] of traditional masculine roles."

Nor were the Soviet/Russian women that went to fight in the Eastern Front forced to fight by Joseph Stalin and Soviet authorities. As social actors, they had agency and were reacting on the basis of the normative settings of the Soviet/Russian social landscape. In context of their social environment, their socialist/communist normative system, and the identities of Soviet womanhood, it can rhetorically be ask if it is even correct to say that Soviet women needed to be mobilized for combat in the Eastern Front in 1941. By the time the Bolsheviks won the Russian Civil War, women had already played active roles on all sides of the internal conflict (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Hayden [1979] 1984). It can even be postulated that Soviet women fighting to protect their country is a reflection of the "collective conscience," which in Durkheimian terms is said to be reflected by the individuals that make the population of a society — in this case a socialist/communist "collective conscience." The socialist/communist normative system and structural changes in Russian/Soviet society had created a generation of modern "Decembrists," as the Soviets called these militant revolutionaries, which were ready to fight for a world revolution at a moment's notice.[12] Everywhere that a socialist/communist movement or a socialist-leaning revolutionary movement has gained a hold, women have been integrated into the military, from Cuba where Fidel Castro had a women's brigade of rebel soldiers fighting against the US-supported Batista regime to the Farabundo Martí Liberation People's Forces (FPL) in El Salvador and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — which are believed to have anywhere from one-third to one-fifth of their forces composed of women fighters — in Colombia. The militant aspects of socialist/communist ideologies tied to revolution equally applied to the militarization of men and women as revolutionaries ready to fight capitalism, counter-revolution, fascism, and colonialism. It is these circumstances that are the origins of the identity of the "Red Rifle Woman," which includes figures like the Marxist intellectual and anti-war activist Rosa Luxemburg.

At the heart of the matter, Soviet female combatants refute any notions of biological determinism that woman are incapable of fighting or waging war. Women will resist and fight just like men to defend their communities or societies:

> What is beyond dispute is that women have been able to participate in specific combat situations. The desperate though ultimately futile participation of [N]ative American women in the defense of their villages, as just one example, finds mention in the diaries of US Cavalry troopers. George Armstrong Custer attests: "Before engaging in the fight orders were given to prevent the killing of any but the fighting strength of the village; but in a struggle of this character it is impossible at all times to discriminate, particularly when (…) the squaws [a term for Native/Aboriginal American women] are as dangerous adversaries as the [male] warriors" (Maninger 2008:16-17).

This example of Aboriginal women fighting to defend their communities can be thought of in universal terms and easily applied to Soviet women. Krylova's (2010) recount of the experiences of Soviet woman combatants leaves no doubt about the agency of the women she depicts in making their choices to fight as combat personnel in the Second World War.

Retreat of the Amazons: Return of Tradition or Curse of the Maternal Body?

Towards the 1980s, women composed over 50% of the Komsomol, including just over 57% of its lower level committees, and 25% of the Communist Party's members — it was 20% in the 1960s — with rising numbers, which substantiated Soviet claims of increasing female participation in the USSR (Browning 1985; Field 1968). Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, was actually the closest political contender against Stalin before 1925 (Stites 1979). From 1924 to 1939 there had been three prominent female leaders inside the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the highest political body of the Soviet Union, when women were virtually invisible in other societies in the world (Stites 1979). There was no question that Soviet society was the most progressive in the world when it came to equality of the sexes. Yet, there were many shortcomings in the Soviet project that prevented the USSR from reaching its goal of emancipating women. The paradoxes here were that many of the elements that helped discard the traditional gender roles of women could also have the reverse effect in Soviet society. The Soviet concept of citizenship versus the distinct identity of women, population politics, and the centralization of the Soviet Union all contributed to weakening the project. Foci on the family instead of foci on other gender issues and Soviet failure to develop the structures needed to fully shift domestic work into the public sphere also added to this, not to mention that the family was viewed as the basic unit to repopulate the Soviet Union — a state emerging from decades of large-scale conflict(s). Traditional views also started making a comeback in the Stalinist period. The bureaucratization of the Soviet state and Communist Party factionalism also weakened the Zhenotdel.

Marxist ideology through state socialism undoubtedly has pioneered the work to equalize women with men. State ideology said that Soviet women and men were no different and both were expected to be contributing citizens. In the USSR equality meant equal obligations, which also explains the willingness of Soviet women to fight in the Eastern Front in 1941. In this regard, however, the Soviet state in addition took priority over women. Citizenship, as an identity and social script, came before everything else in Soviet society — including gender roles or any other social statuses — and the so-called "woman question" was supposedly solved after 1917 (Bisha *et al*. 2002; Buckley 1985; Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998; Goldman 1993; Hayden [1979] 1984; Hodgson 1998; Marsh 1998; Pushkareva 1997). Yet, it seemed that with the demographic decline and the rapid industrialization of the USSR that to be a good citizen for women was tied to being a mother in the Stalinist period. Nor is there any evidence that the socialist state implemented programs to resocialize Soviet men directly.

The need of the state to repopulate tied to this view of citizenship proved to undermine women. In 1946, Soviet women outnumbered men by about 26 million (Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998). This initially helped women during the decades of fighting, because it opened economic roles to Soviet women (Field 1968). Yet, the decline in the population was a two-edge sword. While the population declined, in terms of a shortage of manpower and a need to staff factories with increasing demands for labour, it allowed women to become active and move into jobs traditionally held by men, in the long run. When peace came, the population decline actually constrained the role of women to mothers and wives who were pushed to have children to repopulate the USSR. This leads to the subject of the maternal body again. The reproductive capacity of women prevented Soviet society from breaking its patriarchal base. This is where the basis of the contradictions in Soviet society and ideology appear; reproduction was central in a society that believed in state planning under scientific socialism. In other words, population planning and demographical politics — a manifestation of the maternal body — were the greatest anti-thesis to progressive Soviet policies for equality of the sexes.

Another major shortcoming of Soviet policy was that "[t]he abolition of the family, rather than gender conflict within it, held the key to woman's emancipation" (Goldman 1993:6). It is also convincingly argued that because the Soviet Union had a less developed retail and consumption sector, the family had to stay intact and that women were still tied to pink collar jobs. As one observer put during the later part of the Cold War:

> Soviet women enjoy many advantages, yet to be won by women in the West, such as a widespread network of state-supported child care institutions, free access to a wide range of trade and professions, and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers. However, more than sixty years after the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet women continue to bear the major burden for household labor, and women have suffered the most from the government's long-term decision to give a low priority to consumers' goods and production. Lack of modern household appliances, the poor quality of meals in public dining rooms, and the scarcity, high cost, and inferior quality of basic necessities force women to labor any additional hours outside of their jobs to maintain their households (Hayden [1979] 1984:v-vi).

This was part of the failure to solve the double-burden that the demands of production and reproduction in a modern society put on women as more and more of them were forced to work for wages (Buckley 1985; Goldman 1993).

Pragmatism turned out to become a dilution of ideology and commitment. The Kremlin's pragmatism ended up hurting Soviet women, the original Soviet vision, and factory democratization. Some blame this on the effects of the total war that the USSR faced from the plains of Soviet Ukraine to the gates of Stalingrad. Just as she opposed feminism as a Marxist, the Bolshevik leader Kollontai also opposed the Communist Party's divergence from the original Soviet democratic worker-run factory system, which resulted in her essentially being exiled from the USSR through diplomatic postings in Scandinavia (Clement 1979; Hayden [1979] 1984). What happened was that the Soviet policies and laws that were designed to "wither away" the state —which some refer to as the ideas of anarchic communism and libertarian communism — were instead reversed for the strengthening of the Stalinist USSR. This arguably could have been tied to the preparations for a showdown with Germany and other external forces. This change in the USSR led one British feminist looking back at Soviet policies on women to explain that it appeared that Marxism did not appear to be more than a mere justification for Soviet policies and not their source (Buckley 1985).

Soviet society existed in a paradox, because of the cohabitation or *modus vivendi* of patriarchal traditions with Soviet communist ideology. Hodgson maintains that the resurrection of pre-Bolshevik traditional cultural values in the 1930s— which also revived patriotic sentiments from the Czarist period that resurrected gendered symbols of masculine heroes like Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great and the feminine concept of "Mother Russia" — repealed the legislation on abortion and divorce (Hodgson 1998). Discussions of free love and sexuality also disappeared from the Soviet press (Pushkareva 1997). The return to tradition may also be described thus in a political context: "The association between women and honesty relied to a certain extent on women's identification with the private sphere, which offered some asylum from the encroaching state, a space free from political slogans were more reliable truths might be found" (Hodgson 1998:140).

The discussion on tradition leads to the figure of Joseph Stalin and arguments. Stalin has

been criticized as a traditionalist and for curbing women's rights. Under his rule the Zhenotdel was eroded and then disbanded in 1930. A look at Stalin's record, however, opens up the floor for debate. New Soviet laws were passed in June 1936 that put legal penalties on any men that did not pay alimony to women, but the laws also made divorce harder, and abortion a measure of last choice that could only be conducted if a woman's health was in danger (Goldman 1991, 1993; Pushkareva 1997). Abortion would not be legalized in the USSR again until 1955 (Pushkareva 1997). The new laws tried not to target women and appeared to be based on population planning through the strengthening of the family unit to support Stalin's industrialization program; these Stalinist laws expanded the number of childcare facilities in the USSR, only sentenced people who conducted and pressured (presumably mostly men) pregnant women to have abortions with death or two years in prison, increased pay and benefits for pregnant women or new mothers, and applied criminal penalties to any employer who refused to hire pregnant women or discriminated against them (Goldman 1991, 1993; Pushkareva 1997).[13] A tax on "childlessness" was also imposed (Pushkareva 1997). Major economic and housing incentives were also offered to women to have more children (Goldman 1993; Pushkareva 1997) Golman writes (1993:332): "To every mother with seven children or more, it granted 2,000 rubles for five years for every child born thereafter. Mothers with eleven children were to receive 5,000 rubles per additional child for one year and 3,000 rubles for the next four years." During the Stalinist era the Zhenotdel's last activities actually intensified and increased with the so-called "women of the East," specifically in Soviet Central Asia (Hayden, 1979). In the 1930s there were also campaigns to get women to become automobile drivers, pilots, and to bring women into senior positions and possessions previously monopolized by men (Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998). Article 122 of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 makes the USSR's commitment to women under Stalin clear:

> 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 (Beard 1996).

Stalin was clearly concerned with order and working on a structural framework to increase the population, which came at the expense of the older communist programs aimed at producing the emancipation of women in Soviet society.[14]

The Myths/Chains of Military Traditionalists and Patriarchy

What prevents any cognizant recognition or acceptance by military traditionalists and military forces about the ability of women to fight in combat roles are the myths perpetuated, like discursive weapons, by the (1) the cult of the body, which believes that most women cannot fight due to their psychological and physiological characteristics; (2) the cult of homogeneity, which is based on the presumption that the presence of women among military men will disrupt group cohesion and bonding and lower group performance; and (3) the concept of the maternal body, which reduces women to their fertility as reproductive vessels of procreation for men that are destined to be mothers vis-à-vis their female bodies (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008). These views represent a metaphysical dualism that represents man through the mind, objectivity, discipline, civilization, strength, logic,

and science while women are represented by the body, subjectivity, wildness, nature, weakness, desire, lust, and emotions. These notions reduce women into mere bodies and prevent them from even having the possibility to transcend. They ultimately turn women into property.

Klaus Theweleit's ([1977] 1987, [1978]1989) two volumes of *Male Fantasies* is work that embodies the essentialist views that imprison women within the confines of the maternal body. The maternal body has weighed women down, because women cannot abject themselves from their bodies. Theweleit does not acknowledge historic truths and his methodology requires women to essentially be constructed as good creatures that are naturally alien to conflict. His work refuses to even recognize the sexuality of the very men in the German Freikorps that he studies, by portraying them as masculine minds protecting themselves from the weaknesses of the body represented by women; never once does it mention that these men all fought in the brutal campaigns of Germany's African colonies and that rape was prevalently uses as a disciplinary tool in the German military, especially in Africa (Amidon and Krier 2009).

The cult of homogeneity — which it can be argued is akin to a sexist version of racist apartheid — is easily disarmed. If not a myth, social homogeneity can easily be disagreed with on the basis that gender roles are socially constructed and thus subject to change. This clearly means there is no natural urge by men to be in an all-male environment in the military unless they have been socially conditioned this way. Therefore, if they are socialized and conditioned in a different way, then their concepts of social homogeneity would be different.

The historical record from the Soviet Union challenges all of these views. Moreover, these views, which are deeply enshrined in the West, cannot even come to terms with the successful *en masse* mobilization of frontline female fighters in the USSR, and instead ignore what took place during World War II. Nor can these perspectives and beliefs sociologically explain why many women soldiers in the USSR did not see a contradiction in their roles as both women and fighters (Krylova 2010).

The military mobilization of Soviet women played an important role in defeating German Third Reich in Europe. Soviet women combatants did not have to choose between being women and soldiers. They were both women and soldiers, or women soldiers, as a result of the series of events and socialist/communist normative system of Soviet society.

Unlike in the Soviet Union, women in the West were not viewed as authentic soldiers.When Soviet women were fighting as tankers, snipers, and pilots to defend Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and the entire Soviet Union, from Sevastopol to Stalingrad, they essentially had no Western counter-parts. The visit of one famous Soviet female sniper, Lyudmila Pavlichenko, to the United States is very telling about the gap. After fighting to defend the Crimea from the Germans, Pavlichenko was shocked by Western perceptions about how women soldiers in the frontlines should act. While visiting the US to lobby for the opening of a Western Front in Europe to relieve the Soviets from doing most the fighting against Germany, Pavlichenko was shocked to see that US society was more interested to know if female Soviet soldiers wore makeup instead of being interested in what role Soviet women played in resisting the Nazis. Despite the historical record, the West still believes that it is globally pioneering the road for women and gender equality, which is why Western media praise the role of their women as pilots without any cognizance that otherized societies like in places such as Russia have been way ahead of them.

NOTES

[1] Russian women writers were able to assume an important role during the Great Patriotic War too (Marsh 1998; Hodgson 1998).

[2] Mikhailov argued that women's education should not merely be confined to gender socialization and for the roles of wifehood and motherhood. He was against the concept of "free love," but believed that a well-educated couple would have a more happy union and thus improve society and both would raise better families (Hayden [1979] 1984).

[3] Unlike most men, the government would not finance the education of women, except in medical courses to become nurses, and spent only 3% of its education budget on women in 1911-1912. Women were also not allowed to teach at higher levels and graduates were not given civil service jobs (Hayden [1979] 1984).

[4] The strict opposition of Rosa Luxemburg to nationalism (and the nationalist project to divide Russian Poland from Russia) also parallels this view of Marxist orthodoxy at the time that objected to women and men being divided in their struggles or for working women to unite with the female bourgeoisie instead of the rest of the proletariat. Just as Marxist orthodoxy opposed the division of ethnic groups in their political struggles or cognitively diversified by joining non-socialists/communists and the bourgeoisie, it also opposed a division between men and women. It was capitalism that profited on sex-based and ethnic divisions. This is why the latter group of Russian/Soviet women, which included Alexandra/Aleksandra Kollontai, did not join or form feminist organizations.

[5] Engels used notes made on the anthropologist Lewis Morgan's study of the Iroquois family (based on matrilineal kinship and matriarchy) by Marx, who had died in 1883, to prepare his text in 1884 (Hayden [1979] 1984:32-34).

[6] See *The Condition of the Working Class* (1845) by Engels for more on the effects of industrial factories on woman and children.

[7] It is worth noting that the views of Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725), who build St. Petersburg (which was renamed Leningrad in 1924 after V.I. Lenin died), and the Soviet authorities had one similarity. Czar Peter I saw both men and women alike as tools to be utilized by his Czardom in statecraft, just like Soviet officials and planners. Peter's programs aimed at making the Russian Empire a European great power through the resocialization of the men and women of the nobility and the Westernization of high culture (O'Malley 2007). In Peter's time the peasants were more or less considered outside of the realm of culture, as social aliens, and all that culture entailed. In no way were the changes applied by Peter the Great aimed at correcting any "perceived inequality in the status of women within Russian [imperial] society" (Bisha *et al*. 2002:2-3).

[8] For a time couples were even allowed to use a double name consisting of the family names of both, but the law was changed in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic because hyphenated last names were causing problems (Luryi 1980).

[9] *Kommunistka*, *Peasant Woman* (*Krestinka*), and *Woman Worker* (*Rabotnista*) were the names of this triumvirate of important women's publications (Hayden [1979] 1984; Pushkareva 1997).

[10] The religious authorities of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the Russian Empire/USSR also all opposed and forbid it.

[11] Olga Berggolts (Bergholz), the poet of the nine-hundred day siege of Leningrad, spent most of her time making radio broadcasts that transformed her from a relatively unknown poet to the popular symbol of Leningrad's resistance as the "Voice of Leningrad" and the "Muse of the Blockade" (Hodgson 1998: 134).

[12] This term comes from the end of the Napoleonic era. Many Russian nobleman and officers who fought against the French Empire ended occupying France. Upon their return to the Russian Empire they brought back new French ideas about government and civic rights, which prompted them to overthrow Alexander/Aleksandr I (r. 1801-1825) in December 1825. Many of the conspirators, called the "Decembrists" due to the month of their coup, that were exiled to Siberia were also joined by their wives, which were elevated by Soviet historians as the first female revolutionaries of Russian society even though they were not politically active (Bisha *et al*. 2002:2-3). This may be because the first feminist organization ever established in Russia was established in 1859 by Maria Trubnikova, the daughter of the Decembrist V.P. Ivashev (Hayden [1979] 1984).

[13] Women who got abortions would only be fined 300 if they were caught having an abortion a second time (Goldman 1993:331).

[14] Stalin's policies on non-Russian nationalities in the USSR parallel his policy on women in many ways. Order was the common denominator for both.

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