

Primary Source Packet

1. Newspaper, Women's Equality

Articles and images published in Soviet newspapers on March 8, International Communist Woman's Day provide the most obvious examples of how women were used as symbols in a propaganda campaign. These texts and images were clearly intended to convey a certain message about the changing role of women in the Soviet system. In particular, March 8 publications celebrated the achievements of Soviet women in part by comparing their lives to the difficulties of Russian women "in the past," prior to the revolution, and to contemporary women "outside the Soviet borders," which included the capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States and the Asian and African colonial peoples ruled by European governments. This article suggests key themes that dominated Soviet discourse on women in the 1930s: the new roles for women in employment, government, and education, the on-going effort to overcome the legacies of the past, the unity of women behind the Soviet government and Communist Party, and the assertions that Soviet women were the most equal and most emancipated women in the world.

Source: Pravda, "On the Path to a Great Emancipation," March 8, 1929.

Today is international communist women's day, the international day for working women. Today is a holiday in honor of one-half of the international proletarian army and in honor of the women workers of the socialist Soviet Union. In our country, governed by the power of the proletariat, the day of the woman worker has been consciously designated as a political and cultural "great day." And outside the Soviet borders, in places where capitalist bondage has not been overthrown, we are certain that conscientious, advanced women workers will today demonstrate their dedication to the cause of the international revolution and their indestructible solidarity with the working women and men of the Soviet Union.

Our woman worker in the past . . . during the barbaric, savage, and blood stained tsarist regime. The heavy and hopeless fate of the woman worker—as mother, wife, and girl. All of the striving of the woman worker toward the light, toward freedom, and to a human existence were snuffed out by the criminal arm of the autocracy. The exploitation and debasement were tripled: in politics, in factory labor, and in daily life.

Working women in capitalist countries. Capitalist "democracy" has not and cannot give freedom to working and laboring women. Working women in all bourgeois countries are economically and politically enslaved. Middle class conventionality has a tenacious vice-grip on daily life. Advanced women workers and revolutionary women proletarians are persecuted. The most brutal blows of capitalist "rationalization," unemployment, and hunger in the midst of plenty descend upon the female half of the proletariat. Fascism, Catholicism, and reformism with increasingly thoroughness exploit the historical backwardness of women workers in order to split apart the proletarian ranks and

strengthen the position of imperialism. The temples of “national government”—what a thing to talk about!—are protected by stone walls which prevent the participation of working women.

Only we in the Soviet Union have at hand all of the preconditions and foundations for the complete emancipation of working women. These preconditions were created and acquired in a severe struggle with enemies, at a time when world history passed over the heights of the great October summit. Only our women have been emancipated in practice, acting as conscious builders of a new society and a new governing commune, and speaking out as active citizens with fully equal rights in the socialist family.

For more than eleven years, our woman worker has made her way along the path set by the proletarian dictatorship. Together with all the proletariat she fought for power in October. Together with her working brothers she passed through the crucible of sacrifice and suffering during the civil war. She stands in the most advanced ranks of our working collective in the present-day glorious and productive period of socialist construction. In the factory workshop and at the controls of the state ships, in the cooperatives and at the shooting range, in the nursery school and at the thundering machinery, everywhere the tractors of our increasingly strong state farms and collective farms are plowing the virgin soil of our Soviet land, in the workers’ faculties and in courses for the red sisterhood where the proletariat struggles relentlessly to master science, and everywhere that life is in full swing and the anthills of labor are humming—in none of these places have the working women of the Soviet Union been forced into last place. Everywhere the vigorous stream of activism of our women workers is flowing. With ever more firm and certain steps they are advancing on the path to complete emancipation under the tested leadership of our Party.

Needless to say, without the conscious and active participation of the working woman we will not fulfill the tasks defined by Lenin and by the entire development of the October revolution. We will not achieve the rapid tempo of socialist industrialization if the woman worker turns out to be passive. We will not achieve the complete cultural revolution if the woman worker remains “on the side,” or is somehow pushed off toward “the second rate plan.”

For the successful completion of all these tasks we must mobilize the entire women’s active. Recruitment of the best women into the Party and the courageous and steadfast advancement into the soviets, management and cooperative duties, and the governing apparatus—these measures will ensure the actual emancipation of women who remain backward in comparison with our general levels of economic and cultural development.

The maximum activism of all women proletarians and conscientious working peasant women is one of the indispensable guarantees of our further successes and our victorious socialist growth. The greatest possible and most inexhaustible activism, the unceasingly creative work of the woman proletarian on all large and “small” fronts of our life, their rigid and total solidarity with the Party—these are the obligatory conditions for our creativity.

The struggle for a new cultured life—is this possible without the creative initiative of the woman worker? The struggle with alcoholism and disgusting drunken debauchery and the struggle to expel the green hydra from the Soviet home—are these conceivable without the will and determination, without the intensive and constant force of the working woman? Could the struggle with such social ulcers as prostitution proceed successfully without arousing and involving hundreds of thousands of working women?

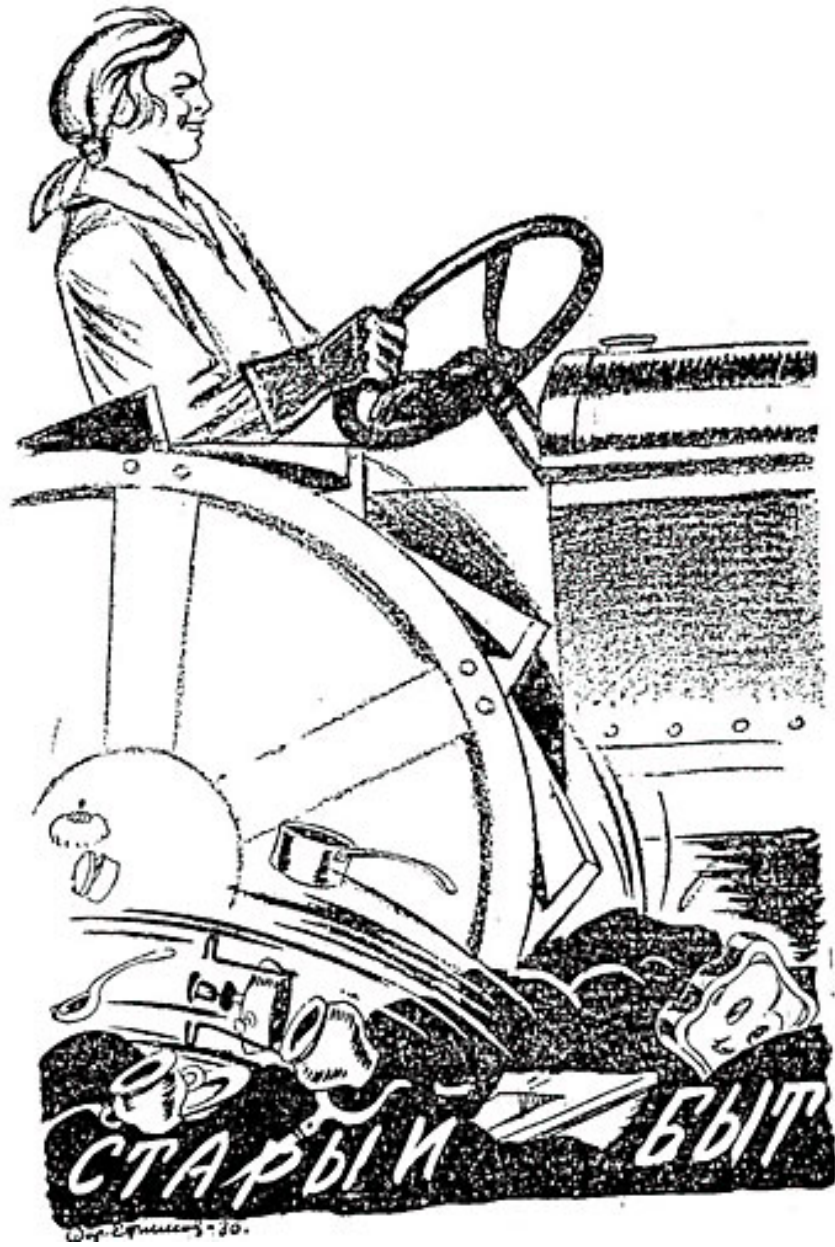
And the struggle to overcome difficulties, the struggle with our many-faceted class enemies, the struggle with anti-Semitism, with the priesthood, and with religious stupification—are these goals attainable if the campaign against these barbarisms does not include the millions of working women and if they are not advanced into the leading positions?

All of these tasks need to be accomplished, and they will be accomplished. The path to the complete emancipation of working women is clear. No force has concealed it. And not only today, on the red holiday of March 8, should we take note of and strongly emphasize the great challenges facing the women's proletarian movement. These should be remembered constantly, they should become part of our everyday "routine" of socialism. For surely we are talking about one of the greatest tasks that has been set by history: the complete liberation and emancipation of working women from any kind of exploitation, from material need, from lack of culture, and from barbarism.

2. Drawing, "Old Way of Life"

Articles and images published in Soviet newspapers on March 8, International Communist Woman's Day provide the most obvious examples of how women were used as symbols in a propaganda campaign. These texts and images were clearly intended to convey a certain message about the changing role of women in the Soviet system. In particular, March 8 publications celebrated the achievements of Soviet women in part by comparing their lives to the difficulties of Russian women "in the past," prior to the revolution, and to contemporary women "outside the Soviet borders," which included the capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States and the Asian and African colonial peoples ruled by European governments. This image contrasts the symbols of woman's oppression in the "old way of life," such as cooking utensils and make-up products, with one of the most evocative symbols of the new Soviet order: a young woman driving a tractor.

Source: Izvestiia, "Old Way of Life," March 8, 1930.



3. Cartoon, "Woman with Lenin/Stalin Flag"

Articles and images published in Soviet newspapers on March 8, International Communist Woman's Day provide the most obvious examples of how women were used as symbols in a propaganda campaign. These texts and images were clearly intended to convey a certain message about the changing role of women in the Soviet system. In particular, March 8 publications celebrated the achievements of Soviet women in part by comparing their lives to the difficulties of Russian women "in the past," prior to the revolution, and to contemporary women "outside the Soviet borders," which included the capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States and the Asian and African colonial peoples ruled by European governments. In this cartoon, a woman waves a flag bearing the images of Lenin and Stalin while standing in front of buildings and factories symbolizing industrialization and urbanization.

Source: Leningradskaja pravda, "Woman with Lenin/Stalin Flag," March 8, 1934



4. Newspaper, Women's Roles

Articles and images published in Soviet newspapers on March 8, International Communist Woman's Day provide the most obvious examples of how women were used as symbols in a propaganda campaign. These texts and images were clearly intended to convey a certain message about the changing role of women in the Soviet system. In particular, March 8 publications celebrated the achievements of Soviet women in part by comparing their lives to the difficulties of Russian women "in the past," prior to the revolution, and to contemporary women "outside the Soviet borders," which included the capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States and the Asian and African colonial peoples ruled by European governments. In contrast to the themes a decade earlier, this text also reveals subtle changes in this message, including the growing prominence of Stalin and other individuals as essential leaders and the downplaying of promises of a complete transformation in daily life.

Source: Pravda, "International Communist Woman's Day," March 9, 1939.

In the Bol'shoi theater, a celebration of March 8, International Communist Women's Day, occurred yesterday, organized by the Moscow Committee of the All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the Moscow Soviet, and the VTsSPS, in conjunction with party and soviet organizations, Stakhanovites, shock workers, and the Soviet intelligentsia of the city of Moscow.

The hall was more than filled to capacity, and burst into warm applause when at the presidium appeared the leaders of Moscow party and soviet organizations and the VTsSPS, and the famous women and heroes of the Soviet Union, the heroines of labor and award-winners whose names are familiar to the entire nation. The meeting opened with a welcoming speech by comrade Popov, the secretary of the Moscow city committee of the VKP(b). Places at the presidium were taken by comrades Shcherbakov, Chernousov, Pronin, Shvernik, Marshal of the Soviet Union Budennyi, Nikolaeva, Marina Raskova, Valentina Grizodubova, Polina Osipenko, Zinaida Troitskaia, T. Fedorova, Evdokiia and Mariia Vinogradova, O. Leonova, and others.

Comrade Fedorova proposed to elect an honored presidium. The first name nominated was comrade Stalin. Shouts of "hurrah" and exclamations of "Long live our own Stalin!" and "We raise our banner to salute Stalin!" rolled through the hall.

Accompanied by stormy applause from all participants in the celebratory meeting, the candidates elected to the honorary presidium included the members of the Politburo of the Communist Party led by comrade Stalin, as well as comrades Dimitrov, Tel'man, and Pasionariia.

The secretary of the VTsSPS, comrade Nikolaeva, made a speech about International Communist Woman's Day: "We have assembled on the eve of historic events. In two days, the voice of the leader of the people, comrade Stalin, will be heard from the tribunal of the XVIII Congress of our party. Comrade Stalin will describe the results of the gigantic victories won by our country, and will set out the path toward solving the even

greater tasks set by the third five year plan.”

Comrade Nikolaeva talked about the rise of the Soviet woman, about the heroic and energetic path taken by women of our country, and about the concern for women shown by the Soviet government and party of Lenin-Stalin. In her speech, comrade Nikolaeva referred to clear evidence that the Soviet woman had secured an honored place on all fronts of socialist development and in all areas of the political and public life of our country. The deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR include 189 women, and the deputies to the Supreme Soviets of the union republics include 848 women. What a clear example of the growth of the political activism and the political maturity of the Soviet woman! Comrade Nikolaeva spoke about the heroism of the Soviet woman and the unforgettable flight taken by V. Grizodubova, P. Osipenko, and M. Raskova. The heroines were located right there, on the presidium, and the hall greeted them with warm applause. Comrade Nikolaeva described how Soviet women had mastered technology and knowledge and had become powerful economic leaders. She cited the example of Zinaida Troitskaia, who successfully mastered the complex craft of driving a locomotive engine, became an engineer, and now is the director of the Moscow regional railway. Zinaida Troitskaia was also located right there on the presidium, and her success was recognized with warm applause. Speakers also talked about the tremendous assistance that had been provided to the woman in our country by the Soviet government and the party of Lenin-Stalin, about the many millions of benefits given to mothers with many children, and about the steady growth in the number of nurseries and kindergartens.

Expressing the thoughts and feelings of the entire hall, speakers referred to the warm sympathy felt by Soviet women for the women of China and Spain, who were heroically fighting for the honor and independence of their homelands against fascist invaders.

After her speech, Hero of the Soviet Union Marina Raskova proposed to send a letter of greeting to comrade Stalin on behalf of the assembly. With a warm ovation, the hall approved this heartfelt greeting.

5. Quantitative Evidence, Women's Employment

The increased presence of women in the work force as a result of industrialization and other aspects of modernization during 1930s was documented in government publications. While the numbers themselves cannot be independently verified, the more important analytical question involves asking about the explicit claims and underlying issues in these sources. In this table on employment, the most striking changes are the overall increase in women’s employment, which more than doubled in six years, and the even more rapid proportional increase in women’s employment in traditionally “male” sectors such as heavy industry, construction, and transportation. Yet most women workers still predominated in more traditionally “female” sectors, as shown by the much higher proportion of women in food preparation, services, and institutions, which suggest that even as conditions changed, the relative position of women remained consistent in important ways.

Source: Chart of “Women in the Soviet Labor Force: Total Number and Percent of Workforce.” In *Zhenshchina v SSSR* (Moscow, 1936).

| | 1929 | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| In the whole economy | 3,304,000 | 3,877,000 | 4,197,000 | 6,007,000 | 6,908,000 | 7,204,000 | 7,881,000 |
| | 27.2% | 26.7% | 26.9% | 27.4% | 30.5% | 31.7% | 33.4% |
| Heavy industry | 939,000 | 1,236,000 | 1,440,000 | 2,043,000 | 2,207,000 | 2,274,000 | 2,627,000 |
| | 27.9% | 29.0% | 29.3% | 32.3% | 34.5% | 35.6% | 38.3% |
| Construction | 64,000 | 156,000 | 189,000 | 380,000 | 437,000 | 454,000 | 450,000 |
| | 7.0% | 9.6% | 10.1% | 12.8% | 16.0% | 18.7% | 19.7% |
| Agriculture | 441,000 | 425,000 | 221,000 | 394,000 | 508,000 | 506,000 | 685,000 |
| | 28.0% | 27.4% | 23.1% | 21.3% | 24.2% | 25.4% | 27.0% |
| Transport | 104,000 | 146,000 | 173,000 | 243,000 | 322,000 | 358,000 | 384,000 |
| | 8.0% | 9.7% | 10.2% | 11.6% | 13.8% | 15.1% | 16.6% |
| Trade & food service | 134,000 | 279,000 | 405,000 | 675,000 | 786,000 | 766,000 | 822,000 |
| | 19.0% | 28.0% | 34.6% | 28.9% | 40.5% | 40.0% | 39.4% |
| Institutions* | 961,000 | 1,134,000 | 1,245,000 | 1,593,000 | 1,766,000 | 1,864,000 | 1,978,000 |
| | 38.2% | 29.6% | 40.3% | 42.5% | 45.2% | 47.6% | 48.8% |

- Institutions refers to education, health care, government, and administrative positions.

6. Quantitative Evidence, Women’s Education

The increased presence of women in the work force as a result of industrialization and other aspects of modernization during 1930s was documented in government publications. While the numbers themselves cannot be independently verified, the more important analytical question involves asking about the explicit claims and underlying issues in these sources. Another important propaganda use of statistics can be seen in this table, in which a comparison of women’s higher education enrollment in the Soviet Union and three so-called “capitalist countries” shows just how unusual the Stalinist period was for the history of women.

Source: Chart of “Women in the Soviet Union and Capitalist Countries.” In *Zhenshchina v SSSR* (Moscow, 1936).

| | Soviet Union (1935) | Germany (1935) | England (1933) | Italy (1935) |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| In all higher educational institutions | 38.0% | 13.6% | 25.7% | 14.0% |
| Including | | | | |
| Industrial institutes | 23.3% | 3.5% | 2.0% | 1.1% |
| Agricultural institutes | 31.8% | 1.5% | 13.0% | 1.3% |

7. Newspaper, Women’s Work

The increased presence of women in the work force as a result of industrialization and other aspects of modernization during 1930s was documented in government publications. While the numbers themselves cannot be independently verified, the more important analytical question involves asking about the explicit claims and underlying issues in these sources. This article, published in the Moscow city newspaper, indicates how the recruitment of women into production was an important government project.

Source: *Vecherniaia Moskva*, “More Women into Production!” June 30, 1930.

Last night the presidium of the Krasno-Prezenskii district soviet heard a report from the commission for improving work and living conditions.

After organizing the community of workers into brigades, the commission carried out several investigations. Enterprises which had shifted to a seven hour working day were inspected. In several of these enterprises, the investigation resulted in improvements in the services provided to pre-school children: in the “Trekhgorka” factory the nursery school was expanded, in the “Svoboda” factory and in a crystal making plant night-time classes were opened so that mothers could leave their children during their time at work,

in the “Nogina” factory the nursery school changed to operate in three-shifts, in the “Proletarskii trud” factory an evening class was also established, and so on. But despite great attention devoted to the needs of pre-schoolers, the enterprises could not fully achieve the planned measures. Instead of 23,000 pre-schoolers, organized educational facilities enrolled 16,000.

“Our commission devoted a great deal of attention to prostitution,” according to speaker comrade Konova. “The struggle against prostitution received this consideration because 70 former prostitutes who had gone through a preventive clinic received jobs in production. Others requiring medical assistance remain at the preventive clinic. We have a marked reduction in the number of prostitutes.” Comrade Konova then discussed the organization of a living commune made up Komsomol members. At the insistence of the RUNI commissions, 30% of living spaces in new buildings have been designated for Komsomols living in communes.

Following the speech by comrade Konova, additional remarks evaluating the work of the district commissions were made by comrade Ignat’eva, who spoke for the regional commission on work and daily life: “The work of the Krasno-Presenskii district commission had indisputable advantages, including the widespread investigation of the administration of bath-houses, the public provision of meals, and independent establishments. I consider that the work of the commission will lead to great results when the district soviet starts to provide better leadership of its work. What kind of tasks now stand before the commission? First of all, there needs to be broad dissemination of women’s work in production. A list of professions and jobs accessible to women should be compiled. Men then need to be liberated from these jobs and transferred to jobs that are physically more difficult, while women are sent to take their places.”

The district soviet confirmed that the Krasno-Presenskaia commission for improving work and daily life had conducted its work in a proper way.

The district soviet resolved “to use brigades of workers to study the conditions of women’s work and the possibility of their broader employment in industry; to assume control for allocating funds set aside for improving the daily life of workers; to oversee the activities of organizations working with children; to carry out in the district a conference on questions of everyday life; and finally to wage the struggle against prostitution not only along preventive lines, but also by struggling against the consumers of prostitution.”

8. Newspaper, Women Workers

The increased presence of women in the work force as a result of industrialization and other aspects of modernization during 1930s was documented in government publications. While the numbers themselves cannot be independently verified, the more important analytical question involves asking about the explicit claims and underlying issues in these sources. In this article, published in the Minsk city newspaper, it is clear that government efforts to recruit women workers did not eliminate problems encountered at work, including discrimination at the hands of men, as well as broader problems, including work assignments, wages, and prostitution.

Source: Minkin, Z. "The Bolshevik factory still does not have any women-master workers." *Rabochii*, July 7, 1931.

In the past year, in connection with the overall growth in production, new ranks of women workers have flowed into the "Bol'shevik" factory. At the present time, women make up 26.2 percent of all workers at the factory.

A large share of the newly entered women workers are the wives of workers who had already been working at the plant. As a result, the status of mass cultural and political educational work among these workers has clear significance.

At the "Bol'shevik" factory, 79 percent of women workers are shock workers. But the Party stratum among women workers is only 9.2 percent, whereas it has reached 30 percent among all workers at the factory. This clearly indicates that recruitment among women workers is insufficient.

The promotion of women into more qualified jobs and the training of women to take the place of men's labor within certain limits has been unsatisfactory within this factory. Many older women workers, who have worked for a long time at the factory, have been assigned to work not requiring qualifications and thus have not progressed any further. For example, at jobs near the presses, near the finishing machines, or involving work as planers, the number of women workers can be counted on a single hand. Yet a large share of women workers are assigned to unskilled labor not requiring any qualifications.

It is sufficient to note that not a single woman worker can be found among the staff of master workers, despite the presence of a number of women workers who have already worked many years in factory, have sufficient qualifications, and could be assigned to this work.

Because of the shortage of master workers, it happens that when the master worker of a particular section or workshop has to be away for several days, no one is available to take his place. Yet if the desire were there, it would not be difficult to train a couple of women to become master workers. It would also be possible to train a large number of women workers for other kinds of qualified positions.

The situation is no better regarding the development of mass work among women

workers. It is true that 14 percent of women workers received various kinds of awards for their shock work. A group made up of activist women workers is coming together. But inadequate efforts among women workers has meant that only 2 percent participating in rationalization measures. The percent of women workers in all kinds of public organizations is lower than the percent of men workers.

The weakness of work among women workers is explained by the “absence of personal responsibility” in this area. Women’s organizers change frequently, and as a result this work is quite unsatisfactory.

9. Newspaper, Daily Life

This article reflects a more complex example of state-controlled media. It is more negative in tone, by providing examples of problems in daily life, including shortages of housing and food, unequal treatment at work, and lack of services for families. Once again, the intention is to assert the achievements of the Soviet regime while also referring to problems that needed to be overcome through even greater efforts. In this case, however, the article also seeks to attribute blame for these problems to specific individuals, offices, or practices that could be made accountable. Women continued to bear a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities, and the actual availability of maternity leave, services for new mothers, and child care fell short of promises and propaganda. This article from a regional newspaper in the Far North provides just a partial view of what were clearly broad trends in the daily lives of women in this period.

Source: Pravda Severa, “Maria Semenovna Requires Assistance from the Party Collective,” September 9, 1932.

In its day to day work with women, the Party constantly implements the instructions of V.I. Lenin “to bring women into public and productive work and to pull them out of ‘domestic slavery’ by freeing them from subordination to the stupification and humiliation of always and forever being responsible for cooking and taking care of the children.”

But officials of the Party collective and of the factory committee and the directors of timber mill No. 23 still have not understood this objective.

Pravda Severa has already written more than once about Mariia Semenovna Abramova, and has repeatedly demanded that the Party collective of the factory committee and directors of factory No. 23 earnestly take up the tasks of eliminating lines at the stores and improving the work of nursery schools and kindergartens, so that Mariia Semenovna [Abramova] and all the other housewives of the factory may be liberated from the absurd lines and kitchen fumes which wash away all the strength of women, isolate them from production and cultural activities, and undermine the completion of the production plan.

Despite the fact that two months have already passed since Pravda Severa raised these questions, conditions at the factory have not changed at all.

As before, Mariia Semenovna spends her days standing in line for bread, herrings, and milk, and as before she rushes around the kitchen preparing supper for her kids.

She tries with all her might to get away from this “vicious” circle, but she cannot. She tried to work at the factory, but had to quit work after ten days, because the horrible work of the childcare center left her children going hungry and without supervision. As a result, her youngest son became sick, and this tied the hands of Mariia Semenovna. The medical assistance was also quite poor.

Neither the Party collective nor the factory committee have lifted a finger to improve any of these awful conditions and they have also made no effort to keep Mariia Semenovna at work in the factory. The secretary of the Party collective Lukin says that they have decided to reform their efforts in ZRK and have assigned one person in the supply department to eliminate lines at the stores, but in fact nothing has changed in this area.

At the present time, the Party collective does not even have a women’s organizer, which is evidence for judging the efforts of the Party collective to organize women and to draw housewives like Mariia Semenovna into the public and political life of the factory.

We categorically demand that the Party collective and the factory committee immediately turn their attention to issues of women’s work, to freeing housewives from the tenacious grip of lines, to ensuring the consistent work of nursery schools, and to drawing women into socially productive labor.

10. Newspaper, Women’s Education

This article reflects a more complex example of state-controlled media. It is more negative in tone, by providing examples of problems in daily life, including shortages of housing and food, unequal treatment at work, and lack of services for families. Once again, the intention is to assert the achievements of the Soviet regime while also referring to problems that needed to be overcome through even greater efforts. In this case, however, the article also seeks to attribute blame for these problems to specific individuals, offices, or practices that could be made accountable. Women continued to bear a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities, and the actual availability of maternity leave, services for new mothers, and child care fell short of promises and propaganda. In this article, a schoolteacher writes to the main educational newspaper to complain about treatment by her school director who is not upholding regulations.

Source: Za kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie, “School No. 130 Follows its own Law,” February 6, 1937.

In the Soviet Union, the rights of mothers and children are strictly protected by the law. For example, in addition to a four month maternity leave, every working mother has the right to take breaks during work for nursing until the infant reaches the age of nine months. But it seems that the administration of school 130 in the Soviet district of Moscow considers that this rule does not apply to its school.

I have worked as a teacher for nine years, and am in my first year at school 130. Returning from maternity leave, I placed my infant in a nursery school. At first, I was able to nurse him regularly, every three hours. But because I could not nurse my infant during the break between classes (20 minutes), I was always late by 10-15 minutes.

These minutes of tardiness were not absences, because I have the right to an additional half-hour besides these 20 minutes for nursing my infant. But the head of instruction and the school director, after repeated warnings, have ordered me to either stop nursing my infant or quit working in the school, because they consider that the class (42 pupils) cannot and should not be left without a teacher for even a minute.

I completely agree with the orders of the head of instruction and the school director that pupils should not be left without a leader for even the shortest amount of time. But it does not follow from this that I, as a teacher-mother, am not able to lead the children in lessons.

This unequal battle has resulted in the victory of the school administration. Despite the orders of a doctors, I had to stop nursing my infant and switch to artificial food, which quickly had a negative effect on the child's health.

I consider that the approach to me taken by the head of instruction and the school director demonstrates an unwillingness to let a teacher-mother have normal conditions for bringing up a healthy infant.

It is possible to find a solution to this situation that does not harm the children and does not violate Soviet law by providing a substitute during this break or by drafting a schedule so that the pupils have another teacher after three hours.

I love the work of teaching and do not want to give it up because of this temporary condition. In the current situation, I demand only that the administration of school 130 provide a little flexibility and human sympathy, so that I can continue working and bringing up my infant normally.

11. Newspaper, Women's Activism

This article reflects a more complex example of state-controlled media. It is more negative in tone, by providing examples of problems in daily life, including shortages of housing and food, unequal treatment at work, and lack of services for families. Once again, the intention is to assert the achievements of the Soviet regime while also referring to problems that needed to be overcome through even greater efforts. In this case, however, the article also seeks to attribute blame for these problems to specific individuals, offices, or practices that could be made accountable. Women continued to bear a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities, and the actual availability of maternity leave, services for new mothers, and child care fell short of promises and propaganda. This article, from the regional newspaper for Uzbekistan, reflects a shift in the tone of the Soviet press during the Great Terror, when articles became almost hysterical in making accusations against alleged “enemies” and “traitors” accused of “anti-Soviet” activities. This extreme language served the dual purpose of explaining continued difficulties by finding scapegoats and legitimizing the repressive measures taken by Stalin, the secret police, and the regime as a whole against so-called “enemies of the people.” In this article, the increased activism in women is contrasted to the continued discrimination, harassment, and even violence that they encountered at the hands of men, as a husband was sentenced to death for attempting to kill his wife in retaliation for her increased political activism in support of the Soviet government.

Source: Pravda Vostoka, “Defending the Rights of a Soviet Woman,” June 22, 1938.

In the collective farm “Communism,” in the Kokandskii district [Uzbek SSR], a determined struggle between Milidzhan Gafurov and his wife Rakhmalia-bibi Rustamova has been going on for the last few years. Rustamova threw off her veil, eliminated her illiteracy, works like a Stakhanovite in the collective farm, and was elected to serve as a brigade leader. With all his strength, Gafurov obstructed the political development of his wife by persecuting her and more than once threatening to kill her.

As an activist and public organizer, Rustamova was nominated and actively participated as a member of the electoral commission for the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Gafurov began to persecute his wife even more strongly, and forced her to leave the collective farm and stop her work in the electoral commission.

Realizing his powerlessness to force his wife to submit to his influence, Gafurov decided to commit a terrorist act. The first time, he tried to kill his wife at night in their apartment, but Rustamova saved herself by running away. The second time, during the drying of the cotton crop, Gafurov again attacked his wife with a knife. This time, she was saved by the intervention of other collective farmers.

The third time, December 12, 1937, on the election day for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, when Rustamova as a member of the electoral commission and busy with work on the elections, Gafurov forced his way into the village soviet and demanded that

Rustomova immediately quit everything and return home. Rustamova refused and went into the electoral commission's room. Following after her, Gafurov attacked his wife with a knife, but was restrained.

This matter was investigated on June 11-12 of this year [1938] in the village of Arzyk-Tepe, in the presence of the collective farm's Military tribunal SAVO composed of acting military jurist second rank comrade Pensin and court members lieutenants Anisenko and Spichkin.

The court determined that Gafurov is a descendant of a kulak-bai family, was a merchant, and has for the last few years lived on the income of his wife. The court sentenced Gafurov to be executed.

The collective farm members attending the trial greeted the sentence with expressions of satisfaction.