

- Campaign”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 14, 2012. Accessed May 10, 2013, [http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbajijani\\_journalist\\_defiant\\_over\\_blackmail/24515283.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbajijani_journalist_defiant_over_blackmail/24515283.html)
- 8 Ben Brumfield, “Salacious Video Defames Journalist Critical of Azerbaijani Government”, CNN, March 20, 2012. Accessed May 10, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/19/world/asia/azerbaijan-video-defamation/index.html>
  - 9 Amanda Erickson, “Khadija Ismayilova”, *The Atlantic* 310, no. 4 (2012): 51.
  - 10 IRFS/IFEX, “Anti-Corruption Journalist Receives Threats, Explicit Images”, *The Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety/International Freedom of Expression Exchange*, March 8, 2012. Accessed May 10, 2013, [http://www.ifex.org/azerbaijan/2012/03/08/ismayilova\\_threatened](http://www.ifex.org/azerbaijan/2012/03/08/ismayilova_threatened)
  - 11 Khadija Ismayilova, personal communication with author, March 30, 2013.
  - 12 According to the updated list of political prisoners, released by the Baku-based Human Rights Club on October 1, 2013, there are two females in Azerbaijani jails among the 142 persons imprisoned for politically motivated reasons. Within the published list both of them are placed under the rubric of Other Cases, with very brief information being provided: “Beylerqizi Shamsiyya - member of the Union of Azerbaijani Journalists and Writers”; and “Safaraliyeva, Shafaq - resident who complained about the Zerdab District Executive Authority head Lutfali Babayev.” When a more thorough Internet search with these names is conducted no other information, but the list itself, can be found online. Although this might be related with the differences in pronunciations of names in their original vernacular forms and English neither of women were mentioned by Khadija Ismayilova during the personal communication as well. Human Rights Club, “Azerbaijan: An Updated List of Political Prisoners”, *The Civic Solidarity Platform*, October 1, 2013. Accessed May 4, 2014, <http://civicsolidarity.org/article/800/azerbaijan-updated-list-political-prisoners>.
  - 13 Daisy Sindelar, “Together A Lifetime, Azeri Activists Now Apart And In Jail”, *RFE/RL*, August 26, 2014. Accessed November 6, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan-yunus-couple-apart-in-jail/26551508.html>.
  - 14 HRW, “Azerbaijan: Investigative Journalist Arrested”, *Human Rights Watch*, December 5, 2014. Accessed December 6, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/05/azerbaijan-investigative-journalist-arrested>.
  - 15 AI, *Amnesty International Public Statement: Azerbaijani Youth Activists Targeted after Using Facebook to Call for Protests* (London: Amnesty International, 2011), 1.
  - 16 Ilkin Mehrabov, “Surveillance, Gender and Social Media: New Politics of Opposition in Azerbaijan” (paper presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference Crossroads in Cultural Studies, Paris, France, July 2-6, 2012).
  - 17 Niloofer Osuli, “Feminism in Republic of Azerbaijan in Globalized World”, *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 9, no. 1 (2011): 44-50.
  - 18 According to the World Bank statistics on the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliaments, 16% of Azerbaijani *Milli Majlis* are women. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>
  - 19 Manijeh Sabi, “The Impact of Economic and Political Transformation on Women: The Case of Azerbaijan”, *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 1 (1999): 111-120.
  - 20 Suzanne Rothman, “Azerbaijan: When Will the Catcalls Stop?”, *EurasiaNet.org*, January 10, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2014, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67929>
  - 21 The graphic is derived from the Caucasus Research Resource Centers’ *Caucasus Barometer 2011 Azerbaijan survey*’s dataset, available at the <http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=17&row=157&column=2&print=true>
  - 22 Katy E. Pearce, “Facebook in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia – 2013 – With a Gender Focus”, Katy Pearce Blog, January 13, 2014. Accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.katyp Pearce.net/facebook-in-armenia-azerbaijan-and-georgia-2013-with-a-gender-focus>



V. Lebedev, “Good Hands”, *Sovetskoe Foto* 6 (1964).

# Paternalistic images of power in Soviet photography

by Ekaterina Vikulina

## abstract

The study was based on the power images of the Soviet period during seventy years, from the beginning to the end of the Soviet regime. The images of the leaders in the widely distributed press played an important part in shaping the ideological platform in the Soviet Union, including the regulation, control and support of a certain gender order.

The representation of gender was studied in the subjects of pictures of the country's authorities and heroes. A significant role in power representations was given to the body, which is the basis of ideological norms and rules.

**KEY WORDS:** Representation, gender, power, Soviet photography.

The focus of this study is the gender aspect of Soviet power, its focus, and its normative status in mass media representations, particularly in magazines. Dynamics of change were traced over a period of seventy years, from the beginning of the Soviet regime to its end. A period of such great length was chosen in order to delineate the full range of changes that took place during the Soviet era, changes that nonetheless overlay a certain continuity in the way media functioned as a means of regulating, controlling, and supporting a gender order.

The images of leaders and officials were published on the front pages of Soviet magazines and served as a pattern of gender norms and bodily codes for the rest of the citizenry. These photos, which appeared in popular, widely distributed publications, played a significant role in shaping the ideological platform of the state. The visual rhetoric of those photos, the context of their emergence, and the techniques used in their production are considered to be one manifestation of power in Foucault's sense of the term.

The media is a space for biopolitics,<sup>1</sup> a means of impacting on our sensuality and our bodies through images of popular culture. Power, politics, and the media are inseparably linked in the creation of "true values" for the masses, including forming representations of gender.



A photographer's selection of a frame is not accidental. He or she stops at one of the endless fragments of reality and makes a choice about its visual embodiment. This makes photos subjective, expressive of the author's opinion, but at the same time, it transmits existing public views about the subject. As Peter Burke noted, what images record "is not social reality so much as social illusions, not ordinary life but special performances", and that is why they offer unique evidence for the history of values or mentalities.<sup>2</sup>

Photography had a special role in representations of Soviet power. This medium had to certify a historical fact, to indicate the success of the socialist construct, to convince people who were assessing communism. Nevertheless, attitudes towards photography as a propaganda tool changed throughout the Soviet period. Bold experiments of the 1920s, marked by a fascination with sharp angles and the technique of photomontage, were replaced during the Stalin period by caution, a fear of uncontrolled information, which led to the retouching of many photographs, transforming them into something with the poses and gestures found in the fine arts.

In turn, the democratization of Khrushchev's image was closely related to the development of photography, the dissemination of amateur photography, and an extended arsenal of pictorial means and options. In the 1960s, photography was promoted as a modern technological medium and was used to propagandize the success of Soviet science, notably the space program.<sup>3</sup>

**THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH** presented here were to analyze how the country's leader appeared in the press, how images of power changed throughout the period, and what representations of power were valid. In addition to the analysis of iconographic schemes, it is important to see who is represented together with the leader in the pictures, his entourage. The image becomes paternalistic in relation to someone who is represented nearby. Hence considerable attention was paid to images of the "First Lady". In this article, the difference between representations of leaders is examined with regard to the relation of a main character to the secondary subjects in the picture (common people, a wife, etc.). A significant role in power representations was also given to the body, which is the basis of ideological norms and rules.

Because the official view of gender roles in Soviet photography was manifested most completely in magazines with wide readership, the present study is based on the material of popular Soviet magazines such as *Sovetskoe Foto* [Soviet Photo], *Ogoniok* [Little Flame], *SSSR na stroike* [USSR in Construction], *Sovetskii Sojuz* [Soviet Union], *Krestianka* [Woman farmer], *Rabotnitsa* [Woman worker], *Sovetskaia zhenshina* [Soviet Woman], *Fizkultura i sport* [Physical Culture and Sports], and *Zdorovie* [Health]. These periodicals are the most appropriate for the research thesis because they are mass-produced and because of their propagandistic function; but they are also important because of the greatly varying contexts in which images of politicians appeared. This gives us a wide spectrum of leaders' representations.



Images of revolutionary women from the magazine *Sovetskaia Zhenshina*. Nadezhda Krupskaya is the first one in this list.

The methods of semiotics and the approaches of visual and cultural studies are essential to this study. Feminist critiques of visual culture, with their attention to the construction of female and male images and to the political meaning of their circulation in media production, have special significance for this type of analysis. In addition, these concrete historical images were examined in the wider cultural and political context. The importance of such an approach has been noted by many authors.<sup>4</sup>

The representation of gender was studied with regard to the characters, events, scenes and settings of pictures in which authorities and heroes of the country appeared. Attention was given to the context of the image's publication (the type of magazine and the accompanying text), the choice of the genre (staged photography, reportage, official portrait), the artistic methods (composition, framing decisions) and the set of photographic codes (close-up, camera angle, distance from the subject) that allows us to see how the image was constructed. The presence or absence of certain iconographic schemes, such as traditional poses, was also noted.

In this analysis, I distinguish several modes of constructing a paternalistic image of power. First, there is the presence of certain iconographic schemes in pictures glorifying the figure of the leader. This was observed mainly in photos of the Stalin period, but it was also noted to some degree in shots of Lenin. This is not to suggest these schemes were not used in other periods, only to highlight the dominant trends. Second, the demonstration of the principle of familial relations through kissing and hugging is analyzed in the photography of the "Thaw". Finally, the image of the First Lady serves as a marker of gender attitudes in society and represents the female hypostasis of power. Photos of First Ladies from throughout the Soviet period are reviewed, as well as some from post-Soviet times, in order to emphasize the similarities and differences of the two epochs.





Members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union published in *Ogonek* 32 (1966).

## Iconography of the leader

As is known, Lenin firmly discouraged visual representations of living Bolsheviks, including himself, but the fact that the Monumental Propaganda project was his initiative “legitimized the practice of singling out individuals for heroization”.<sup>5</sup>

The iconography of Vladimir Lenin was made up mainly of portraits and shots for longer news stories that emphasized the uniqueness, simplicity, and humanity of the political figure, and of his family photos.<sup>6</sup> One of the most famous photographs of Lenin had been taken in January, 1918, by Moisei S. Nappel’baum.<sup>7</sup> This first official portrait was reproduced countless times in magazines and newspapers. It shows a close up of the leader looking directly at the viewer. The close distance, the steadfast gaze, the play of light and shadow created the personification of a new kind of power, expressing Lenin’s individuality, his unpretentiousness and his attention to other people. The clothes also accentuated the simplicity of the leader. Artists were guided by photos presenting Lenin wearing a suit, vest, tie, overcoat, and cap, which was considered informal attire in this period.<sup>8</sup>

Lenin was photographed with his comrades and with Red Army soldiers, peasants, and workers. Reportage shots from meetings stressed the exclusivity of his personality, but most of the photos showed the leader among others, equal to the people photographed. Nevertheless, certain gestures of the leader, such as his outstretched arm, and camera angles elevating his cutting figure at the podium, were subsequently used in artworks to create the canonical image.

Paternalistic traits can be seen not so much in the photos as in the photomontages of that time, in which Lenin was often presented as a larger-than-life figure raising his hand and pointing in the direction of the bright future. Such proportions show Lenin’s

grandeur in relief against other people. The masses appeared in representations of Lenin after his death, and by the early 1930s “had become an indispensable ingredient” in posters featuring the leader.<sup>9</sup>

Such a representation of Lenin as the leader of the masses, was close to Stalin’s iconography, which visually realized the metaphor of “the father of the nation”. At the end of the twenties, Stalin was still portrayed together with his colleagues and the people, but the thirties tended to present him in the figure of the leader. At the beginning of the 1930s, Stalin became the Lenin of his day, and then some. A drawing of Stalin in profile with Lenin’s profile behind him was published in *Pravda* in 1930; the next year *Bol’shevik* for the first time ranked Stalin together with Marx, Engels, and Lenin as a source of wisdom on materialist dialectics.<sup>10</sup>

When Stalin was portrayed together with Lenin, his image was usually placed on the right. Jan Plumper writes that in symbology the left side means the beginning and the woman, and the right side – the end and the man. Thus Lenin always had to appear to the left of Stalin.<sup>11</sup>

Another example of Stalin’s magnification was to show his figure against a background of people and things much smaller than him. Perspectival distortion was widely used in Soviet posters. The most famous exponent of this technique is Gustav Klutis, a Latvian artist who worked with photomontage and who “forged a new path in the creative application of this device for the glorification of Stalin”.<sup>12</sup>

Few people had the honor of being photographed with Stalin. Several children were among these exceptions, and served the symbolic generalization of a paternal guardianship over the nation. For example, in the magazine *USSR in Construction*, Stalin is seen applauding a happy, multinational group of children.<sup>13</sup>

Widely known are the pictures with the little Buryat girl Gelya Markizova in his arms. The Tajik girl Mamlakat Nahangova presents another variation on this theme. She was a schoolgirl who exceeded the norm for cotton picked, and Stalin personally presented her with an award in 1935.<sup>14</sup> From the very beginning of the cult of Stalin, he was portrayed only with girls. The presence of girls emphasized the inaccessibility of the leader: the differences of sex and age expressed the distance between him and others.<sup>15</sup>

The body of the leader had a special status: “Accordingly, while the population dissolved into a single united hyperbody, the singular body of the Leader hypertrophied and multiplied”.<sup>16</sup> Paintings and photographs before the Thaw dealt primarily with the ideal body of the leader, transforming his physical features into the perfect figure of the national leader.

Changes in the ideological regime during the Thaw had profoundly affected various aspects of politics, including the representation of power. They are evident if we compare the pictures of Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev. Photography of the Thaw did not seek to embellish the image of the leader; it did not avoid ordinary physical details of the head of the state. The First Secretary of the Communist Party was represented as an ordinary human being. While the images of Lenin and Stalin were



V. Lenin and N. Krupskaya. *Sovetskaia Zhenshina* 3 (1970).



Indira Gandhi and Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow, 1976.

timeless (“He is always with us” and “Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live”), the figure of Khrushchev was rooted in the present. Where Lenin’s expression “was serious, determined, thoughtful, or slightly ironic, but never jovial”,<sup>17</sup> Khrushchev allowed himself to laugh, to smile broadly, and to show his emotions in other ways.

The image of power became prosaic and everyday. Periodicals did not gloss over the image of the head of state; they did not hide the features of his mediocre body.

**COMPARED WITH THE STRICT**, frozen photo portraits of Stalin, of which there were few,<sup>18</sup> power during the Thaw was represented more informally. Images of Stalin were glorified by the angle of the composition and the lighting, but portraits of Khrushchev did without such expression and represented the uncomplicated appearance of a Soviet bureaucrat. His clothing emphasized the ordinariness of his appearance: a jacket and tie replaced the military uniform of the Generalissimo.

Khrushchev’s photos were published in great quantities on the pages of periodicals. He was often surrounded by people – Party members, workers, and others. Photographers often used wide-angle shots of the Party’s meetings and activities, capturing not only the leader, but also his entourage. This expedient also worked to “democratize” the image of power.

### Hugs and kisses: the sensualization of power

Corporeal confirmation of the promulgated ideas was important to the authorities during the Thaw. A hug and a kiss became a representation of concern for the population of the country, of the granting of assistance to downtrodden people of Africa, or of gratitude for a mission fulfilled. Thus, in the pictures of the Thaw, a kiss and a hug acquired the meaning of a political act. The significance was contextual; it depended on whether the action took place during an official meeting, at a meeting with he-

roes of the country, or with representatives of a particular group.

“The era of kisses” began not with Leonid Brezhnev, as many think, but in the time of the Thaw. It was then that the authorities resorted to emotional expression, to warm gestures – whether a handshake or a hug. Power involved physical contact; it became sensual and tactile. Hugs became the norm at official meetings, as evidence of a trusting relationship, but also extended to Khrushchev’s meetings with ordinary people. The emphasis on sincerity during the period demanded the confirmation of feelings by appropriate gestures.

Khrushchev and his entourage confirmed agreements and cemented their friendship with numerous hugs and kisses. Others of the epoch tried to follow suit. Khrushchev pressed German Titov to his chest (“Fatherly Hug”)<sup>19</sup>; cosmonauts in turn threw themselves into each other’s arms (“Star Brothers”)<sup>20</sup> as well as those of family and friends (“Joy of the Meeting”).<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that the titles of the pictures referred to family relationships.<sup>22</sup> This emphasized warmth, but at the same time signified a hierarchy. The hugs duplicated in the names and captions of the photographs became the norm for visual and verbal expression.

“Parental” discourse was also reproduced directly by Valentina Tereshkova at a press conference in the mention of a “space brother” and Khrushchev’s “fatherlike” concern.<sup>23</sup> The photo “Good Luck and Happiness to the Discoverers of Stellar Roads!” by Vasily Peskov also demonstrates the “family ties” of the leader and cosmonauts.<sup>24</sup> Khrushchev is raising his glass to the health of the newlyweds, Valentina Tereshkova and Andrian Nikolayev. Khrushchev stands next to the bride and groom in a place normally occupied by their parents. Actually, “parental” power also lay in the fact that the marriage was arranged by the authorities as a propaganda move.

A similar expedient, in which love or marriage received a blessing by the intervention of higher authorities had long been known in Stalinist cinema.<sup>25</sup> Photography in this case repro-



Mamie Eisenhower and Nikita Khrushchev in 1959.



The Gorbachev couple. *Sovetskaia Zhenshina* 3 (1991).

duced the familiar story. A kiss and a hug in the Soviet photography of fifties and sixties belonged to the public space and often took place in front of witnesses. They were framed with people around, ordinary citizens or top government officials, which had the effect of verifying and confirming the event. There are similar situations in the Soviet cinema of that time.

Hugs also expressed political support for particular nations. Khrushchev embraced Fidel Castro and black young men with emphatic enthusiasm, and held a Burmese girl and a Russian boy (“Good Hands”).<sup>26</sup> He symbolized assistance to the oppressed African people by a welcoming gesture, gathering black students into his arms.<sup>27</sup> At the Sixth Youth Festival, fraternization took place among all nations, but special attention was given to guests from Africa. Support had to be demonstrated for these countries’ fight against colonialism.

These photos represented Khrushchev as the “father of the nations”, as a “friend” and a “brother”, thereby implying family relationships between peoples. This was a way to demonstrate the international nature of Soviet power and the “parental” tutelage of the Soviet state in relation to other nations. This indulgence in the form of “Helping Hands” produced the friendly image of the Other, building a hierarchy and ensuring the cultural hegemony of the socialist society.

The Thaw cultivated a sensual approach to the world. Displaying hugs and kisses, their permissibility or prohibition, depending on the context, created a sexual tension that attracted attention. But mostly it was a demonstration of familial relations.

### Female hypostases of Soviet power: images of First Ladies

In his book *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, Richard Stites points out that the Soviets never succeeded in matching educational and economic equality of the sexes with political equality on any level. From 1918 until 1924, Stasova was the only woman to appear of the

Central Committee; from 1924 to 1939 there were only four women members in the Central Committee (Nikolaeva, Artiukhina, Krupskaja, and Kalygina). Before 1956, no woman ever sat on the Politburo or the Presidium, the chief political bodies of the Party.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, despite their factual absence in the higher echelons of power, women were not excluded from the scope of power’s representation.

Lenin’s wife, Nadezhda Krupskaja, for example, always occupied a special place in the Soviet pantheon. She often appeared in the pictures of her high-ranking husband. A great deal of attention was given her in particular by the *Sovetskaia Zhenshina* magazines. The image of Krupskaja as a faithful friend and fellow member was to be an inspiration to millions of women. No female image appeared so close to power during the years that followed. None of the wives of later Soviet leaders – not Nina Khrushcheva nor Raisa Gorbacheva, nor the minister of culture Ekaterina Furtseva, nor the first woman cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, nor many others – could begin to approach the status of the “grandmother of the Russian Revolution”. The image of Lenin’s wife remained intact as the image of Lenin, whose only competition after his death was Stalin.

**NEVERTHELESS, THE IMAGE** of Krupskaja typically used was not an aesthetically pleasing one, one that would alleviate or hide physical imperfections. For the young Soviet country, that would look like a shameful rewriting of the past. The Nadezhda Krupskaja in these pictures was a “comrade in a skirt”, with minimal references to sexual identity.

For generations of Soviet people, Krupskaja was a model Communist. Materials about her appeared in the Soviet press regularly, from the early twenties to the late eighties.

Such attention can be explained partly by Lenin’s respectful attitude to his family circle, and, in particular, to Krupskaja, a fact noted by researchers.<sup>29</sup> But this issue was not limited to the personality of Lenin, but was rooted in the new ideology. Pre-



cisely in Lenin's era, the role of women in the political process was taken to be important. Maria Ulianova, Lenin's sister, and the Western communists Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg shared with Krupskaja the image of "flaming revolutionaries". Their portraits were set in honorable places in Soviet textbooks and magazines, but Krupskaja was always on the top of this "female list".<sup>30</sup>

Stalinism accentuated the gender division, the polarized concepts of femininity and masculinity. Stalin's time continued to cultivate heroic revolutionaries, to glorify female workers, collective farmers, and delegates. However, in the higher echelons of power, there was no representation of women. In the shadow was also Nadezhda Alliluieva, Stalin's wife, whose image did not appear in the Soviet press.

The role of the First Lady changed with the Thaw. Nina Khrushcheva, who accompanied her husband on state visits, occupied a special place in relation to the higher echelons of power. For the first time, the wife of a Soviet leader was present in the pictures of official visits of the head of state. Khrushcheva was captured with her husband in a meeting with the Eisenhowers, and with Charles de Gaulle and Yvonne de Gaulle at the Élysée Palace. These photos placed Soviet leaders in a new context of high-society life.

In several pictures, Nina Khrushcheva was even shown without her husband. She was seen giving interviews to American journalists, shaking hands with children, talking with the chairman of the UN General Assembly, Víctor Belandé, communicating with young Frenchmen. Through these pictures, power acquired its feminine hypostasis. At the same time they emphasized the role of women in the Soviet Union and the importance of family ties by presenting the leader of the country as a good family man.

**IN SOVIET PHOTOGRAPHS,** women were represented as having power, mainly as delegates of the congress. Their role in the political life of the country was limited mainly to the declaration of women's rights in the Soviet Union, and to the struggle for peace. It was these issues that were most important at the World Congress of Women, for example, which took place in Moscow in 1963. However, although magazines wrote a great deal about the labor achievements of female workers and peasants, the Soviet era actually had created few recognizable figures of women in power.

These included the minister of culture Ekaterina Furtseva, the only woman to become a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and the cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova. Both greeted the Soviet people from the tribune of the Mausoleum.

The most recognizable Soviet woman was Valentina Tereshkova. Her image played an important role in the representation of women's rights in the USSR. Tereshkova symbolized and validated the victory of socialism and the equality declared by the Constitution. She was an example for all Soviet women, because she functioned in such a difficult role on a par with men. After passing the physical and intellectual trials at the same level as



Hugs and kisses of Nikita Khrushchev: V. Egorov, "Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro", *Sovetskoe Foto* 11 (1960). V. Smetanin, "Fatherly hug", *Sovetskoe Foto* 9 (1961).



men, Tereshkova proved the power of the "weaker sex". The first woman in space was a deputy and a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Chairman of the Committee of Soviet Women until 1989. Her image became a symbol and guarantee of gender equality in the country, and her pictures appeared in the press on a regular basis right up until the end of the Soviet era.

The vast number of members of the Politburo was a visual sign of the stagnation period. Only portraits of the general secretary of the CPSU could compete with their numbers. All magazines were crowded with photographs of Brezhnev. Even during Stalin's cult of personality, there were not as many images of the leader as there were in the seventies. Brezhnev was everywhere: applauding from the tribune, shaking hands with workers, signing agreements at the negotiating table, receiving awards, saluting the people from the mausoleum. Pictures were staged of his speeches at the congresses, with the hall full of applauding delegates.

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev was by no means the sole representation of power – his comrades in the Party also appeared in pictures, but no one else stood out from the faceless state apparatus. The other members of government constituted the background for the leader of the country. Among the women pictured next to Brezhnev were Indira Gandhi and Valentina Tereshkova, as well as ordinary Soviet female workers in reportage photos. Brezhnev's wife was not featured in pictures. Even in the compilation of the family archive, which was published by *Ogonek* on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, her pictures were absent.<sup>31</sup>

The Gorbachev couple clearly contrasted with the tradition of downplaying family ties, appearing together at official meetings and visits abroad. For Soviet citizens such behavior presented an unusual image of power, so it caused considerable misunder-



Boris Yeltsin with the Patriarch Aleksy II. Photo by Y. Feklistov, *Ogonek* 31–33 (1992).

standing and annoyance. This rejection was even discussed on the pages of *Sovetskaia Zhenshina*, which tried to rehabilitate Raisa Gorbacheva in the eyes of the public.<sup>32</sup>

Even in the last moments of his reign, coming down the steps of the plane from Foros with his wife and daughter, Gorbachev was shown as a perfect family man.<sup>33</sup> But in the eyes of the public, this was not a positive characteristic, and it did not win him any points as a political leader – quite the contrary.

## The post-Soviet postscript

At the beginning of the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin was portrayed in a crowd, among people, thereby embodying democratic values.<sup>34</sup> In another shot, with dozens of microphones focused on him, he presents a visual metaphor of publicity.<sup>35</sup> He was also shown drinking tea with the Patriarch – this meant that he respected tradition.<sup>36</sup> In general, the new government tried to surround itself with churchmen in order to express its continuity with the prerevolutionary past.

At the same time that the royal family was rehabilitated, there were publications about the family relationships of royal personages, and about the execution in Yekaterinburg.<sup>37</sup> Materials were accompanied by photographs of a married couple, the Tsesarevich, and the Grand Princesses. The declaration of prerevolutionary values and a call to go “back to the roots” that came after perestroika initiated a return to the patriarchal model.

After Raisa Gorbacheva, who had irritated her compatriots because of her various activities, the figure of the First Lady vanished into the shadows for a long time. Naina Yeltsina did not appear in the press. Her absence in the pictures of her husband indicated a change in the view of the social role of women: public and private were separated even more than before.

Since the election of Vladimir Putin, the First Lady has rarely

been seen in the media. In the words of the *Daily Beast*, during the second term of Putin’s presidency, his wife was, in effect, “invisible”.<sup>38</sup> The disappearance of Lyudmila Putina from the public sphere indicated that Putin had built his image ignoring the family context, as if he were an old bachelor.

The image of Superman – practicing judo, skiing, surfacing out of the deep sea with ancient amphoras – does not need a women’s supplement, which would simply detract from the main character. The image is created simultaneously for all women in the country. Leadership is represented in all spheres and even beyond normal human limits. He is not only the head of state, the “father of the nations”, but also the “king of beasts”, the leader, quite literally, of a flock of cranes.

The reign of Dmitry Medvedev was described by many as a weakening of vertical power. It is symptomatic that the President’s wife became a more powerful figure at this time. Thus, the active position of the First Lady is one of the most important markers of democratic tendencies. The historical process in Russia attests to this.

**THE RELATIVE FREEDOM** of the twenties, which created and glorified the image of the woman revolutionary in the faces of Krupskaya and Kolontai, was replaced by the patriarchy of Stalin’s time, which passed under the shadow of the “father of nations”. After Khrushchev’s Thaw, which took Nina Khrushcheva from the home into the public sphere and placed Valentina Tereshkova on the same level as the men atop the Mausoleum, there came, with the cult of personality of Brezhnev, stagnation. The process of perestroika weakened the old gender mindsets, but not for long. With the post-Soviet “return to the origins”, the patriarchal model came back again, reinforced by market relations.

Paternalism in its visual embodiment asserts itself through iconographic schemes which emphasize the role of the leader through the scale of his figure contrasted with others and depict him as the “father of nations”, the leader of the masses, and their high patron. Gestures also play an important role, expressing trust relationships of the ruler and the people to approve the family character of their connection. Finally, the presence or the absence of the First Lady in power representations, as well as that of female politicians, also indicates the gender politics of the society. The paternalistic model determines the position of a monarch as a sole ruler, while the wife is reduced to at most a decorative function, to a symbol stripped of its power.

The study of images of power permits the revelation of their ideological character, and the detection of a paternalistic attitude and the degree of authoritarianism of a regime. It thereby helps to formulate a critical position towards power, because truly democratic reforms are possible only with a change of gender norms, where equality is a vaccination against the scourge of autocracy. ✖

Ekaterina Vikulina, lecturer at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow.



## references

- 1 According to Michel Foucault, biopolitics is a control apparatus exerted over the population. It is “a new technology of power . . . [that] exists at a different level, on a different scale, and [that] has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments”. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 242.
- 2 Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 28.
- 3 Susan E. Reid, “Photography in the Thaw”, *Art Journal* 53 No. 2 (1994): 33. The Soviet space program included not just space exploration but rocketry in general.
- 4 For an example, see Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 187.
- 5 Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 139. Monumental art was proclaimed by Lenin as an important means for propagating revolutionary ideas.
- 6 Key elements in the aesthetics of Leniniana were simplicity and humanity: “Leniniana cultivated the image of Lenin as a simple and modest man whose outstretched arm projected a new type of power”. These attributes were later transferred to Stalin, with whom they acquired unprecedented proportions (Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 146).
- 7 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 140.
- 8 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 143.
- 9 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 154.
- 10 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 158.
- 11 Jan Plamper, *Alchemy of Power: The Stalin Cult in the Visual Arts* (Moscow: NLO, 2010), 110.
- 12 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 163. One example is Klutsis’s 1936 poster “Kadry reshait vse”, in which Stalin is posed against a red background like Christ in many icons and surrounded by smiling men and women bearing flowers. Klutsis’s poster “K mirovomu oktiabriu” (1933) utilizes a perspectival distortion to aggrandize Lenin and Stalin, whose giant feet are positioned near crowds of very small people (Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 163, 166).
- 13 [Photomontage], *SSSR na stroike* 8 (1937): front cover, 1.
- 14 [Photo], *Sovetskii soiuz* 5 (1953): 8.
- 15 Plamper, *Alchemy of Power*, p. 110. Starting in 1947, these girls did not represent the national republics, but rather had a typically Russian appearance.
- 16 Helena Goscilo, “Post-ing the Soviet Body as Tabula Phrasa and Spectacle,” in *Lotman and Cultural Studies: Encounters and Extensions*, ed. Andreas Schönle (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 261–262.
- 17 Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 153.
- 18 Maya Turovskaya, “Easy for the Heart or Kraft Durch Freude,” in *Soviet Power and Media*, ed. Hans Günther and Sabine Hänsen (Saint Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2006), 250.
- 19 Viktor Smetanin [photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 9 (1961): 2–3.
- 20 Valery Gendo-Rothe [photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 9 (1961): back cover.
- 21 Gennady Kuposov, “Joy of meeting” [Photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 10 (1962) 23–25.
- 22 Parental discourse was very important in representations of the Soviet cosmonauts. This was pointed out by several researchers. Iina Kohonen pointed out ordinariness in the representation of cosmonauts. Photographs of cosmonauts spending time in their beautiful homes with their happy spouses proclaimed that “the heavenly creatures were already living among ordinary people” (Iina Kohonen, “The Space Race and Soviet Utopian Thinking,” *Sociological Review* 57 (2009): 123). See also the article by Matthias Schwartz, “Poslednij ryvok: Intimnaja zhizn’ kosmonavtov v sovetsoj populjarnoj kul’ture i nauchnoj fantastike”. Matthias Schwartz [Last jerk: Intimate life of cosmonauts in Soviet popular culture and Science fiction] in *SSSR: Territoria ljubvi* [USSR: territory of love], ed. Natalia Borisova, Konsantin Bogdanov, Iuri Murashov (Moscow: Novoe Izdatel’stvo, 2008), 171–177.
- 23 “My flight has shown that the female body bears space conditions not worse than men’s . . . I did not have a sense of fear, especially since I worried a lot at first for my space brother Valery Bykovsky. [...] It’s hard to convey what I felt during the conversation with Nikita Khrushchev. He gave me fatherly and warm wishes for a happy flight and landing”. Valentina Tereshkova, “Space does not make a gallant indulgence to a woman,” *Soviet woman* 8 (1963): 8–9.
- 24 Vasily Peskov, “Good luck and happiness to the discoverers of stellar roads!” [Photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 1 (1964): front cover.
- 25 Natalya Borisova, “‘Liubliu – i nichego bolshe’: sovetkaia ljubov’ 1960-1980-x godov” [“I love and nothing else”: Soviet love in the 1960–1980s], in *SSSR: Territoria ljubvi*, 42.
- 26 V. Lebedev, “Good Hands” [photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 6 (1964): colored plates between pp. 24–25.
- 27 Sergey Smirnov [photo], *Sovetskoe Foto* 10 (1961): 2–3.
- 28 Richard Stites, *Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 326.
- 29 Dmitry Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 29–30.
- 30 *Sovetskaia Zhenshina* 3 (1970): 12.
- 31 *Ogonek* 51 (1976).
- 32 *Soviet Woman* 3 (1991): 2–3.
- 33 Yuri Lizunov, “Homecoming” [Photo], *Ogonek* 16–17 (1992): back cover.
- 34 Feklistov Y. [Photo], *Ogonek* 12 (1991): 2.
- 35 Feklistov Y. [Photo], *Ogonek* 24–26 (1992): 2.
- 36 Feklistov Y. [Photo], *Ogonek* 31–33 (1992): 14.
- 37 Edward S. Radzinsky, “Shooting in Yekaterinburg”. *Ogonek* 21 (1989): 4–5, 30–32. The Russian imperial family, the Romanovs, were shot in Yekaterinburg on July 17, 1918.
- 38 Anna Nemtsova, “Where Is Russia’s First Lady?,” *The Daily Beast*, January 13, 2013. Accessed November 3, 2014 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/13/vladimir-putin-s-wife-lyudmila-has-all-but-vanished-and-russians-don-t-seem-to-care.html>.