

The New Soviet Man With a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver...

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Abstract. The “New Man” is a utopian concept that involves creating an ideal man and replacing the imperfect human being. The beginning of the ideas of creating the new man can be found in ancient Greece and Rome, in the works of utopians and educators, as well as in theological texts. Although this ideologeme as one of the constructs of modernity was fully formed by the end of the 19th century, the efforts to practically implement it are connected with the establishment of (para)totalitarianism. One of the best-known examples of such an attempt was the ambition to create the New Soviet Man. After giving up aspirations to create a perfect biological individual, in the long-term perspective, the main focus was laid on forming an ideologically correct New Man, a builder of communism. Education was seen as one of the key means of achieving this objective. Seeking to identify how the image of the New Man was reflected in the curriculum (primary in particular), 36 textbooks published between 1925–1985 and used in the state schools of Soviet Russia and the Baltic States were analysed.

Although the concept of the New Man includes both the male and female person, the most frequently considered is a male. This article aims to discuss how textbooks represent the Soviet woman by considering the following aspects: what was specific to the New Soviet Man – Woman? What did the Soviet regime expect from women in the context of the New Soviet Man project? How did the project of New Man reflect the gender equality idea?

Keywords: Soviet education, New Man, Soviet woman, gender equality, textbooks.

Naujasis sovietinis žmogus moters kūne: motina, mokytoja, traktorininkė

Santrauka. Naujojo žmogaus sukūrimo idėjos užuomazgų galima rasti senovės Graikijoje ir Romoje, taip pat utopistų, švietėjų kūrinuose, teologiniuose tekstuose, tačiau ši ideologema galutinai susiformavo XIX a. pabaigoje, o bandymai ją realizuoti praktiškai sietini su (para)totalitarizmo įsigalėjimu. Vienas iš žinomiausių tokių bandymų pavyzdžių – siekis sukurti Naujajį sovietinį žmogų. Šis bandymas nuo kitų skiriasi komunistine ideologija, kuri kiekvienam reiškiniui suteikia „papildomų reikšmių ar funkcijų“ (Prozorov, 2013, p. 210). Kitaip tariant, visus daly-

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kus SSRS galima suprasti ir paaiškinti tik diktatūros tikslu – utopinė ateities visuomenė „komunizmas“, kurios vardu valstybė viską ir visus reguliavo. Atsisakius siekių sukurti tobulą biologinį individą, ilgainiui susitelkta į ideologiškai teisingo naujojo žmogaus, komunizmo statytojo, formavimą. Švietimas buvo vienas iš pagrindinių šio uždavinio vykdytojų. Siekdami išsiaiškinti, kaip naujojo žmogaus vaizdinys atsispindėjo ugdymo (ypač pradinio) turinyje, išanalizavome 36 vadovėlius, išleistus 1925–1985 m. ir naudotus sovietinės Rusijos ir Baltijos valstybių mokyklose.

Nors sąvoka „naujasis žmogus“ apima ir vyriškos, ir moteriškos lyties asmenį, vis dėlto dažniausiai omenyje turimas vyras. Šiame straipsnyje mes siekėme aptarti, kaip vadovėliuose pateiktas sovietinės moters paveikslas atkreipdami dėmesį į šiuos aspektus: kas būdinga naujam sovietiniam vyrui ar moteriai? Ko sovietinis režimas tikėjosi iš moters „Naujojo sovietinio žmogaus“ projekto kontekste? Kaip „Naujojo sovietinio žmogaus“ projektas atspindėjo lyčių lygybės idėją?

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: sovietinis švietimas, Naujasis sovietinis žmogus, sovietinė moteris, lyčių lygybė, vadovėliai.

Introduction. A woman's place in the project of the “New Soviet Man”

When in 1917, the ninth wave of Bolsheviks flew across the spacious fields of Russia and, metaphorically speaking, the tide approached, the new Soviet government had to consider implementing revolutionary ideas in practice. The situation was unenviable – the illiterate comprised around 60% of all inhabitants older than 8 years, in rural areas reaching even 82%; poverty, heavy drinking and crime ruled the country. (Shepler, 2008, p.15, 19) In these gloomy conditions, Bolsheviks brought forward a “breath-taking idea”, the greatest experiment in the world’s history (Bowen, 1981) – to create a new human being or “a new man,” developed on a physically and mentally higher level. This New Soviet Man was portrayed as a perfect creature – “the best man” (Savage, Velikanova, 2011) – a hero and role model: intelligent, diligent, an active citizen, athletic and physically gifted.¹ Of course, the perfect human being was not a new idea – the ancient Greeks and Romans tried to create one; it is also known as the *Übermensch* in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. (Ibid., p.6) But the Soviet version was different from other attempts with the particular Communist ideology that added “additional meanings or functions” to every phenomenon. (Prozorov, 2013, p.210) In other words, all matters in the USSR can only be understood and explained through the purpose of this dictatorship – utopian future society of communism, in the name of which the state regulated everything and everyone.

In 1920s, the creation of New Soviet Man, a builder of Communism, was perceived as not only as a pedagogic objective but also as a selection of people. With the state’s blessing, Soviet psychologists studied heredity and thought about the selection of artificial men,² namely, the coupling of perfect men and women for the mass production of perfect communists. (Kogan, 2011, p.165) However, from the 1930s, heredity was denied in the USSR (Babkov, 2001), and in 1936 a Communist party decree banned pedology (Kogan, 2011, p.167) – a pedagogo-psychological approach that emphasized heredity and used testing for predicting a child’s mental development. It put a stop to the ideas of eugenics in the Soviet public space. It was now required to construct the

¹ “Through this purely idealistic vision that was taken from Marx and Engels, Lenin and his party carried out their utopian reforms in the hopes of recreating the perfect citizens.” (Savage, Velikanova, 2011, p.6).

² “Attempts at eugenics” as called by Savage and Velikanova (2011, p.9).

New Man from already “existing material,” by means of production and transformation or education and re-education. The state entrusted the task of creating the New Man to the functionaries of the Communist Party, scientists, and pedagogues.³ Their scope of work was enormous, as it was not a small thing to shape a completely new “species” of a man from the traditional material.

We know that a direct translation from the Russian would be a “New Soviet Person.” However, public discourse in the Soviet Union was controlled by men and the New Soviet Person was, to some extent, their self-portrait. Additionally, official texts clearly emphasize the masculine part of that Soviet creature: for example, “Communist moral covers the various sides (...) of man as a worthy son of his nation.” (Ogorodnikov, Shimbirov, 1946, p.56). Thus, we will continue to use the concept of New Soviet Man.

In our study, we reviewed one part of New Man’s project, namely, the fabrication of the New Soviet Man from a woman’s flesh. The body emerged in our study as an important discourse because it is traditionally associated with the female gender (Barnacle, 2009, p.23) and *vice versa*. Communists were driven by the idea about complete equality in humanity and a homogenous society – without classes and ethnic or gender-related peculiarities. (Kestere, Rubene, 2017, p. 59-68). But they met an unexpected obstacle – only a woman was born with large breasts and a vagina, and only a woman was able to give birth to a child. This was something the creators of New Man had to keep in mind.

Our study focused on the following questions: what was specific to the New Soviet Man – Woman? What did the Soviet regime expect from a woman in the context of the New Soviet Man project?

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, several studies have been published with a clearly formulated concept – discovering the hidden discrimination forms of the Soviet woman, showing her as a victim of the ruling regime. (Channell-Justice, 2020; Lazda, 2005; Roudakova, Ballard-Reisch, 1999) We were interested in the issue whether really everything was so simple in the USSR concerning the (in)equality of genders? How did the New Man project reflect the gender equality idea?

The communist perception of the world order was made known already during childhood and systematically repeated throughout the life of a person, where education institutions took up an essential role as the imposers of discipline onto the body and mind.⁴ We cannot image schools without teaching materials leading to the fact that textbooks became an efficient propaganda tools for the Soviets. Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869–1939), wife of Lenin, and ideologist of the Soviet education emphasized the role of textbooks: textbooks should regard the basis of “principal political issues.” (Krupskaya, 1959). So, it was stated clearly that task of the textbook in the Soviet school is not only to provide knowledge but also propagate communist ideas. Rephrasing Foucault, alongside teach-

³ One of the most renowned Soviet psychologists Lev Vygotsky and his trainees took up the creation of a New Soviet Man with great conviction and enthusiasm. Gielen and Jeshmaridian (1999) consider that the belief of Vygotsky of the possibility that this New Man could be created serves as an evidence of his professional weakness.

⁴ Soviet school as the imposer of discipline on the person is a popular illustration on the Foucault theories of power. (Hewitt, 2001)

ers, the textbooks served as another weapon for “normalization” and “imposing of discipline.” The Soviet censorship meticulously controlled fulfilment of this task.

Textbooks as an important tool for the creation of New Soviet Man have not received due attention, therefore textbooks from 1929 to 1985 used in the Soviet schools in Russia and Baltic States were the source of this study. We analysed 10 books published in Moscow, including two primers for adults, 14 books published in Riga, including one primer for adults. The range of textbooks also embraced 11 books (including 1 primer) for Lithuanian schools with Polish as language of instruction published in Kaunas as well as one textbook in Lithuanian for schools in Poland with Lithuanian as language of instruction, which was published in Warsaw. Moreover, one textbook published in Tallinn was also analysed.⁵ The available base of sources defined the time frame where oldest textbooks were the ones published in 1929. On its turn, the year 1985 was chosen because of the change in the political context of USSR: this was the year of Gorbachev *perestroika* bringing along democratic changes in all the public life areas of USSR, education included.

We used both text and images for content analysis. We studied how and in what context woman as a “New Soviet Man with the body of a female” (Gradskova, 2007) – a part of “the Soviet biopolitical project” (Prozorov, 2013) is represented in 197 excerpts. Following the studies of Sergei Prozorov in the biopolitics, we especially focused on the representation of women’s gender and professional activities related to role of mother, as well as her leisure time.

Woman as New Soviet Man. Pedagogical Texts

After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Nadezhda Krupskaya took up the care for women and children (in the spirit of the best aristocratic traditions). Her writings and speeches during the period from 1920 to 1939 declared a course of action that was introduced into the pedagogical practice of USSR to a bigger or smaller extent. Basically, Krupskaya created the communist education system and its ideology that influenced all the coming generations until the collapse of USSR in the 1990s.

In her writings Krupskaya expressed a conviction that women and men should be completely equal. These notions fitted perfectly into the global movement of intellectuals of 1920s and 30s, who propagated woman’s liberation (Turner, 2001, 18-19). However, it is important to emphasize that Krupskaya was the wife of a leader in an authoritarian country and therefore the emancipation movement was not a matter of narrow group of intellectuals but was raised on the state policy level. Krupskaya admitted that in the 1920s women in Soviet Union were still economically dependent “slaves of the family,” who had to fight for their liberation. Education is the weapon of this fight, as the educated woman will know how to become independent (Krupskaya, 1959). Women re-

⁵ The authors are grateful to staff of *Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research* (Germany) and especially to director Prof. Eckhardt Fuchs for the opportunity to work on their rich textbook library. We are also thankful to the employees of the Museum of Lithuanian Education History.

quired education also to be able to do the same jobs as a men. Therefore, we come to a logical conclusion that both men and women should acquire similar education. Krupskaya writes that boys and girls should study together; Soviet school cannot emphasize gender differences, boys and girls should be good comrades to each other, grow up in similar circumstances and enjoy equality of rights from a young age (Ibid.). Education also had an added value – it helped to discipline and structure the society, taught the individual how to assess and control oneself. (Popkewitz, 1988, p.88; Kogan, 2011, p.166) Formation of the New Soviet Man started as early as childhood, and boys and girls were given equal starting positions.

Equality had to prevail throughout the further life of both genders as well – everyone had to work in a state-funded productive job and share rights and responsibilities equally. Main statements of the Soviets as to this regard were clear and concise, expressed in the form of slogans in the primer for adults published in Moscow in 1929 and 1930: “Soviet government granted all rights to women. Woman can rule the country. She is a fully-fledged ruler in her home. She owns as many things as man does. (..) There is a lot of work. Woman should be liberated from the household. This will give her the chance to take part in the building of Socialism.” (Golant, Vissel, 1929, p. 89)

So, the task of a woman was not to work on behalf of her and her family but for the sake of state and future society. When telling about the family, textbooks always included occupations of family members and taught children to be proud of it: “Mother of Maiga and Marta (..) is a doctor. She treats sick people,” (Lubāniete, Bērziņa, Vuškāle, 1955, p.76) but “Victor’s mother is a seamstress in the factory (..) Sister Maiga is a teacher.” (Ozoliņš, 1950, p. 40). First and foremost women were presented in the textbooks as teachers at school or kindergarten (Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1954, p. 21, 29), the “doctor” was yet another intelligent occupation (Lauriniene, Szczerbinskiene, 1954, p.78.), followed by less qualified jobs as nurse, nanny in kindergarten, cook, seamstress and cashier. (E.g., Alittoa, Raigā, 1955, 68; Barannikov, Varkovickaja, 1973, 56; *Bukvar*, 1985, 56, 94). The textbooks were also filled with women – blue collar workers: tractor drivers, kolkhoz stock breeders and workers of the rural brigades, weavers in factories, bricklayers and painters. (Lauriniene, Szczerbinskiene, 1954, p.54; Alittoa, Raigā, 1955, p. 97; Nesterovs, Osmanis, 1976, p. 46, Gylienė, 1982, p.67) In 1941 the primer for adults tells: “Aina takes care of 12 cows. She looks after them very attentively. (..) Cows give so much milk every day.” (Ozols, 1941, p.18). Therefore, Aina delivers a specific, measurable product to the society, and the textbooks emphasise that efficient work deserves special respect and appreciation: “Margute [the cow] gave lot of milk this year. For this reason, milkmaid Kubiliene and her Margute were photographed and their picture was published in the newspaper” (Chlebinkas et al., 1962, p.110). The example of milkmaid as a hero of labour was one of the most frequently met example.

There were not any women mentioned as artists, lawyers, or secretaries, which were quite popular female occupations in the USSR. Thus, hierarchy was introduced in the professional career of a woman – productive work was praised the most, also adding doctors and teachers to it. In 1937 the accomplishments of the Soviet ruling were priced

in the printed media – 40.4% of women worked in factories and did construction work, while in imperialistic Russia women were mostly employed as maids, in the service industry, and by individual farmers. (Lazda, 2005, p.103)

Apparently, the Soviet woman also works in occupations traditionally considered to be men's jobs. The state promoted selection of masculine occupations also due to practical reasons – men were lost in wars and Soviet repressions. (Roudakova, Ballard-Reisch, 1999, p.22) The analysed textbooks praise tractor drivers, women employed in construction and factories. For example, in the primer for adults published in 1930, Njusa is a tractor driver in the community and takes cares of her tractor “like of a baby.” (Kaidanova, Porshneva, Azarov, 1930, p.24). The image of the woman-tractor driver is very vivid also in the textbooks of the further years: in the primer of 1973 children are proud of their mother who is a state renowned tractor driver. (Barannikov, Varkovickaja, 1973, p.152).

As the women were brought into “masculine” occupations, the textbooks altered the professional image of a man – almost iconic Soviet occupations were given to him – for example, blacksmith (Chlebinkas et al., p.87; Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1954, p.40) that was seen in the Soviet propaganda art immediately after the 1917 revolution. Woman never qualified for that job and she was depicted just as the assistant of the blacksmith (something that never existed in real life). (Bonnell, 1997, p. 23)

To work in manufacturing woman needed a good health. In the primer of 1929, the story “We should try to be like them” presents worker Nikitina, who has been employed for 40 years in the factory but has never missed a single working day – “has not been even sick for once.” (Golant, Vissel, 1929, p.55) So health is an important virtue of a woman. Good health and strength were needed not only for productive work, but also for giving birth to a child, namely, to solve the demographic problems of the USSR. The Soviet country required material for the creation of a New Soviet Man. But after the birth of a child responsibilities of mother, as well as other household works, were entrusted to the state. As the primer states, woman “should be liberated from the household works.” (Ibid., p.31). Primers propagated day care centres for babies, telling how great children felt there: “We have a day care centre for the babies next to the factory (..) Here babies receive food and drink. Babies are in a warm and clean place.” (Ibid.) Next to “liberation” of mother, there was another purpose of isolating the child from the family: when the child was put under the care and protection of the state, it received an option to subject the child to the communist ideology from an early age. (Kogan, 2011, p.165) Here we can use the famous quote of Lenin “Give us the child for 8 years and it will be a Bolshevik forever.”

As textbooks have stated, female workers are also excited about the public catering options. Workers like the canteen of the factory named after Lenin: lunch offer includes soup, meat, porridge and bread. Food is filling and cheap. You can also take it home. Workers admit: “I am sick of the kitchen and worries. I need to attend school or club in the evening.” (Golant, Vissel, 1929, p. 32).

So, the textbooks of early Soviet period in particular promise woman a life similar to the man's life – spend your daily life at a job outside home, children in the day

care centre, food in the canteen and devote evenings to your interests. Thus, putting the household, upbringing of children and free time completely in the control of the public, namely, the state. The impact of the family on the upbringing of a child reduces.⁶

However, while praising the emancipation of women, Soviet power soon was faced with declining birth rates. A woman busy with working, education and social life had no longer allowed the time to give birth to and nursing children, and it threatened, with the shrinking of a new generation of Soviet workers, the raw material for New Soviet Man. That is why the communists decided to put a double burden on the woman's shoulders – both productive work and the role of the housewife (Roudakova, Ballard-Reisch, 1999). And so, in the long run, the textbooks (Lithuanian ones in particular) returned the woman-mother to the kitchen. She not only prepares food every day (e.g., Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1949, p.100) but also takes care of supplies for winter: “We have cherries and goose-berries. Strawberries and currants. We also have a jar of plump jam. <...> During the summer mom prepared different supplies for winter” (Vaina, 1958, p.43).

The state undertook care of the physical health of a woman, which was required both at work and in a role of a mother. In 1931 the special state program “Ready for the Work and Protection of USSR (GDA)” was implemented that defined physical condition criteria for all citizens of USSR from 10 to 60 years of age. A special badge was granted to those who fulfilled the criteria in a particular sports discipline. The discourse of physical health, body culture and movement of hygienists in 1920s and 30s were very popular around the world. (Mayer, 2018) In the USSR, it was put on a state level and successfully implemented afterwards. The textbooks invited: “We all do sports! Small and big, young and old.” (Kaminska, Čapļina. 1946, p. 18)

The image of the healthy, strong and working woman was portrayed in the poem of Lebedinska published in textbook of 1947. The author asks who is a person that cares for a baby with a smile on her lips and a song in her voice, operates a plane, works with the surgeon's knife, knows how to shoot and ski in the snowstorm? Who has a glistening GDA badge on her chest? Who is the person that always performs her tasks excellently, moves through the path of life securely and proudly in both the sun and rain? You can find the answer in the end of poem: this heroine is the Soviet woman. (Landa, Lebedinska, 1947, p.70) So it was officially proclaimed that real Soviet woman is capable of everything.

Woman – New Soviet Man. Images in the textbooks

The image, as Burke describes it, frequently illustrates a generalization, (Burke, 2001, p. 187) The textbooks of Soviet pupils included all Soviet World and this world was perfect and correct (Vails, Geniss, 2006, p.77-78), meaning that also the image of a woman in the textbook was a generalized ideal or “standard model.” Guiding from the

⁶ As Brickman and Zepper considers, in 1956 a system of boarding schools rapidly introduced in USSR served as “a long-range plan of accelerating the upbringing of the New Soviet Man by weakening the family's influence upon children.” (1992, p.42)

official viewpoints in the textbooks about the role and purpose of a woman in the Soviet society, when starting to analyse images, we expressed a hypothesis about seeing a masculine woman. But we were wrong. In the textbooks we did not find the physically well-trained and exaggeratedly muscular body of the woman depicted in Soviet posters and art. (Svičiulienė, 2016)

The following components characterize the visual image of a person: body (gender, age, skin colour, height, body constitution, hair, health condition and body ornament), outfit (clothes, jewellery, accessories and footwear), verbal communication (voice characteristics, including tone) and non-verbal communication (body language, including gesture and mimics; location in the room). (Kestere, Kalke, 2018)

There are three groups of women's images dominating in the Soviet textbooks: (1) woman – mother, (2) woman – teacher and (3) woman – employee, and women – hero (4). Frequently the first and third groups are overlapping: *mother* is also an occupation.

Throughout the years, the visual image of the mother is constantly beautiful – she is a young, feminine creature, dressed fashionably and with taste, her facial expression is kind, she is smiling. (Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1954, p.8; Citoviča, Arbeiterere, 1982, p.4, 49) Also when doing household work, her clothes are neat and orderly, protected by an apron. She is preparing for her role as a mother since childhood – we can see that in the images where the girl takes care of the doll as a baby. (Lauriniene, Szczerbinskiene, 1954, p.14, 17) In the pictures the mother runs the household and performs all traditional female duties at home. She takes children to school, makes dinner, washes laundry, cleans the house, shops, sews and knits... (E.g., Redozubov, 1946, p.3; Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1954, p. 14, p.42; Lauriniene, Szczerbinskiene, 1954, p. 41, 56; Alittoa, Raigna, 1955, p.69; Barannikov, Varkovickaja, 1973, p. 75; *Bukvar*. 1985, p. 9) The mother is pictured as a perfect housewife, but we cannot forget that she also has a duty to be productive at work outside home.

The teacher is presented almost as beautiful as the mother (Kestere, Kalke, 2018). It is the most frequently represented female occupation in the textbooks. The teacher is young, her body is beautiful and feminine, clothes are nice but modest, she always (!) wears a skirt or dress, never trousers, her hair is long and set, her facial expression is kind. (e.g., Čiplys, Pupeikis, 1954, p. 21; Gyliene, Jakubauskienė, 1974, p. 129; Citoviča, Arbeiterere, 1982, p.10) Frequently we can see a Komsomol badge attached to her clothing, demonstrating that the teacher belongs to the Young Communist League (Komsomol) (Lauriniene, Szczerbinskiene, 1954, p. 90.) The teacher bridges the gap between the roles of a mother and worker. She radiates love towards children but at the same time is employed in a productive, state-paid occupation.

The third group in the textbooks shows a woman as a representative of low-qualified or physical labour. Just like the mother and the teacher, the members of this group have a feminine body, they are dressed nicely, even trendy and colourfully, in distinction to their male colleagues. The woman's hair is set, frequently covered with a scarf. (E.g., Alittoa, Raigna, 1955, p. 69; Jurgutienė, Tomkytė, 1963, p. 10, 12, 13; Barannikov, Varkovickaja, 1973, p.31, 74; Nesterovs, Osmanis, 1976, p. 46; Citoviča, Arbeiterere, 1982, p.9.) Mostly

she wears skirts and works in the field or garden. (E.g., Čiplies, Pupeikis, 1954, p. 38, 39; Jurgutienė, Tomkytė, 1963, p.10; Barannikov, Varkovickaja, 1973, p.12, 165).

As for the female hero (fourth group), it must be said that the specialists in the Soviet propaganda developed several prototypes of “The New Man.” The majority of those prototypes referred to males: nature conquerors – geologists, polar explorers (Bolotova, 2004), pilots, soldiers and partisans, heroes of socialist labour and, undoubtedly, cosmonauts. (Gerovitch, 2007) Although textbooks contained the biggest number of texts about and images of Jury Gagarin, Valentina Tereshkova, the first female cosmonaut in the world, was also mentioned there. (Gylienė, 1982, p. 76) However, the image of Maryte Melninkaitė, a heroine of Soviet Union, is most often used in the Lithuanian textbooks⁷. The monument to Melninkaitė depicts a woman with a gun in her hands, but dressed in a skirt. Even though the poem in textbook with the picture of the monument raises the question “who is going to continue her deeds?” (Čiplies, Pupeikis, 1960, p.133), it is hardly addressed to girls. The majority texts of other primary textbooks and their illustrations do not encourage the girls to become heroines and the same is about becoming pilots or cosmonauts. The textbooks (e.g., Gylienė, 1974, p. 54, Gylienė, Jakubauskienė, 1980, p. 3) present these activities and occupations as boys’ aspirations.

Judging from the textbook images, the Soviet woman does not lose any of the traits associated with femininity when performing any work, even while fighting enemies – her clothes are pretty and her body with feminine curves, her hair is long and she is dressed in traditional women’s clothing.

Conclusions

Soviet textbooks show us the woman as a very biological creature – her life purpose and meaning hides in her body. Soviet ideology defined and promoted the idea that everything must be productive in the Soviet Union. Everything that can be measured and counted is highly appreciated, as it provides an apparent benefit to the society. The extract of economic utility is completely drawn out from the body of a Soviet woman. (Prozorov, 2013; Hewitt, 2001, p. 228, 233)

Her work results, sports achievements and number of children determine productivity, and it denotes the value of a woman. So, the body of a woman in the hierarchy of production was put on the highest level – the woman was twice as productive, she produced both in her workplace and produced in the family, giving birth to children.

According to these criteria, the woman’s body is more productive than the man’s body. Therefore, women also get more privileges. The state cares for her health and tries to set her free from the traditional household works, as well as creates favourable

⁷ According to V. Davoliūtė and L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė (2016), the studies of the portrait of Marytė Melninkaitė (1923–1943) revealed that this young woman, who fought against Nazi Germany within divisions of Soviet partisans, was not accidentally chosen for the cult of heroine. She was an equivalent to Russian partisan Zoja Kosmodemjanskaja, who was killed at the age of 18. Just as Kosmodemjanskaja, Melninkaitė supplemented the pantheon of Soviet heroes with the features of purity and unconditional devotion to political ideals formed by the Communist party. She was particularly suitable for school propaganda.

conditions for her education. In her turn, the responsibility of woman was to pay for these privileges by work: working outside home, giving birth to children, taking care of her health and in the free time also of her mental world. Her body, just like everything in the Soviet Union, both directly and indirectly was not a property of an individual but managed, controlled and regulated by state institutions. (Hewitt, 2001, p.228)

An important issue of the textbooks is not only what is included in them but also what is left out. (Grever, Van der Viles, 2017, p. 291) Although the equality of all occupations is publicly declared, the list of occupations entrusted to a woman is still limited, and the jobs requiring less qualification mainly prevail there, with the exception of the teacher and the doctor. The message is clear: a woman should employ her body but not her brain. Thus, physical labour is made poetic and aesthetic.

On the other hand, the lower productivity of a male body is compensated by his intellectual superiority confirmed by the fact that Soviet republic leaders and top-level officials were only men. As the brain among intellectuals is always valued higher than the body, there is a consensus in the academic community about discrimination against women in the USSR: if the state valued mainly a female body but not her mind, she is discriminated.

Another explanation can be also given to the beautiful female-worker in textbooks, especially the ones published in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. According to Lazda, the protection of traditional social roles was a way of protesting against the order imposed by the Soviet dictatorship in Baltic lands (2005, p.13). A small number of women in “masculine” occupations observed in the textbooks of the Baltic States in comparison to the ones published in Russia could serve as a confirmation for that. The woman of the Baltic States believed that the Soviet ruling violently took her out of the traditional female roles. As the Soviets were “bad ones,” the emancipation of women was perceived in a negative light as well. Until now, feminism has not gained wide recognition amongst the generation brought up in the Baltic States during the Soviet times.

Returning to our study question – what is specific for the New Soviet Man/Woman – we can say that in the project of New Soviet Man, the woman was converted into a body. Metaphorically speaking, the perfect New Soviet Man was endowed with the body of a woman and the mind of a man.

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