

To cite text:

Cherepanova, Ekaterina, and Maria Yantsen. 2025. "Designing the Mother-Peacemaker in the USSR of the 1980s: From Stagnation to Perestroika." *Philosophy and Society* 36 (3): 723–741.

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DESIGNING THE MOTHER-PEACEMAKER IN THE USSR OF THE 1980S: FROM STAGNATION TO PERESTROIKA¹

ABSTRACT

This article examines the representations of the mother fighting for peace in Soviet culture of the 1980s. There is substantial research literature on the struggle for peace in the Soviet Union, which was a key aspect of the country's foreign policy after the Great Patriotic War. This article aims to explore the results of this activity from the perspective of post-conflict culture, which is understood as an evolving set of norms and meaning-making processes that emerge in a society after a conflict, as it reflects on the experience of war. The revision of the military conflicts' outcomes and its moral lessons is reflected in efforts to engineer "a new human" and construct a new vision of his future. This study examines the image of the mother-peacemaker as part of the Soviet post-conflict project that began after the end of the Second World War, in order to reveal the principles and norms that shaped the re-evaluation of later military conflicts and the creation of symbolic visions of a peaceful future. The analysis draws on publications and illustrations from the Soviet women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*, which had a circulation of millions in the 1980s.

KEYWORDS

Soviet post-conflict culture, project for engineering a new human, war, motherhood, struggle for peace, women's magazines of the 1980s

Recent events have reignited interest in post-conflict societies and the cultural shifts they undergo. War leaves a lasting mark on culture, shaping how societies interpret past conflicts and assess new ones. Moral judgments about military actions and their outcomes are constantly revisited as people seek to make sense of later wars. This article examines the phenomenon of post-conflict culture that emerged after World War II—specifically, in the case of the USSR, after the Great Patriotic War. We start from the premise that post-conflict culture took shape after the Second World War in countries involved in the global conflict. It was reflected in efforts to build political, legal, educational, and cultural institutions that addressed the immediate needs of the postwar

¹ The research was supported by the grant from the Russian Science Foundation, № 23-18-00851, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-18-00851/>.



period and aimed to prevent future large-scale wars. In this sense, the legacy of the war continued to influence societies for decades, lasting practically until the late 1990s, when its long-term consequences, such as the Cold War and the socialist system in Eastern Europe, came to an end. From this perspective, it is possible to view the late Soviet period as a time in which elements of post-conflict culture remained active. One such element was the ideological construction of the mother as peacemaker.

As Cristina Demaria observes, there are two dominant processes in post-conflict situations. First, cultural systems reinforce and consolidate themselves by integrating the conflict into dominant practices. Second, meanings undergo transformation or even redefinition, forming the foundation of any culture (Demaria 2019: 12). The cessation of military action does not mean that a conflict is instantly resolved. Its consequences become embedded in documents, policies, and institutions, while society enters a new phase in which participants, reflecting on the outcomes of war, begin to reshape social relations and develop policies and practices that reinterpret wartime experience. This process contributes to building a vision of the future and lays the foundation for post-conflict engagement.

One key aspect of these transformations is the efforts to engineer a “new human,” as new human models are proposed by ideology and represented in anthropological theories (philosophical, pedagogical, etc.), artistic culture, and memory practices. Soviet culture in the second half of the 20th century remained deeply connected to the experience of the Great Patriotic War, making it a unique subject for analyzing post-conflict development. Rooted in a Marxist vision of history, which was oriented toward the future, Soviet culture offers insights into both the ideological project of engineering an ideal man and the discrepancies between its intended goals and actual outcomes. Recent studies show that “post-conflict societies expect mothers to perform the role of everyday mediators between the past and the future, as well as the role of everyday peacemakers in the present” (Omori 2024). Therefore, examining the concept of the mother as a fighter for peace can provide a deeper understanding of post-conflict transformations in Soviet culture and the human ideals it sought to promote.

Our hypothesis is that post-conflict culture should not be limited to the period of immediate recovery. Its temporal boundaries may not coincide with those of the post-conflict situation, and for that reason, it cannot be defined solely as “postwar.” We understand post-conflict culture as one that, through various forms of symbolic representation, assimilates the experience of war.

In Soviet culture of the later period, including the 1980s, values and meanings rooted in wartime memory continued to function and evolve. This was evident both in the cultural memory of the Great Patriotic War and in ideological projects to engineer the “new human” of late socialism.

This paper analyzes the engineering of a “new human” through four dimensions: cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and bodily. We adopt a broad understanding of *proyektirovanie*, which can be translated as “projecting” or “engineering”, as both a concept and an action by drawing on Georg Simmel’s concept of spatial

projection, Henri Bergson's idea of conception, and Jacques Derrida's analysis of the object (Bojanic and Cherepanova 2021). Projecting involves a forward-looking orientation that is defined not only by time but also by space—a kind of social space that exists in a future that has not yet arrived. As such, projects may carry spatial and timeless value characteristics.

At the cognitive level, the concept of projecting/engineering offers a conceptual framework for understanding a military conflict: its causes and triggers, the factors that shaped its course and outcome, and its political consequences. It provides a coherent interpretation of the war, one that goes beyond personal experience. This model of understanding can then be applied to other conflicts. In our case, we explore how the representation of the Great Patriotic War's tragic legacy was reinterpreted in a popular women's magazine throughout the 1980s.

At the moral level, projecting/engineering involves defining the normative foundations for evaluating the conflict. This process establishes the expected moral stance individuals should take, addressing questions of responsibility for the outcome, the justice of violence, the cost of victory, and the role of sacrifice. The actions of those involved in the war are evaluated using terms such as heroism, courage, betrayal, and so on. These moral frameworks can then be extended to other conflicts.

The aesthetic level involves the symbolic representation of a person as a whole, emotionally and sensorially engaging with the memory of war, or with the experience of those who lived through it. In our study, visual materials, such as magazine illustrations and photographs, reveal how artistic techniques were used to construct the image of the woman as peacemaker. The bodily level refers to physical practices shaped by the memory of war such as rituals, parades, military-sport competitions, and so forth. Regarding our topic, particular attention should be paid to the transformation of the visual image of women, especially in the context of their ideologically defined peacekeeping mission.

Our primary source is *Rabotnitsa*, the most widely read Soviet women's magazine, with a circulation of 15-16 million copies. It not only conveyed the official position on motherhood but also showed how that vision was put into practice, including the ideological framing of women's and mothers' roles in connection with military conflict. By analyzing *Rabotnitsa*, we seek to reconstruct the figure of the woman-mother as a peacemaker, as represented in Soviet culture of the 1980s.

We do not address personal reflections or subjective experiences of women regarding this peacekeeping mission. Instead, we focus on the ideologically constructed, top-down image of the mother. By the 1980s, the dissonance between officially declared values and the reality of everyday life had become an accepted part of Soviet existence. At the same time, consumer values and individualism were beginning to assert their influence (Kon 1994: 5–6). Journalists working for mass women's magazines sought to use various artistic tools to humanize the image of the peacemaker mother. Still, year after year, clichés and visual templates were repeated. This repetition, however, allows us to reconstruct the woman-mother figure and her peacekeeping role as a distinct ideological project.

Projects for Engineering a “New Human” and Motherhood in Contemporary Research

Projects for engineering a “new human” are typically discussed in the context of Soviet culture of the 1920s and 1930s. In the collected volume *The Soviet Man: For and Against*, one such example is the chapter “Forming the “Soviet Man”: The Evolution of Theoretical Approaches by Bolshevik Leadership (1900-1930s),” written by O. S. Porshneva. She argues that in their man-making efforts, the Bolsheviks pursued a more distant, strategic goal—the ideal communist of the future—and the specific tactical tasks necessary to transform the actual people into those capable of creating conditions for the emergence of this ideal (Porshneva 2021). Similarly, in the collected essays, *The Era of Socialist Reconstruction: Ideas, Myths, and Programs of Social Transformation*, edited by L.N. Mazur, the contributors analyze the Soviet man as a subject of engineering in relation to the study of the technologies and mechanisms of socialist transformation in political, cultural, and economic spheres (Mazur 2017).

In his article “Moral Culture: Public Morality and Private Responsibility,” Igor Kon analyzes how value orientations were formed in Soviet society. He identifies four levels: official morality, philosophical-ethical discourse, everyday moral culture, and individual moral consciousness. These levels, he argues, did not form a cohesive system. Instead, contradictions between them exposed a deep crisis of moral legitimacy. People could publicly conform to official moral norms while privately disregarding them or internally opposing them (Kon 1994).

The ideological struggle for peace in the USSR is explored by Vladimir Dobrenko in his dissertation “Conspiracy of Peace”. He shows how the “struggle for peace” was disseminated through mass events, posters, films, and cartoons, gradually forming a stable cultural code. According to Dobrenko, the Soviet image of peace was constructed around emotionally resonant symbols: the suffering mother, the soldier-liberator, and the war victim. These images were particularly powerful in the first postwar decades, due to the traumatic legacy of the war (Dobrenko 2018).

In her article “The Soviet Peace Committee and ‘Détente from Below’ in the 1980s”, Irina Gordeeva examines the activities of the Soviet Peace Committee (SPC), a state-controlled organization, alongside the grassroots peace movement of the 1980s, which offered an alternative, horizontal model of anti-nuclear solidarity. She argues that the SPC operated as a tool of foreign policy propaganda, portraying the USSR as a champion of peace while suppressing independent initiatives. Yet from 1982 onward, informal groups began to appear in the USSR, promoting non-ideological dialogue and fostering solidarity with citizens of Western countries (Gordeeva 2020).

Motherhood has been studied from various theoretical perspectives. E. R. Fakhrudinova and V. V. Suvorov critique consumer society from the standpoint of motherhood’s spiritual and moral significance (Fakhrudinova and Suvorov 2021). E. A. Zdravomyslova and A. A. Tyomkina examine how institutional

mechanisms in the USSR reinforced gender role distribution, noting that in the Brezhnev era, motherhood held a distinct place in political discourse (Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina 2003). N. Mitsyuk explores perceptions of motherhood in early 20th-century Russian society by comparing official documents for mothers with ego-documents (Mitsyuk 2015). She argues that the mythologization of motherhood, including the image of the “ideal mother,” began in the mid-19th century as a response to the rise of women’s emancipation. According to Mitsyuk, framing motherhood as a woman’s most essential role served to uphold the patriarchal family structure.

The phenomenon of post-conflict culture is explored by the authors of *Post-conflict Cultures: A Reader*, edited by Cristina Demaria, through an analysis of the aftermath of various military conflicts, including Vietnam, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and the fall of regimes in South America. In the introduction, Demaria observes that the theoretical foundations for studying post-conflict culture are still in their early stages of development. The challenge, as the author rightfully points out, is that the end of a military conflict does not necessarily mean the end of hostilities. The conflict can persist in a latent form, and as a result, post-conflict culture often reflects this ongoing transformation. Demaria argues that “conflicts lay bare the normative mechanisms of a cultural system,” while “individual, collective, ethnic, national and transnational identities, and the memories on which they are founded, are constantly constructed and de-constructed, recognized or mis-recognized, transformed and used not only to define the present, but also to project future possible scenarios, their re-mediation and premediation” (Demaria 2019: 12).

From socio-theoretical and socio-psychological perspectives, researchers examine memory practices in post-conflict culture and the effects of traumatic war experiences on women and children. Several studies (Hasić et al. 2021; Boesten 2019; Takseva 2018; Wale et al. 2020) highlight how war memories are preserved through cultural initiatives and public actions, helping women come to terms with the aftermath of conflict. Hasić et al. explore these dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing the role of memory culture and efforts to promote genocide remembrance (Hasić et al. 2021). They analyze the contrast between public memory practices led by mothers and the official narrative of the conflict. In post-conflict Bougainville, George examines women’s roles as peacebuilders, revealing the ambivalence of their efforts—while peacebuilding initiatives bring positive change, they often obscure ongoing local challenges (George 2016). Khelghat-Doost et al. in the chapter “The Psychopolitics of Motherhood in Post-conflict Public Policies: The Cases of the PKK and ISIS,” investigate the influence of mothers both within the family and in the socio-political sphere, using examples from extremist movements in the Middle East and Africa (Khelghat-Doost et al. 2023).

One of the contributors to the *Women and War* reader, Sara Ruddick outlines three types of representations of women in war: mater dolorosa, outsider, and peacemaker (Ruddick 1998). Mater dolorosa, or the suffering mother, represented by the image of mothers weeping over their fallen sons. Such an

image becomes a symbol of the nation's suffering. After the conflict ends, it is reproduced in the context of demands for justice and efforts to halt and prevent aggression. Outsider, the second type, is the woman who fundamentally distances herself from acts of cruelty and violence during war. The third type or peacemaker "counters violence nonviolently:" through peaceful demonstrations, hunger strikes, and similar actions.

In the chapter "Motherhood and Reconstruction of the Social Order in the Peace Process" of her monograph, «Everyday Life Peacebuilding and Family. Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict», Yumi Omori considers the moral expectations placed on mothers as peacemakers, both within the family and at the national level (Omori 2024). Omori explores how women respond to these demands, specifically, among other things, the author describes the daily actions mothers take to mitigate the impact of conflict on their children, thus playing "taken-for-granted, unacknowledged and unnoticed roles" of everyday peacemakers in the family (ibid.). She also warns against the risk of romanticizing the mother's role in peacebuilding efforts.

In her article "'Postwar' and 'After the War': The Value-Propositional Structure of Soviet Culture from 1945 to the Late 1960s (Through the Arts)," Tatyana Kruglova argues that Soviet culture did not seek to overcome war memory, but rather to institutionalize it as part of a long-term ideological and cultural project (Kruglova 2021). In contrast to Western models of trauma processing, the Great Patriotic War in the USSR continued to shape visions of the future and ideas of social normality. Kruglova highlights how mass art, especially cinema and visual art, contributed to constructing the image of the woman-mother. In official discourse, motherhood was not treated as a personal experience, but rather as an ideological resource. The mother was portrayed as heroic and self-sacrificing, as a symbol of continuity between generations, reinforcing a mobilizational discourse. "It was through the image of the mother that Soviet culture ensured continuity between war and peace, framing everyday life as a continuation of the wartime mobilization effort" (ibid: 6). This image left no room for female vulnerability or emotion that did not fit into the victory myth. In Soviet culture, the postwar period was not the overcoming of war, but rather its ideological continuation, pursued in part through the symbolic use of motherhood and sacrifice woven into portrayals of "normal" everyday life.

A separate group of studies present analyses of representations of women and motherhood in Soviet culture of the 1980s. For example, E. Stiazhkina examines Soviet gender aspects of everyday life in the 1960s and 1980s and concludes that women create their own spaces of interaction, distinct from those of men (Stiazhkina 2012). M. Davidenko explores the bodily representation of women drawing on mass women's periodicals (Davidenko 2016). T. A. Rassadina and A. A. Ageeva also focus on the study of female archetypes (working woman, modern woman, wife, etc.) in magazines, more specifically, they analyze changes in the image of the "modern Russian woman" in the magazine *Liza*, tracing the dynamics of "needs, values, and expectations of Russian public opinion" (Rassadina and Ageeva 2012). M. S. Petrov examines

everyday life and the system of values in connection with the changing image of the working woman (Petrov 2010). He concludes that transformations in women's social positions lead to changes in the representations featured in magazines. G. Orlova examines contemporary recollections from online communities about participation in Soviet peace campaigns, including those involving women and children in the 1970s and 1980s (Orlova 2007). She shows how Soviet cultural practices often used peace slogans that appealed to maternal and parental emotions.

Overall, researchers studying the late socialist period tend to focus on gender analysis, while the impact of the memory of the Great Patriotic on the portrayal of the woman-mother remains largely unexplored.

Mothers in the Struggle for Peace at the End of the Stagnation Era

Theoretically, conceptions of what a woman in the era of developed socialism should be did not change much compared to the 1970s. The 26th Congress of the Communist Party (CPSU) reaffirmed the previous course of social development — “the steady improvement of the material and cultural standard of living of the people, the creation of better conditions for the comprehensive development of the individual through the further enhancement of the efficiency of all social production, increased labor productivity, and the growth of social and labor activity among Soviet citizens” (Materials 1982: 136). Similar perspectives on humanity were formulated in the late 1970s, when the prevailing belief was that communist education required “the shaping of any profession as a person, as a socially active and fully developed individual” (Kosolapov 1979: 31).

Women were primarily discussed in connection with the ongoing elimination of class and other social distinctions in living and working conditions. This question was raised in the context of disparities in living standards across different regions of the country, including the Soviet republics. “The mass involvement of women in social production, coupled with their equal opportunities with men in terms of professional qualifications and wages, has strengthened the economic foundation of gender equality,” emphasized prominent Soviet sociologist A. G. Kharchev (1979: 154). It was assumed that the ability to work alongside men and perform any job, even those previously considered exclusively male, contributed to gender equality and the emergence of new family and marital relations. “For Marxists, the involvement of women in active labor life is an important indicator of their progress toward social equality; even under capitalism, this process is progressive and inevitable. As a result, the patriarchal family type and patriarchal monogamous marriage, designed to uphold private property relations in society, are dismantled, giving rise to new forms of gender relations” (Andreeva 1980: 143).

The moral character of the Soviet person was not examined from a gender perspective. The goals of shaping the ideal individual under-developed socialism emphasized instilling key traits of the socialist way of life—above all, collectivism, camaraderie, mutual assistance, civic responsibility, humanism,

integrity, modesty, and simplicity. These qualities were to be transformed into societal norms through exemplary behavior (XXVI: 19). After the death of General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, his successor, Yury Andropov, fully endorsed the Congress's resolutions, emphasizing that socialist society was defined by a collectivist spirit, mutual assistance, moral integrity, and social optimism (Andropov 1983: 13–14). After Andropov's passing, Konstantin Chernenko echoed the same ideas, underscoring that “building a new world means tirelessly shaping the people of this new world, fostering their ideological and moral growth” (Rech: 10).

The March 1982 issue of *Rabotnitsa*, the edition celebrating annual International Women's Day, included an article with a detailed description of the moral qualities of the Soviet mother. She was depicted as both a diligent worker and an active citizen, serving as a moral compass for her children and loved ones: “Mother—the one who gave life, nurtured and raised a child, forming the foundation of their civic and moral development” (Rabotnitsa 1982: 2).

The issue highlighted the shared experiences of Soviet women across diverse professions—bridge engineers, actresses, orphanage caretakers, shoemakers, and ethnographers: “Despite their different occupations, their lives and worldviews have much in common” (ibid.).

“They are united not only by their passion for their work or their drive for professional excellence but also by their public engagement, confidence in the future, and optimism” (ibid.).

“The Soviet woman is free from constant fear for her child's future... Alongside the entire nation, she stands in defense of that bright future. Together with the Soviet people, she fights for peace across the planet” (ibid.).

By the early 1980s, the portrayal of the mother as a fighter for peace followed patterns established in the 1970s. Motherhood was framed as a special status that granted women the right to address world leaders and international organizations. The discourse of peace advocacy in the 1980s remained unchanged, centering on the struggle for peaceful coexistence and the “deepening of détente in international tensions... to ensure the external conditions necessary for the Soviet people to fulfill their creative tasks” (Materials 1982: 4–5). Such rhetoric was consistently aligned with the Congress resolutions of the Communist Party: “The primary goal now is to eliminate the threat of nuclear war. The Peace Program for the 1980s, adopted at the XXVI Congress of the Communist Party, is fully supported by all Soviet people” (Rabotnitsa 1982: 4).

Key formulations from the Congress's resolutions on peace efforts were reflected in directives sent to regional branches of the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace. These branches organized peace campaigns in workplaces, schools, and universities. One common practice was the publication of open letters, including those addressed to the U.S. President. “Open appeals to Reagan in 1982–1984 were not only common but also took the form of organized campaigns” (Orlova 2007).

A longstanding tradition was also the call for mothers in other countries to unite in a struggle for peace. Such appeals appeared in Soviet publications,

including the Committee of Soviet Women's Address to the Women of the World:

"Women—mothers, keepers of the home, workers in cities and villages! We must not allow our children to perish in a nuclear inferno! Mobilize mass demonstrations to demand a ban on the production and deployment of nuclear, neutron, chemical, or any other weapons of mass destruction in your countries! We must stop the spread of nuclear weapons across our planet!" (Rabotnitsa 1982: 4).

As in the previous decade, *Rabotnitsa* in the early 1980s presented Valentina Tereshkova, the first female cosmonaut, as the official symbolic figure of a mother fighting for peace. In the fifth issue of 1980, she addressed readers with the following words: "For 35 years now, Soviet people and the peoples of Europe have lived without war. A lasting peace has become a reality. At its foundation lies Lenin's peaceful foreign policy, consistently pursued by the Communist Party, the Central Committee, and the Politburo, led by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Comrade Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev" (Rabotnitsa 1980(5): 1).

The engineering of a "new human" in post-conflict culture requires a reinterpretation of military conflict, which in this particular case was intertwined with reflections about the hardships of the Great Patriotic War. Memory practices in the 1980s, much like in the 1970s, were diverse. However, unlike the early postwar decades, they placed particular emphasis on honoring veterans and those who had worked on the home front. Commemorative events extended beyond marking key battles to recognizing the losses and suffering endured by the residents of besieged Leningrad.

By the 1980s, a new generation of mothers had grown up—born at the end of the Thaw or the beginning of the Brezhnev era. Their understanding of military conflicts was shaped entirely by the stories of older relatives and media portrayals of the Great Patriotic War. The press featured recollections from war veterans, widows and mothers of soldiers, child combatants, and those who had worked on the home front alongside adults. Through these personal stories, the war was presented from the perspectives of people of different ages, genders, and social backgrounds. The goal was to reinforce the belief that military conflict profoundly disrupts every individual's life, no matter where the front line is drawn.

"There is no task more important today than defending and strengthening peace on Earth. The struggle for peace has become the most widespread movement of our time. Its active participants are Soviet women" (Rabotnitsa 1982: 4). "Soviet women perceive this ominous threat with extraordinary urgency. They bore particularly heavy hardships and immeasurable suffering during the war..." (ibid.).

Unlike the previous decade, the magazine no longer featured photographs of victims of specific military conflicts, and descriptions of ongoing wars were quite sparse. Although the war in Afghanistan began in 1979, it was not reflected

in women's magazines. Officially, it was described as the deployment of a limited contingent of Soviet troops to fulfill an international duty to the Afghan people. For the most part, few knew what was actually happening. For example, medical professionals were often initially unaware that they would be treating actual combat injuries, when they were deployed to Afghanistan: "We were told, '*You are Komsomol members—who can help the friendly Afghan people preserve the achievements of the revolution better than you? Assist the local population in fighting infectious diseases!*' (emphasis in the original). But no one said a word about our boys being shot at and dying there every day... And yet, even this left a mark on many medics of my generation: there was a desire to help others in some way. I didn't think twice—I had to help, so I went" (Cherepanova 2023: 120).

The visuals in magazines included not only photographs of contemporary women but also artistic illustrations, which were often reproduced in posters. Clearly, these images varied significantly across different periods of Soviet history. To compare, let us look at a publication in the February 1952 issue of *Rabotnitsa* featuring the painting *I.V. Stalin with His Mother* by A. Kazantsev (Rabotnitsa 1952: 18). Stalin is depicted leading a very elderly woman by the arm; she wears a long, beautiful dress with her head covered by a scarf. The illustration is accompanied by quotes from Maxim Gorky: "Let us glorify the woman—Mother—the one force in the world before which even Death bows in submission!" "The Mother creates and protects; to speak of destruction in her presence is to speak against her..." "A Mother is always against death; the hand that brings death into people's homes is hateful and hostile to Mothers..." "...Mothers detest weapons of aggression, acknowledging only those used for the defense of life." Mothers of the 1950s were either direct participants in the Great Patriotic War, workers on the home front, or girls who had survived the war. They had stern faces, steady and open gazes. Often, they were adorned with medals and orders.

During the Thaw, the image of the mother became "younger;" depictions tended to favor young women rather than older ones. The third issue of *Rabotnitsa* in 1957 featured, across an entire page, Fyodor Reshetnikov's painting *Doves of Peace* (Rabotnitsa 1957: 9). The image shows an official parade, likely for May Day, moving through a city street. White doves and colorful balloons float above the crowd. People carry banners calling for peace. Leading the procession are children—some around ten years old, some even younger. There are even infants being pushed in strollers by other children. The children are smiling, their eyes wide open, looking ahead. They quite literally lead the people toward a bright and peaceful future. This same issue includes a poster advertising the upcoming World Festival of Youth and Students. The image features a young man and woman lifting a "bouquet" of flags representing various countries toward the sky, accompanied by the caption "For Peace and Friendship."

In the 1980s, the image of the peace-loving mother was visually represented in several ways. First, there were images of mothers from the Great Patriotic War, either saving their young children or seeing off their adult sons to

the battlefield. Second, there were photographs of activists and members of women's committees. Third, there were images of mothers from other countries, victims of conflicts initiated by capitalist nations. Additionally, readers often saw drawings of motherly women set against blue skies, rainbows, and flying doves. For example, in the February 1980 issue, a poster by artist V. Feklyayev depicted the silhouette of a young mother holding her child, their faces turned toward one another as the mother reaches out to kiss the child. The sky in the background is dark and covered with clouds, but the silhouettes are bright, and a rainbow passes through them—almost like a promise of a peaceful future (Rabotnitsa 1980(2)).

During Perestroika, the visual representation of peace remained fundamentally unchanged. For example, in the September 1986 issue, the article "Into the 21st Century—without Nuclear Weapons!" featured an illustration of children raising their arms in a victory gesture, with a white dove flying above them, and a slogan reading "Friendship—Peace—Friendship" in the background. In the adjacent drawing, an image of a bomb is crossed out with the slogan "Peace to the World."

Thus, the conceptualization of the peace-fighting mother in the last years of the stagnation period can be summarized as follows. Modern military conflicts were conceptualized through the experience of the Great Patriotic War. However, the military actions in Afghanistan were not discussed or were interpreted outside a military discourse, framed as assistance in the Afghan people's revolutionary struggle. The peace-fighting woman was expected to remember the severe suffering caused by the Great Patriotic War and, therefore, to firmly oppose the arms race and the production of nuclear weapons.

At the moral level of the project, motherhood was understood as a special status that gave women the right to condemn politicians from imperialist countries who unleashed wars or expanded nuclear armament. A mother was expected to express her condemnation openly, joining forces with other women. Aesthetically, the image of a mother fighting for peace was meant to support the established project and portray the contemporary Soviet woman as an active participant in the struggle for peace in public organizations at various levels. Drawings and posters depicted the mother and child as symbols of peace, akin to a dove and rainbow in a blue sky.

Glasnost and the Human Factor: Updating the Mother-Peacemaker Project

The 27th Congress of the CPSU in 1986 and the CPSU Central Committee Plenum in 1987 introduced new concepts into theorizing about the individual: acceleration, the human factor, democratization, perestroika, and glasnost. A decision was made to strengthen the "social orientation of economic development, directing it towards creating better conditions for the harmonious development of the individual" (Materials 1986: 272). Scientific studies emphasized

the role of social sciences in the project for making a “new human” and the need to update research approaches: “The project-practical orientation of social science calls for rejecting the ‘one-size-fits-all’ bureaucratic approach and viewing each person through the lens of their individuality, with a thorough study of their social activities in relation to the broader goals of acceleration and rebuilding” (Yanovskii 1987: 10). The enhancement of human capital was declared key to the success of the perestroika project, emphasizing greater worker involvement in management, openness in discussing challenges, and the activation of “labor and social activity” (Materials 1987: 2).

This required a significant transformation of the established practice of presenting materials in mass media, a rejection of formalism, and the dismantling of existing clichés. Since perestroika had now become the key concept describing the necessary changes, “at the plenary session of the Committee of Soviet Women, each candidate for the People’s Deputies expressed her program for perestroika regarding women—if not always clearly, then always passionately and confidently. Our intentions are good. As long as we don’t stop...” (Rabotnitsa 1989: 5).

The most significant change was the rejection of the long-standing image of women carrying the same workload as men despite their maternal responsibilities. The requirement to be a model worker (*peredovik*) (as in the 1930s) or a technologically and scientifically educated specialist (as in the 1970s) was no longer taken for granted. Numerous articles—sometimes multiple in a single issue—examined the real challenges women faced in balancing work and family life.

In the third issue of 1989, dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the journal, the editor-in-chief, Z. Krylova, raised the question of when the women’s rights movement had “stalled” or even regressed: “Yes, we, women, have changed over the years: we all have an education, many have good professions... we can work as well as men... A wide network of nurseries and kindergartens, as well as the impossibility of living on a single husband’s salary, have eliminated housewives as a class. But have there been fundamental changes in public attitudes toward women themselves, in respect for their femininity, their womanhood, their maternal concerns?” (ibid.).

“The topic of a separate, extensive discussion is how we, as women, gradually lost the heights we had won. Society has yet to realize that without a moral revolution in attitudes toward women, further social development is impossible” (ibid.).

The author cites excerpts from letters in which women speak about domestic violence—written about both in 1929 and in 1989. They provide examples of unfair wages: “Our loaders earn more than we do... this is the humiliation of a woman-mother!” (ibid.).

The women writing letters to the editor of *Rabotnitsa* also expressed their outrage that the burden of raising children was placed on them, while they were simultaneously expected to be active in the workforce, which resulted in an inevitable conflict in time allocation. Women were forced to choose their

work obligations: “We are tired of ‘humiliating ourselves with motherhood.’ We want to be proud of it, not condemn our children to a life without care” (ibid.).

“...women should be provided with an opportunity to truly, not just in dreams, choose where they see the best application of their efforts and where they can blossom: if at work—to help, to free them from standing in lines, from hours of washing and cooking; if at home, with children—to ensure the minimum living standards” (ibid.).

Despite ongoing changes, the image of the mother-peacemaker remained largely unchanged. Official sources continued to frame the struggle for peace much as they had in the early 1980s: the arms race was attributed to global imperialism, while socialism was portrayed as the direct path to peace. In this narrative, the fight for peace was synonymous with opposing the arms race, particularly the expansion of nuclear capabilities: “A peace built on intimidation through nuclear weapons is a fragile peace. It cannot be strengthened through an arms buildup—whether terrestrial or space-based” (Launom 1985). In the article *Bridges to Peace* in the January 1988 issue of *Rabotnitsa*, the author V. Anichkina emphasizes that “...the nuclear threat is understood by all. It forces us to overcome our individualism for the sake of common interests and awakens a desire to contribute personally to eliminating this threat.” The author interprets peace as a complete rejection of violence: “Our common desire is to walk together on the path to peace, where kindness and mutual trust will prevail, and where there will be no place for violence.”

The mother-woman is still encouraged to take an active life stance, but the efforts are now directed more towards solving important issues within the country, at her workplace, in her local community. Environmental problems are frequently mentioned: the disposal of hazardous waste, homes located near harmful production sites. The magazine portrays mothers as fighters for a safe living environment.

As before, the magazine contains articles dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, which are becoming increasingly informal. The magazine published reminiscences and stories highlighting women’s struggles to keep their children alive, focusing on wounds, hunger, fear, and the self-sacrifice of the mother. In a major article in the May 1986 issue, “Five Stories of the War,” A. Pozdnyayev collected the accounts of five women about “the most memorable episodes of their frontline biographies” (Rabotnitsa 1986: 32). The dramatic nature of the described events and the sincerity of the emotions described in the article aim to give a new meaning to the clichéd slogans.

In the fifth issue of 1988, the magazine publishes reminiscences of veterans. The text shows that the understanding of today’s conflicts should, as before, take into account the context of the difficult experience of the Great Patriotic War:

“We, the veterans, know the value of peace. That is why we revere the steps being taken by the Communist Party and the Soviet government to eliminate the nuclear threat. Let our glorious, loving women, devoted to the Motherland, never have to carry wounded or maimed men from the battlefield” (Rabotnitsa 1988: 13).

In discussing a monument to female veterans: “No matter how much we write in the magazine about the heroism of Soviet women during the war, we will never be able to speak about all those who deserve our gratitude and memory. Therefore, the editorial staff of *Rabotnitsa* supports the proposal to erect a monument to the women who fought, waited for their husbands and fiancés from the front, worked tirelessly in the rear, and kept the home fire burning... And let this monument be ‘another call, a weighty, deep, human argument against a new war!’” (ibid.).

In the late 1980s, the May issues of *Rabotnitsa* featured an increasingly small number of full articles dedicated solely to the events of the Great Patriotic War. From May 1988, when Soviet troops began withdrawing from Afghanistan, the portrayal of women-mothers fighting for peace started to shift. The connection between the military conflict and the memory of the Great Patriotic War was now represented by the mother in her special status—that of a soldier’s mother.

The fifth issue featured a large article titled *And the Mothers Wait for Their Sons*, covering the first meeting in Moscow of mothers whose sons served in the Moscow military district. The photograph shows women with neat hairstyles in elegant dresses, some giving speeches while others receive flowers from young officers. The meeting, held for Victory Day, was described the following way: “Victory Day is approaching. Traditionally, this is the day when those who defended and preserved our lives come together. But today’s soldiers will also come. They are entrusted with the honor of guarding the Motherland. Soldiers of two generations will meet. And their mothers will meet. The current ones—young, cheerful, proudly walking alongside their grown-up sons. And the elderly mothers of war soldiers. Looking at them, you realize how inseparable the concepts of mother and Motherland are” (Rabotnitsa 1988: 7).

This article also mentions the Afghan conflict: “Now, Alexander is a radio installer. For fulfilling his international duty in Afghanistan, he was awarded two medals for bravery. The service of a son in Afghanistan is a heavy burden on a mother’s shoulders. The soldier’s mother knows—it’s not a training ground there. Her son is being shot at by the enemy. And so, the mother’s heart knows no peace until her son returns. Oh, if only all would return... To you, the mothers of internationalist soldiers, our deepest respect” (ibid.).

In the third issue of 1989, in the article *We Will Do Everything Possible*, the author A. Yurskaya conveys “a message from the women of Novosibirsk and Nikolaev” to the UN Secretary-General: “These petitions carry hundreds of signatures from mothers, wives, and sisters of Soviet internationalist soldiers. They express concern about Pakistan and other countries violating The Geneva Agreements on Afghanistan”; “An authoritative international organization will take all measures to search for and free 312 Soviet soldiers who are in captivity” (Rabotnitsa 1989: 28). The reason for the soldiers’ captivity is not specified: “In our country, a Coordinating Committee of Soviet society has been created; official negotiations with the involved parties are led by representatives of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.

The government assists the families of those killed or missing in Afghanistan. Yet, the pain of mothers never eases. How they long for comfort, mere human compassion!" (ibid.).

It can be seen that the former practice of peace advocacy—open letters and appeals to high-level politicians—is now applied in a new context. Now, the peace-making mother is primarily the mother of a soldier or a prisoner of war. It is mothers, not fathers, who speak out about the need to address the problem of bullying and violence (both emotional and physical) in the military. The magazines feature articles on issues in the army, the need for reforms in conscription, and the organization of military service, which makes a stark contrast with the complete absence of such topics in the previous decade. In this case, the mother is not a peacekeeper, but a fighter for justice in her own country.

In the late 1980s, the depiction of women becomes more varied as new themes emerge: Orthodox holidays, with illustrations reminiscent of vintage postcards; the challenge of balancing work and family, depicted through caricatures; and efforts to promote a slim figure, shown in photos of models and drawings mocking overweight women who have let themselves go.

The symbolism of illustrations dedicated to the struggle for peace remains virtually unchanged, featuring the same familiar imagery from propaganda posters: doves, the sky, and children. In the September issue, an illustration accompanying the article "Into the 21st Century without Nuclear Weapons!" (surrounded by photographs) depicts children raising their hands in a victorious gesture, with a white dove flying above them and the slogan "Friendship—Peace—Friendship" in the background. In the adjacent drawing, an image of a bomb is crossed out with the slogan "Peace to the World." The photographs highlight women's modernity and competence, whether as participants in military conflicts or as members of public organizations. The fourth issue of 1987 contains a report on the Central Hospital of the Afghan Armed Forces in Kabul, built in 1975 with the support of the Soviet Union (Rabotnitsa 1987(4): 22). The photographs depict neatly groomed women—doctors and nurses—leaning over a patient or examining X-rays. In the following issue of May 1987, readers are introduced to the chairwoman of the Mongolian Women's Committee—a woman with a tidy hairstyle, dressed in a business suit, and smiling (Rabotnitsa 1987(5): 5). The May 1988 issue features photographs from a gathering of soldiers' mothers, showing older women who are elegantly dressed, well-groomed, with neat hairstyles, makeup, and jewelry (Rabotnitsa 1988: 5).

The conclusion to be drawn is that during the Perestroika, on a cognitive level, the trends in the construction of the image of the mother as a peace-maker were similar to those of the early 1980s. The interpretation of the military conflict in Afghanistan was framed within the experiential horizon of the Great Patriotic War, but in a new way. Specifically, the woman now took center stage in a different role, the role of a soldier's mother. From this perspective, both current and potential military conflicts were evaluated. On a moral level, it was assumed that the ultimate value was life itself. As a result, mothers were expected to actively fight for peace while also engaging in struggles for

environmental protection and a just world order. The visual representation of women emphasized a maternal status that implied an active civic stance and competent participation in the country's political events.

The project of the mother as a fighter for peace, which emerged in the post-war culture of the USSR after the Great Patriotic War, came to an end in the 1990s because the state that had initiated and supported it ceased to exist. Although the project ended, ways of understanding and evaluating military conflicts, along with the corresponding values and behavioral norms, persist.

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Jekaterina S. Čerepanova i Marija A. Jancen

Oblikovanje majke – mirotvorke u SSSR-u 1980-ih: od stagnacije do perestrojke

Apstrakt

Ovaj članak razmatra reprezentacije majke koja se bori za mir u sovjetskoj kulturi osamdesetih godina. Postoji obimna istraživačka literatura o borbi za mir u Sovjetskom Savezu, koja je predstavljala ključni aspekt spoljne politike zemlje nakon Velikog otadžbinskog rata. Cilj ovog članka je da istraži rezultate te aktivnosti iz perspektive postkonfliktne kulture, shvaćene kao skup evoluirajućih normi i procesa stvaranja značenja koji nastaju u društvu nakon konflikta, dok ono reflektuje iskustvo rata. Revizija ishoda vojnih sukoba i njihovih moralnih pouka ogleđa se u naporima da se „projektuje novi čovek“ i oblikuje nova vizija njegove budućnosti. Ovo istraživanje analizira sliku majke – mirotvorke kao deo sovjetskog postkonfliktnog projekta koji je započeo nakon završetka Drugog svetskog rata, kako bi se otkrili principi i norme koji su oblikovali preispitivanje kasnijih vojnih sukoba i stvaranje simboličkih vizija mirne budućnosti. Analiza se zasniva na publikacijama i ilustracijama iz sovjetskog ženskog časopisa *Rabotnica*, koji je u osamdesetim godinama imao tiraž od nekoliko miliona primeraka.

Ključne reči: sovjetska postkonfliktna kultura, projekat oblikovanja novog čoveka, rat, materinstvo, borba za mir, ženski časopisi osamdesetih

