The study of women in Russia and the Soviet Union is a healthy field. This is not to say, however, that the growing body of literature is well represented in course outlines or on conference panels. The following guide should provide a starting point for further reading on Soviet women and contemporary society.


This is one of the early important works on the study of women in Russia and the Soviet Union. It is a collection of papers by historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and economists. The essays provide a good introduction to a wide range of topics and, frequently, the author has a book-length study to which the reader can refer for more information (see the bibliographies by Yedlin and Wilman and by Hyer).


Most of the information which we have on Soviet women pertains to city dwellers. In this important contribution to the literature, Bridger discusses the nature of women’s work in the agricultural sector and in the home.


At the 27th Congress of the CPSU, Gorbachev spoke of the need to establish a broader network of women’s councils. Browning’s study is a history and an analysis of these councils, exploring the reasons why they have not led to the development of an independent women’s movement and the creation of a feminist consciousness among women.


Kollontai is Russia’s most famous female revolutionary. With the re-emergence of the women’s movement in the 1960s, she has been rediscovered, and reclaimed, by feminists and chroniclers of women’s history. This biography by Clements is excellent. For more on Kollontai, see Holt.


An excellent anthology, including biographical sketches of the writers and their publishing histories. For more on literature, see McLaughlin.


Moscow Women is a collection of thirteen interviews which the authors conducted in the late 1970s. They met the women through personal rather than official contacts. There is a good cross-section of women from all walks of life. The interviews are punctuated by short, informational chapters on women in the work force, birth control and abortion, women in politics, divorce, etc. This is a valuable book because we learn about the life of Soviet women from the women themselves.


This is a comparative study of women in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Heitlinger analyzes the implications of the ideology of egalitarianism for sexual equality.


Soviet Sisterhood is an anthology of essays on a wide range of topics, from Soviet views on psychological sex differences to the images of women in the media to maternity care. A fairly recent publication, it provides a necessary update to the earlier literature. And in step with the development of women’s studies, it deals with issues which the earlier literature tends to overlook.


See the book review by Diana Greene, p.102-03.


Kollontai was one of the very few women in the Russian revolutionary movement to write on theoretical issues. Of particular interest to feminists is her work on the “woman question”. Kollontai was also the theoretical mind behind the Worker’s Opposition during the early years of the Bolshevik regime. Holt’s introduction and commentaries are excellent. For more on Kollontai, see Clements.


This bibliography contains 434 titles in English and Russian. Also see Yedlin and Wilman.

Jones, Ellen and Fred W. Grupp. Modernization, Value Change, and Fertility in...
This Poem’s for You!

SUSAN L. HELWIG

“Shall I write a poem or iron your shirts,
O husband mine?”
“Iron my shirts, my dear, for clothes make
the man, not poems the woman.”

“Shall I write a poem or bake a cake,
o husband mine?”
“Bake a cake, my pet, for man shall not
live by bread alone and Marie Antoinette
herself once said, ‘Let them eat cake!’”

“Shall I write a poem or wash the tubby, hubby?”
“Oh scrub the tub, my lamb, for cleanliness is next
to Godliness; less toil is your bon ami.”

“Shall I pen a poem or pour your beer, my dears?”
“Pour me a beer, my dear, for it’s surely Miller time,
and time and tide wait for no man.”
With that she poured her own beer, raised
the glass and said
“This poem’s for you!”