

SOVIET WOMEN. By *William M. Mandel*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975. viii, 350 pp. + 16 pp. photographs. \$3.50, paper.

With the current focus on the roles of women in the world, the mixed situation of Soviet women has lent itself to varying interpretations. This book, intended for a general audience, is an attempt to popularize the author's belief that Soviet women "are far ahead of American women" in rights, benefits, opportunities, and general treatment, and that the story of how they reached their "advantaged position" and exercise it today holds some lessons for women in our country.

This conclusion is not supported even by the author's own selection of materials. The most appealing quality of the book is Mandel's spirited advocacy of Soviet women on the very issues that limit their professional and political advancement to the highest levels. The author concedes that full equality still eludes them because of the nature of traditional Russian culture. Soviet cultural policies "were progressive as far as women were concerned, but were overwhelmed by the weight of established [male] chauvinism and rural custom."

It is difficult to explain away all shortcomings in terms of lingering attitudes and traditions. A judgment more balanced than Mandel's would have to fault Soviet leaders for the fact that, even today, the simplest tasks of everyday life involve obstacles that could long ago have been lessened by a political leadership truly concerned with easing the burdens of its women. Although many opportunities have indeed opened up for the professional advancement of Soviet women, the daily concerns of life—shopping, running a household, raising children—remain extraordinarily energy-consuming. Soviet power draws heavily on the dynamism of women and it has exploited their capacity and willingness to endure.

An innovative study would be required to explore the inner psychology of Soviet women, in order to learn why it is that, in spite of the double load of job and home, they seem to accept, by and large, the leadership's claim to have immeasurably improved their lot. Soviet women feel "comparatively little dissatisfaction" with their position relative to men, and Mandel concludes that there is not enough dissatisfaction, at this time, to generate a liberation movement aimed at equalizing the burden of work in the home.

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LITERATURE AND IDEOLOGY IN SOVIET EDUCATION. By *N. N. Shneidman*. Published for the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Toronto. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D. C. Heath, 1973. xii, 209 pp. \$13.50.

Formal study of literature is part of the Soviet school curriculum beginning with the fourth grade of elementary school, and continuing uninterrupted until graduation. Thus, every graduate of a Soviet secondary school receives a total of seven years instruction in the subject. In the process, every pupil reads impressive amounts of Russian and also some Western writing—certainly much more than almost any American student. In addition, he is often required to memorize a great deal of poetry and, on occasion, prose. Nevertheless, American educators and parents, despairing over the ignorance of literature that is prevalent among their charges and offspring, should not be too quick to accept this evidence as yet another testimony to the superiority of the Soviet educational system. As one