

femmes

Edmonton Leningrad

DOSSIER

Feminism in Russia

9 août 1980
Tatiana
Natalia

elles étaient
venues « dangereuses »
IN RUSSIA

1980

La famille maternelle

**Feminist
dissident:
The Soviets
exiled her
for her view**

autres

TIME AUGUST 4, 1980

La parole des
femmes soviétiques

Women's Lip



Revue féministe en URSS
MOSCOU (AFP) — Une revue féministe clandestine, «La femme et la Russie» circule actuellement à Moscou et à Leningrad, fait sans précédent dans l'histoire de la presse en Union soviétique.
Le Nouvel Observateur

**АЛЪМАНАХ
ЖЕНЩИНАМ О ЖЕНЩИНАХ
ВЫПУСК 1**

10 ДЕКЯБРЯ 1979 г

The Boston Globe
Sunday, November 2, 1



Tatiana Mamonovala Vienne le 20 juillet
Tatiana Goutcheva and Natalia Malakhovskaya in Vienna after their expulsion

Defence

Julia Vozniessenskaia, Tatiana Goutcheva, Natalia Malakhovskaya et
« Nous allons nous organiser entre nous, nous ne voulons pas avoir de leaders »

**LABOUR FOCUS ON
EASTERN EUROPE**

The Secret Police vs. Women's Lip
SOVIET UNION
Moscow expels a trio of underground feminists

femmes

PRAGA PARIS
Edmonton Leningrad

Feminism in Russia

9 août 1980
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Tatiana

An emerging women's voice . . .

For the first time in fifty years a feminist voice has appeared in the Soviet Union. Its medium is Almanach, a clandestine journal produced by a collective of twenty women and several hundred supporters from Ukraine to Latvia. Ten hand-typed copies of Almanach were published on the first anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1979, and they have been distributed as far north and east as Novosibirsk, and as far south as Nezhin. Feminists in the West will be intrigued by two distinct and seemingly counterposed currents of thought within the collective. Some of the women are Catholic and turn to the Virgin Mary as a symbol of hope. Some have converted from the official Soviet version of Marxism to the unofficial church dogmas. Others, like its leader Tatyana Mamonova, repre-



sent a different current, described by her as "anti-totalitarian, but not anti-socialist." In an article from Almanach entitled "Break the Wall of Silence," Nina Kehayan explains how the journal represents the pluralism of thought of Soviet women, publishing articles by women from different walks of life and from all areas and language groups of the Soviet Union.

Almanach: Women and Russia . . .

The first edition of Almanach, titled Women and Russia, is a collection of articles, poetry, illustrations and interviews. It treats six major themes: Christianity and Marxism; the larger dissident movement; mothering and health care for women; women in prisons and other detention centres; gay women; and, women in art and culture.

The publication begins with an appeal to sisters all over the world. The tone of the appeal is pessimistic but the call for action is not: "We cannot believe that life should so punish innocent beings, simply for being born women." But, "Nothing changes by itself . . . It is by coming together to talk about our bitterness and suffering, by understanding and exchanging our own experience, that we shall be able to find a solution." Clearly the "punishments" that these women refer to cannot be solved by normal "legal" channels. Since the consolidation of power by Stalin in 1928, what were progressive demands of the Revolution have been turned into "monstrosities" against which Soviet women have no legitimate "socialist" defense.

No! to the dissident movement . . .

These women are intent on transforming the condition of the lives of Soviet women. In an interview with Marina Oulianova, one of the editors of Women and Russia, their independent stance is clear: . . . Women here want struggle, too. Some of them come out of the dissident movement, and some don't. The dissident movement has never addressed the question of women or feminism. It is phallocratic, like all the internal organs and organizations of samizdat [dissent]. Certainly some women publish in the journal of samizdat,

but these women simply follow their men who lead the work . . . Obviously I do not agree with the politics of the Soviet government. But neither am I in agreement with the dissident movement. Certainly not with its ideas — or its lack of them — around women. The dissident movement does nothing to address the needs of women, and they stifle women within their movement, or ignore them. The feminist movement can only reinforce the dissident movement, and give it more strength, not less. We have no desire to demand that the dissident movement take women's demands seriously, but it doesn't matter anyway. The dissident movement is totally conformist when it comes to the question of women . . .

exile . . .

Early in 1980 these Leningrad women appealed to all Russian wives and mothers to persuade their sons and husbands not to fight in Afghanistan. The K.G.B. (Committee for State Security) answered this appeal with mock rapes, telephone haranguing and detentions and interrogations. The three leaders of the movement were arrested and given twenty-four hours to leave the Soviet Union or face uncertain prison charges. Tatyana Goritcheva, a thirty-two year old Marxist philosopher who had converted to Christianity, chose exile. Thirty-three year old Natalya Malakhovskaya, writer and critic, chose exile. And Tatyana Mamonova, a thirty-six year old artist and organizer of the non-conformist Painters Union in the nineteen sixties, also chose exile. They landed in Vienna in July, 1980. Stripped of their Soviet citizenship, they continue to translate and distribute Almanach for their sisters in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Tatyana Mamonova, who now lives in Paris.

a close-up of Tatyana Mamcnova . .

Tatyana Mamonova was born on December 10, 1943 — Human Rights Day in the Soviet Union. She is married and has a five-year old son. In an interview in Ms. Magazine, published in November, 1980, Mamonova talks about being a woman in the Soviet Union:

I have retained a feeling of freedom, but also a picture of suffering from my early years. Leningrad had been destroyed by the war. I did a lot of physical work in my childhood.

As far as feminism is concerned, that was clearly pronounced in me from the beginning. I remember the first years in school when I got sick of hearing the Russian word Baba, which is a derogatory description of women, at least in modern usage: something like 'broad' in North America . . .

The Soviet woman really is emancipated as far as education itself is concerned. She can get her education — but she cannot use it. So I was always interested in women who had managed to attain a bright position in history or the arts or life in general. Right after school I started to write about women's problems. It was the 1960s and liberalization. I don't think Khrushchev was an ideal ruler of the country, but it was like a gulp of fresh air after Stalinism. What happened in literature and in the arts — Valentina Tereshkova in space — this was a positive movement. If liberalization had continued, other women would have had the chance to come to some power, to change our society.



Anyway, I was educated in the 1960s. I started writing essays about feminism, but that word didn't exist; we would say "women's questions," as do journals about Soviet women that are published officially. But after censorship there was nothing left of my ideas. Already in the 1960s they called me to the KGB. At that time I was very inexperienced, and I believed that this question could be solved in an official way in the Soviet Union . . .

My husband, Gennady, is supportive of my feminism and isn't liked by other men because of that. We were married eight years ago. I continued to paint and to write and then I had Phillipe . . . One of the reasons I married was to defend my position against the authorities because they could jail me for "vagrancy," for not working at a job. But once married, I could be called a housewife by the KGB and so I used that.

When we produced the first feminist magazine, the men within the dissident community seemed very threatened . . . But the response from women! I think feminism may start from the intellectuals but turns to women of all classes.

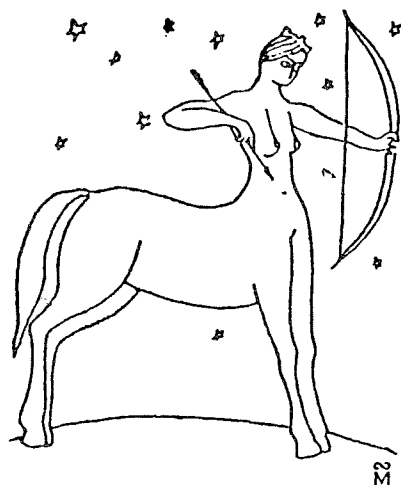
I was called to the KGB in November of 1979, then again on the 10th of December, 1979. The second time I was clearly told that if I continued with my feminist activities and produced the second issue of the samizdat [Almanach], I would be arrested. There were people who reported on me before, so the authorities knew I was the main editor. When I sent the manuscript abroad, I got back good reactions on it, and that attention was a defense in itself . . .

I am convinced that there are other women like me in the Soviet Union, but they don't have information on the women's movement. As I didn't have it. The first phase is to inform. As soon as many Soviet women are

informed, I would like to return to the Soviet Union to work openly . . .

I think woman is altruistic. She gives life and appreciates life. That's one of my main concepts. I think the woman is organizationally against war, for example, and nuclear and chemical destruction, and she can really save the world if she is committed to play an active role in government in different countries, the Soviet Union among them. But we have to begin with the real problems women are facing today: rape, abortion, childbirth, childcare. These are problems every woman faces, independent of her nationality and class. In the USSR — and in the West too — a woman is educated in the spirit of hatred against woman. I would like to call upon women to love each other.

ПОЭЗИЯ



ТАТЬЯНА МАМОНОВА

Petals from the appletrees' branches
flutter like snow to our feet,
and the noisy warbling of birdsong
wafts to us from heaven . . .
To speak aloud of this quiet joy
is not a waste of speech.
Why waste your barefoot song
on those who are deaf?
This friend will not be afraid
of your fears and griefs,
for in her hand she holds
the girths of your true fate.
Her horses will not bolt
restrained by her command,
while with ceremonious solemnity
and an essence of ice
she winds up the clock —
and the horses of fortune are released.

The actor is triumphant
but the housewife weeps!

Tatyana Mamonova

International Women's Day Mamonova tour in Canada . . .

At the request of a group of women in Edmonton, Tatyana Mamonova will tour Canada and Quebec on the occasion of International Women's Day, 1981. This tour will provide the opportunity for women's groups of all kinds, defense committees and the artistic community to foster the on-going dialogue between East and West, women and men, women and women, on topics such as: working women (women at home and women on the job); the gay question; women in art and culture; women and prisons; the defense of women in the USSR who are the objects of harassment and detention. In her last letter to us Mamonova "begs our support for the women's movement in the USSR and asks us to help in acting against the political manipulations which serve to disinform people about feminism in the USSR." She will visit Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver during February and March of 1981.

The Mamonova Tour Committee can be contacted at the following address and phone number:

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