

**Global Feminisms  
Comparative Case Studies of  
Women's Activism and Scholarship**

**RUSSIA**

**Liubov' Vasil'evna Shtyleva**

**Interviewed by Natal'ia L'vovna Pushkareva**

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**Liubov' Vasil'evna Shtyleva** was born in 1956. She graduated from Murmansk Pedagogical Training College<sup>1</sup> and N.A. Nekrasov Kostroma State Pedagogical Institute in 1975. From 1975 to 1984, she worked as a school teacher of history, and later as a director of the Young Pioneers and Schoolchildren Club in Murmansk. In 1986, she defended her dissertation and received an advanced degree as a Candidate of Educational Sciences. For 15 years she taught educational science and psychology at the Murmansk State Pedagogical Institute, in 2013 she began work at the Institute for Social Pedagogy at the Russian Academy of Education. From 2015, she has served as principal research associate at the Institute of Childhood, Family and Upbringing at the Russian Academy of Education. In 1992, she participated in an internship in the US in Women in the Political Process Program, and in 2004 she served in an internship with an expert program on issues of gender equality in Canada. In 1998 she participated in the First All-Russian School on Gender Research in Tver', in 2000 she participated in the program on gender research methodology for university lecturers at the Moscow Center for Gender Studies, then later in 2000-2001, she led an educational research project entitled "Promoting Gender-based Approaches in Pre-school Education." The first Russian teaching aid on gender approaches in pre-school education was published under her guidance under the title *Gender-based Approach in Pre-school Education: Theory and Practice* (Murmansk: Milori, LLC, 2001). From 2002 to 2005, she served as a project consultant for the Regional Program for the Support of Women "A Path for Success," in 2005-2010, she was coach and organizer of the project "Women Can!" (with the support of the Norwegian People's Aid).

Among her works are the monographs *The Study of Students' Gender Characteristics* (Saint Petersburg: Piter, 2003); *The Factor of Sex in Education: A Gender-based Approach and Analysis* (Moscow: PER SE, 2008); *"The Problem of Sex" in Pedagogical Theory and Education Practice* (Moscow, 2011).

She has numerous government awards and certificates of merit and was awarded a diploma by the International Labour Organization and the Union of Journalists of Russia for her work on questions of gender equality in Russia.

**Natal'ia L'vovna Pushkareva** was born on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1959 in Moscow, Russia. She is currently a Professor, Chief Research Fellow, and the Head of the Women's and Gender Studies Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences. Her interests include gender history, history of family relations, the social anthropology of the academic community, as well as the history of sexuality in medieval, modern, and contemporary Russia. The chief editor of the yearbook *Sotsial'naia istoriia (Social History)*, she also serves as president of the Russian Association for Research in Women's History. From 1981 to 2016, she has edited more than thirty essay collections, published dozens of articles for both academic and non-academic magazines, and written dictionary and encyclopedia entries as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Murmansk Pedagogical Training College was the present Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU). It was named the [Murmansk State Pedagogical Institute](#) (*Murmanskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut*) from 1956 – 2002. Source: "MASU: history and facts." MASU. Accessed Jan 17, 2020.

monographs. Pushkareva is considered to be a principal founder of the field of women's studies in Russia.

**The Global Feminisms Project** is a collaborative international oral history project that examines feminist activism, women's movements, and academic women's studies in sites around the world. Housed at the University of Michigan, the project was started in 2002 with a grant from the Rackham Graduate School. The virtual archive includes interviews from women activists and scholars from Brazil, China, India, Nicaragua, Poland, and the United States.

Our collaborator in Russia is Dr. Natal'ia L. Pushkareva, who gathered a diverse group of feminist scholar-activists and colleagues for the Russia portion of the Global Feminisms Project and conducted the majority of the interviews. Our work in Russia was supported by a Collaborative Planning Grant from University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

### **A Note on the Russian Educational System<sup>2</sup>:**

At the time when the interviewee was attending schools, the Soviet Union educational system contained 2 parts: the mandatory basic education (elementary school and secondary schools) and higher education (universities).

Children usually enter elementary school at age 6-7 and stay for 4 years, after which they enter secondary schools and stay until age 15 when they finish grade 8. Then they can choose to a) stay in the secondary school for 2 more years to prepare for the university entrance exam, b) go to technicums, colleges that teach technical skills, or c) start working.

University education was free and highly specialized. Students took classes in fields they plan to work on and were assigned jobs after graduation. Current Russian educational system is very similar to that during the USSR.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: "Education in the Soviet Union." Wikipedia. Accessed October 30, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Soviet_Union). "Russian Schools: Structure of system, ages of entry and certificates." Justlanded. Accessed October 30, 2019. <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Russia/Russia-Guide/Education/Russian-Schools> "Education in the Soviet Era." Facts and Details. Accessed October 30, 2019. [http://factsanddetails.com/russia/Education\\_Health\\_Transportation\\_Energy/sub9\\_6a/entry-5141.html](http://factsanddetails.com/russia/Education_Health_Transportation_Energy/sub9_6a/entry-5141.html)

**Natal'ia L'vovna Pushkareva: Liubov Vasil'evna Shtyleva, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Childhood, Family, and Socialization at the Russian Academy of Education<sup>3</sup>. Founder of the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula<sup>4</sup>. Good afternoon, Liubov Vasil'evna. First, I would like to thank you for participating in our interview and ask you to tell me about yourself. How did you realize that you needed to create a women's organization? How did it fit in with your professional activities? Please tell me, in general, about yourself. Where were you born? What have you done in life? What are you interested in now?**

Liubov' Vasil'evna Shtyleva: I was born in Murmansk<sup>5</sup>. I am the first generation of urban dwellers in our family. All of my roots were in the Vologda region<sup>6</sup>. My parents were peasants. In the late 40's or early 50's they moved to Murmansk and worked there as laborers. That is to say, I come from a family of workers and peasants. I lived in Murmansk all my life until three years ago when I moved to Moscow. I graduated from teacher-training college in Murmansk because my mother always told me: "you need to stand on your own feet and be independent." Both of my parents spent their entire lives happily married (no divorce or family breakdown). I don't know where my mother got this idea, but she instilled it in me.

Moreover, she made certain--that is, she insisted--that I finish only eight grades<sup>7</sup> of school and then go to teacher-training college. After graduating from college, I matriculated to the Pedagogical Institute<sup>8</sup> – I really wanted to learn. I was excited and curious. It's silly to say that I really wanted to take part in a student construction brigade.<sup>9</sup> It was 1970, or the late sixties, or early seventies when this movement was

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<sup>3</sup> Russian Academy of Education was founded in 1912 and is currently the oldest research and educational psychological institute in Russia. ("About." Psychological Institute Russia Academy of Education. Accessed October 28, 2019. <https://www.pirao.ru/en/>)

<sup>4</sup> Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula is an organization that promotes women's rights by establishing shelters for women who are subject to violence, providing confidential phone lines for women, building up regional women organization networks, and many other things. ("Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula." Owl.ru. Accessed October 28, 2019 <http://www.owl.ru/eng/women/org002/index.htm>)

<sup>5</sup> Murmansk is a port city and the administrative center of the Murmansk Oblast (which is like a state or province) in the far northwest part of Russia. It has highway and railway access to the rest of Europe, and the northernmost trolleybus system on Earth. ("Murmansk." Wikipedia. Accessed October 28, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murmansk>)

<sup>6</sup> Vologda is an oblast (which is like a state or province) in Northwestern Russia. It has abundant historic monuments and large reserves for water and woods. ("Vologda Oblast." Wikipedia. Accessed October 30, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vologda\\_Oblast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vologda_Oblast))

<sup>7</sup> It was possible to enroll in a trade school after completing only 8 grades

<sup>8</sup> N.A. Nekrasov Kostroma State Pedagogical Institute. See footnote 2 on Page 2 for more information.

<sup>9</sup> Student construction brigades were groups of university students that worked in construction during school hiatuses. These brigades were first established in 1959 and continued to operate after the

gaining momentum. After seeing many university students from Leningrad<sup>10</sup>, members of construction brigades, walk the streets of Murmansk in their uniforms in summer, I really wanted to be a university student, just wanted to join them. Because I was always a good student and had almost all straight A's, the teacher-training college recommended that I go to college, so I enrolled in two of them at once. In correspondence courses<sup>11</sup> in Murmansk, and, just in case, at the faculty of literature because I loved both literature and history.

**NP: What year was that?**

LS: It was 1970. And... I knew that if I was a correspondence-course student, I couldn't also be in a student construction brigade. I had to enroll as a full-time student. And one month later the Komsomol<sup>12</sup> gave me a recommendation, and I was accepted without taking the entrance exams as a Komsomol activist to the Kostroma Pedagogical Institute.<sup>13</sup>

They had an amazing department there, which was called the Faculty of Pioneer and Komsomol Work (unofficially); officially, it was the Department of History and Pedagogy. They trained teachers of history and social studies and educators who specialized in working with Pioneers. I heard about this department from my teacher-training college's fine arts teacher, who was taking correspondence courses at the institute in the Department of Graphic Art... And she talked with such admiration about the great people who took part in student construction brigades and agitation brigades.<sup>14</sup> It was exactly what I needed. However, it wasn't so simple because the school was in another city, in Central Russia. I saw a completely different way of life there. Five years later I graduated and returned to Murmansk. Because I graduated from

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dissolution of the Soviet government. ("Student construction brigade." Wikipedia. February 17, 2018. Accessed March 07, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student\\_construction\\_brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_construction_brigade).)

<sup>10</sup> Leningrad is a city in northwestern Russia. The city was named after Vladimir Lenin, the former premier of Soviet Union, after his death in 1924. In 1991, the city changed its name to Saint Petersburg after the collapse of Soviet Union. St. Petersburg is now the second largest city in Russia after Moscow. ("Saint Petersburg Russia." Encyclopedia. Accessed October 30, 2019 <https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/commonwealth-independent-states-and-baltic-nations/cis-and-baltic-political-geography/saint-petersburg-russia>. "Saint Petersburg." Wikipedia. Accessed November 20, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Petersburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg))

<sup>11</sup> Correspondence course is "a course of study in which you study at home, receiving, and sending off work by post, email, etc." ("Correspondence Course." Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed November 02, 2019. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/correspondence-course>)

<sup>12</sup> The Komsomol, or the Communist Youth League, was a state-run youth organization that, from the 1930s, that focused on the education of young people as proper Soviet citizens and the mobilization of youth for agitation, educational, and social work. Membership and success in the Komsomol, both of which one had to earn, provided certain benefits, such as acceptance into schools without taking the entrance exams.

<sup>13</sup> N. A. Nekrasov Kostroma State Pedagogical University. See footnote 2 on page 2 for more information.

<sup>14</sup> Agitation brigades (agitbrigady) were small groups of enthusiasts or professionals who worked to raise public consciousness of social and political issues.

the Faculty of Pioneer and Komsomol Work, and I was a Komsomol activist, the institute gave me a job recommendation for Komsomol work in Murmansk. And...

**NP: Did many women at that time get recommendations get paid for Komsomol work?<sup>15</sup>**

LS: It wasn't exceptional! We had a dean, Anatolii Nikolaevich Lutoshkin<sup>16</sup>, was a rather interesting person, a social psychologist (at that time social psychology was a new field). At one point in his life he was also a Komsomol activist and worker; he studied motivation mechanisms. He told us that if you could explain why some people become socially active and others live their whole lives passively, you would win the Nobel Prize.

And he, by his own initiative, wrote... Because I was referred there by Komsomol, he wrote to the Murmansk Komsomol that "you sent us someone and we trained her. Now you get your professional, she's trained, she knows her work, and so on." At that time in Murmansk a new district was created: Pervomaiskii. The city had only two districts prior: Oktiabrskii and Leninskii<sup>17</sup>. In addition, a political infrastructure was created for the new district. That means it got a district party committee, district Komsomol committee and so forth. The district Komsomol committee had a job opening for the Secretary who works with college students and schoolchildren and who is in charge of the young-adult division.

It all came together. You might think it all happened accidentally, but I believe that it happened for a reason, because all my life I had a passion and a burning desire for social participation. I even remember that when I was four or five, I started to hold meetings at the daycare center. I would ask other children to sit in rows, and I said: "let's talk about what we are going to do." You know? I recall, I remember that so well, what it was like, and in fact, I didn't know then what to say, but I was astounded that they actually sat in rows and listened. It was a very exciting time...

**NP: In the mid-1970s?**

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<sup>15</sup> The translator notes that it was unusual for activists to have a paying job with the Komsomol.

<sup>16</sup> Anatolii Nikolaevich Lutoshkin is a revered faculty member of the Kostroma State University's Pedagogy and Psychology department, where he focused on the development of children's collectives. Complementing his active service with the Kostroma Komsomol, Lutoshkin also headed a sub-department: Theories and Methods of Pioneer and Komsomol Work. He authored books such as *The Psychology of Work in the Komsorg* (with Lev Il'ich Umanskii; Moscow: Molodaia gvardia, 1975); *Emotional Life of the Children's Collective* (Moscow: Znanie, 1978); *How to Lead the Way* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> With the advent of the Soviet Union, countless locations, from streets to buildings to public squares, were renamed to commemorate important dates and events. Pervomaiskii translates as First of May and refers to International Workers Day, celebrated on that date and terribly important to a political movement meant to champion the working class. Oktiabrskii is simply October and indicates the October Revolution of 1917 that saw the victory of the Bolsheviks over the Russian tsarist aristocracy. Leninskii is the adjectival form of Lenin, the name of the Soviet Union's initial leader and one of its most important figures.

LS: Yes, I graduated in 1975. From 1975 to 1982, I worked as the Secretary for the Pervomaiskii District Komsomol Committee, that is in the lowest level of the administrative structure. Next, I was the Secretary of the Murmansk Municipal Komsomol Committee<sup>18</sup>.

**NP: It's a high-level staff position.**

LS: In Moscow, yes, it would be a high-level position. But in Murmansk, a smaller city, which had less than half a million residents, it was another thing... I knew that things looked different to Muscovites from the attitude of my academic adviser...

**NP: So you enrolled in graduate school?**

LS: No, I did not. But when I came back to Murmansk, I began to work within the Komsomol, and I was so excited, it was my calling despite my insecurities. I felt so uncomfortable when I was talking with school principals because it seemed that they were such busy and serious people, and I was bothering them about Pioneers and Komsomol members, and they responded accordingly. That is, they, of course, knew that they could not avoid the district Komsomol structures, and, concomitantly, the district Party committee. For them the Komsomol and Party were unquestionable and holy as it was for most. But we, young and enthusiastic Komsomol members, got in the way of organizing the educational process. I had senior counselors under me as well - the system was a bit ridiculous. The Ministry of Education funded their positions, but we organized and managed the work. Of course, the schools tried to use these counselors for their own purposes: as substitute teachers, as someone to whom they could delegate administrative work. At the same time, we tried to push our own agenda for working with children: we discussed social issues, organized paper and scrap metal recycling drives.

**NP: How did you come by your passion for research, gathering and analyzing data?**

LS: After doing this work for a year and a half, I realized that I was putting so much effort into it, and I loved it, I was always doing something new. The experience I had with agitation brigades during my time at the institute was helpful. But I realized that if I left no one would pick up this work. Nothing would be left. Moreover, my sense was, that if things don't continue afterwards, what was the point of doing it? I contacted Anatolii Nikolaevich Lutoshkin; he was still the dean of our faculty in Kostroma. I wanted to create a research project; I wanted to be involved in academic work, to think it through. To record it. He wrote back: "it's great that you're passionate, but you live in

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18 The district or town Komsomol Committees guide and supervise primary organizations of the Komsomol. They also elect bureaus and secretaries to supervise all Komsomol work and responsibilities. The regional and republic Komsomol organizations are one level above the district or town Komsomol Committees and they supervise district level Komsomol Committees. They also have a central Committee which is formed by several secretaries and a smaller bureau. The highest level of organization in the Komsomol is the All-Union Congress which supervises all branches of Komsomol. ("Hulicka, Karel. "The Komsomol." Proquest. Accessed November 04, 2019. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1291571580?accountid=14667>")

a place with no academic council, no academic infrastructure, so you'll need an affiliation" – I had no idea what he meant.

He said something like this: "keep doing what you are doing, think about it." And he directed me to Boris Zinov'evich Volfov<sup>19</sup>. Volfov often came to Murmansk to lead lectures on organizational methods for organizers of extracurricular activities.

**NP: He was a pedagogue.**

LS: Yes, that's what you might call him. Well, he was assistant principal on socialization of children, as we said then. That is, I had known and seen him, and for us he was the guru, the man who wrote the textbook on the subject. He was really such a well-regarded figure in the world of education. Yes, but personally I didn't know him at the time. So life came together such that I was sent to, hang on, in nineteen eighty something... Well, when I went over to the municipal Komsomol committee.

**NP: So in the beginning of the 1980s.**

LS: Yes, yes, yes. So they sent me to study in the regional school for Komsomol workers in Novgorod<sup>20</sup>. It was just for continuing education courses. There most Komsomol workers were women, very few were men because the school was for those Komsomol divisions concerned with school-age children and young adults. And during our training, the Central Committee of the Komsomol decided to have a conference. A couple of staff members were present from the Institute on General Issues in Child-Raising at the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences...

Nadezhda Petrovna Ivanova was there as well. She was mostly involved with Little Octobrists.<sup>21</sup> She devoted her academic career to studying them. Her task there was to help refine our presentations, to make them more "civilized," or, how might I put it, more academically oriented. My presentation was about how to educate and train young activists...

**NP: Without regard to gender? Not female activists, but just activists?**

LS: Just activists, yes. Because activists – both boys and girls... Although there was always this obvious issue that there were many more girls among Komsomol activists, secretaries of primary Komsomol organizations, and class Komsomol organizations.

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<sup>19</sup> Boris Zinov'evich Volfov headed the University of the Russian Academy of Education, and was the author of several books on pedagogy and early childhood development.

<sup>20</sup> Novgorod is the administrative center for Novgorod Oblast (which is like a state or province) in northwestern Russia. The city lies along the Volkhov River and is one of the oldest cities in Russia with over 1000 years of history. In 1992, UNESCO recognized the city as a World Heritage Site. ("Veliky Volkhov." Wikipedia. Accessed November 04, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veliky\\_Novgorod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veliky_Novgorod))

<sup>21</sup> "Little Octobrists" was the youth organization for children between 7 and 9 years old. After that they typically join the Young Pioneers organization. ("Little Octobrists." Wikipedia. February 11, 2018. Accessed March 07, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little\\_Octobrists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Octobrists).)

Now one of our scholars, Tat'iana Mal'kovskaia<sup>22</sup>— at that time she was investigating this issue—and she talked about this gender disparity. And at the time it was blamed on the fact that public schools operated under women's rules because increasingly more women work there. So it was assumed that women just liked to have other women around who would be easier to work with.

**NP: Interesting.**

LS: By the way, this idea is still alive today. That's the reasoning. I actually think it's sexist, but female researchers are thoughtlessly repeating this inanity, and they have no idea that they are saying: “yes, we are professional educators, but as professionals – we are ‘third-rate sturgeon!’”<sup>23</sup> Men are teachers but who are we? We harm ourselves. And now we have the feminization of education and other things. But that’s a different subject...

After Nadezhda Ivanova looked at my presentation, she said, "My dear, you are so talented! You need to be in academia. Let's have you polish your paper, send us your application along with your abstract and we'll publish it." I took all this advice and thought about it, went home, for two months... And she said, “just like add two words to each line so that it’s a little longer,” and I dutifully added two words to every line. That is, I took what she said literally and did exactly that. And then I sent my abstract and article to the institute on General Issues in Child-Raising at the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow, to the head of the laboratory of Komsomol and Pioneer work, to, if I'm not mistaken, Iashchenko, Iashchenko. I never saw him—they just told me to send it to him—and I sent it. And it so happened that he had died. That is, my packet with my article got to his office, and he, I think, was hit by a car the night before. And he died. He was a very respected person, and he... was a close friend with Boris Zinov'evich Vol'fov. And after Iashchenko's death, when they started to go through his papers, they found my packet with my article. And Volfov, in memory of his friend, Iashchenko, agreed to work with me. That's how my work began. It went on for a long time; I became affiliated with the graduate school at that institute when I left for my maternity leave. So it was 1979, and I arrived literally seven months pregnant. Others looked at me as if I had lost my mind and said, “first deliver your baby and then come work with us.” But deep inside myself I knew that if I take any time off, if I didn't become formally affiliated, that is, if I didn't have a schedule and plans, right? Then I would... well you know how it always is. You tell yourself: “well, let this thing just past,

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<sup>22</sup> Tat'iana Mal'kovskaia is a scholar of pedagogy and early childhood development. She authored such texts as *The Social Activity of Schoolchildren* (Leningrad: Znanie, 2978) and *The Family and Power in Russia in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Moscow: CheRo, 2005)

<sup>23</sup> This is a reference to a novel by Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, first published in 1966. The book was written between 1928-1940 under Stalin's regime and was not published until 1966. The book combines dark satirical components, Christian philosophy and supernatural components. Many critics consider the novel to be one of the best Soviet satires in the 20th century. The book has now been translated into multiple languages. The expression ‘Third-rate sturgeon’ is an amplification of a phrase that became popular in common usage. In it, a party is said to have served “sturgeon of the second freshness” indicating the whole affair as second-rate. Soviet readers subsequently playfully applied the epithet to any phenomenon deemed substandard. (“The Master and Margarita.” Wikipedia. Accessed November 04, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Master\\_and\\_Margarita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Master_and_Margarita))

in another year,” and then time passes and maybe another things changes, and in the end nothing happens. I had a strong intuition that I had to start my scholarly career then. While I was on maternity leave, I read books by Kon, including *Psychology of Early Adolescence* and so on.<sup>24</sup> I read and I read and I read all that I could find. And...

**NP: And you entered graduate schools in the middle of the 1980s?**

LS: No, no, it was in 1979.

**NP: 1979. And when did your defend your dissertation, which...?**

LS: In 1986.

**NP: Once your daughter had grown up and once...**

LS: My daughter grew up at her own pace and so did my dissertation. That is, yes, everything came together at the same time, and it was not easy.

**NP: What role did the subject of women have in your dissertation? Did it have a role or...?**

LS: The subject of women did not have a role in my dissertation. The title of the dissertation was "The Mutual Influence of School and Military Komsomol Organizations in the Communist Upbringing of High-School Students."

**NP: How then did the subject of women show up in your professional career?**

LS: The subject of women first showed up in my social activism, not in my professional career.

**NP: At the end of the 1980s.**

LS: At the end of the 1980s. After perestroika <sup>25</sup>began, it became obvious to everyone that a mindless, senseless, and destructive power had enveloped our enormous country.<sup>26</sup> And no one was asking us what we wanted or needed. And while men were still visible there, , no one thought about women. And no one listened to our voices. Of course, there were difficulties and challenges—we had more than enough of them in the Soviet era—but when perestroika started, everything became more complicated still. All of these problems multiplied. This includes empty store shelves. It was challenging to buy groceries, to make meals, etc.

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<sup>24</sup> Igor Kon was a scientist and sociologist that studied the sexuality of men and children in the context of Soviet gender studies. Kon died in 2011 at the age of 82. Borusyak, Liubov. "In Memoriam Igor Kon: a personal view." Open Democracy Russia and Beyond. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/Liubov-borusyak/in-memoriam-igor-kon-personal-view>. (23 May, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Perestroika is an economic reform that took place in the Soviet Union during the 1980s. It is commonly linked to the then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The reform aimed at introducing more liberal and market-like economy to improve people's living standards and to boost the economy. However, the reform prompted severe inflation and also caused huge political and social tensions that created economic chaos and societal conflicts. Perestroika is regarded to be one of the major catalysts for the dissolution of the Soviet Union. ("Perestroika." Wikipedia. Accessed November 06, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika>)

I can compare Moscow with the rest of the country. For us it was awful. When they tell me now, in Moscow I mean, that "it was tough for us," I always say, "Guys, I visited Moscow then, and I saw meat, cheese, yogurt, and milk." When in 1980... 1981 my advisor went on a business trip to Murmansk, he asked me over the phone—this was in May—"Liubov, what should I bring you?" I didn't even hesitate, "Boris Zinovievich, please bring two containers of milk, three containers of cream, and two plastic jars of Moscow sour cream!" He didn't believe me, he thought I was joking. But we really had problems with that. And if you didn't have connections... I didn't have any; it was unacceptable for me, as the secretary of the municipal committee, to...

**NP: To get something illicitly.**

LS: Yes, to get something illicitly. . We had no food deliveries for our municipal Komsomol committee. Moscow differed from the periphery, and the supply of Party agencies differed from that of government agencies too. The party agencies made sure they were taken care of, and the Komsomol never had that status. It wasn't as important...

**NP: Would it be possible to say that the idea for women's associations came about because of the shortages, the lines, and other such problems that the county faced in the eighties?**

LS: How should I say this? There is a link, but I would say that is was primarily because women desired to, and understood that it was necessary to, be involved in political processes.

**NP: When did this desire appear? At the end of the Gorbachev era <sup>27</sup>or right at the beginning? At the end of the 1980s? Or at the start of the 1990s? When can we place it approximately?**

LS: It was around 1986-1987. Around 1986-1987. Perestroika began in earnest sometime in 1986, then everything unraveled with awful force. And I came to consciousness right before that time. Hang on, I'll explain. My second daughter was born in 1988, and in 1989 I went to take continuing education courses.

**NP: Where?**

LS: In Moscow.

**NP: In Moscow.**

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<sup>27</sup> The Gorbachev Era is the period when Mikhail Gorbachev was the head of the Communist Party in the USSR (1985-1991). During the period, Gorbachev launched two major reforms: perestroika and glasnost ("openness". Slogan for Gorbachev's political reform for more transparency and openness). Gorbachev aimed at increasing economic and political vitality. However, the policies caused political, economic, and societal chaos and were catalysts for the dissolution of the USSR. ("Mikhail Gorbachev." Wikipedia. Accessed November 06, 2019. "The Gorbachev era: perestroika and glasnost." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed November 06, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia/The-Gorbachev-era-perestroika-and-glasnost> "Glasnost." Wikipedia. Accessed November 06, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasnost>)

LS: At that time, yes, in 1986 I defended my dissertation, while I taught history and social studies at a school, and I loved working there. I loved working in the Komsomol, I loved working in the school. It came to me easily and naturally. It's my disposition, my temperament, children.... I still think that no one is more powerful or influential in a school than a teacher. And a teacher has to be such an authority in the classroom in the sense that you can't put an inspector behind him/her. I say what I think is necessary in class. It's a powerful position. If you want to change the mindset of a nation, you need to work with its teachers.

**NP: How did this experience help unite women and the creation...?**

LS: It helped because...

**NP: Tell me about how the women's organization was established.**

LS: It's funny that our women's organization originated from a women's club. And that women's club began with the creation of school studio "Charm." I know: it's an embarrassing name for a school from which women's organization grew. It was in 198—I don't remember now—four, maybe, that I went over... Wait, no, it was after I defended my dissertation, somewhere around 1987 that I went to work at the institute, and I was working on...

**NP: Which institute?**

LS: The Pedagogical Institute. Of course, I was teaching pedagogy at the philology department and the physics and mathematics department and so on. And while doing these lectures, I returned to social pedagogy, to the effects, so to speak, on interactions and communications. I was gathering information on what we would now call gender differences. Then they were called sex-role differences. And with the interpretation that was possible at that time. How women and men are supposed to be, how women are supposed to act, how men are supposed to act. And as a result, I gathered a sufficient amount of information for a decent case study. And then... At one of the seminars, I met psychologists and saw how they conduct trainings, and I really wanted to learn how to do it. Using my own materials, I started conducting my own trainings, which were so... semi-feminist – in the sense that I intuitively had this idea that a woman should be self-reliant, that she can choose her own destiny, make her own decisions. However, because all of this happens in interactions between women and men, she has to develop relations with men in one way or another. So everything was this mix. A core group was formed out of those women who came to my seminars. Many different women were among them. Some came to learn how to walk gracefully, to smile, to attract men. There were also women who, after our seminars (because we definitely discussed what was going on politically in the country) said, "look, let's create our own club, some sort of an organization, which would empower us! What's happening is a disgrace!" And the first group of collaborators came from this club. In fact, the most active were those who used to be Komsomol activists. My closest associate, Irina Fogt, was also a computer science teacher at a technical school, and a math teacher by training. And we began this club as partners.

**NP: And how did you call the club?**

LS: "Liubava." Our first club was called "Liubava." "Liubava," yes. After a year both of us were profoundly disappointed: we learned that we had become game directors for those women who wanted to feign a more interesting life. We weren't happy with this at all. All the more so because we had our social and political views, and we knew that pies, conversations, recipe exchanges, all kinds of courses – for instance, how to cut hair at home and save money by not going to a hairdresser. It was that kind of time and you had to work out strategies to get by.

I now know that we had been relying on a survival strategy, not a development strategy. And a development strategy meant—we understood, or at least I understood—they we had to do something different, bigger, stronger, and more organized. I couldn't articulate it then, but I had this idea. And in 1992 I went to take continuing education courses for teachers in higher education. My husband stayed with the children. Others would say, "How can you leave? You have two children." And I responded, "I'm not a single mom. I have a husband." I made it clear that in our family both of us were responsible for raising our children. I gave him an opportunity to grow. He was a coach, and he aspired to raise Olympic champions. For the first ten years of our marriage, it was like I was a sailor's wife: that is, he was never home in winter, he was always at some practices, and lived in terrible conditions in the sticks with the kids he coached. But all the time...he would come home for three days and then leave again, over and over. I stayed with our child in the polar night: work, daycare, and so on. It was challenging but I believed that I needed to give him an opportunity to grow.

**NP: Did the Liubava Club support all of you and that's why you came together at the time, in the late 1980s?**

LS: Yes. It's hard to say... You know, when you are avoiding thinking about bad things, you tend to distract and busy yourself with other activities. In addition, of course, to the fact that you still have to take care of your family. Some people have more duties, some – less. You have a job, you have to go to work every day, to prepare for work. I'm a teacher, I need to prepare all the time for lectures and classes. And in 1992 I went to Moscow to attend my courses. Moscow was seething and stirring everywhere. I was in class for half of the day, and then I went to the library. I always did something at night. All kinds of events were happening, VDNKh<sup>28</sup> had an exhibition in March – Women's World – and I went there regularly, like a maniac, met others, networked...

Yes, and at this time alongside... or from all this social stress from everything that was going, from an understanding of what was... the challenge of our time, that we need to grow, to do something, otherwise you'll fall to lowest social rung, I suddenly discovered my talent for journalism I was always great at writing essays. And here... "Ostap was

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<sup>28</sup> VDNKh is the acronym for the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy of the USSR. VDNKh is a permanent trade show and park, first opened in 1939, to showcase the achievements of the USSR through a collection of expositions, museums, and other attractions. According to its website, the VDNKh is the world's largest exposition, museum and recreational complex. (About VDNH. Accessed March 08, 2018. [http://vdnh.ru/en/about/.](http://vdnh.ru/en/about/))

carried away."<sup>29</sup> I began to write. I submitted articles to newspapers, they invited me to work for them and even paid me. Well, because I couldn't work two jobs officially, I received only royalties. I was writing all the time and for that I became a celebrity in my region, a media personality. I was often interviewed; I appeared on radio, on television and in newspapers.

When I was in Moscow in 1992 I met the women who at that time were creating the first Moscow women's clubs. For example... I'm not certain if I remember her last name correctly, Irina..., Women's Business Club. In fact, there was also a newspaper, the Business Woman. Now Irina sometimes appears as a psychologist on national television.

**NP: Korchagina.**

LS: Yes, Korchagina. Irina Korchagina. Yes. I... I also saw Masha Arbatova then.<sup>30</sup> I was really frightened by her, by the way. Not exactly frightened, but I had this sense of danger. We never talked one on one, She was speaking about something at the club then. The meetings were held in one of the GUM's outbuildings.<sup>31</sup> And as she was speaking I had this sense kind of, that was like this hedgehog with long spikes. Like if you come close, you might get pricked. Svetlana [Grigorievna] Aivazova,<sup>32</sup> invited her to the club. That's how we created our...

**NP: Networks.**

LS: With Svetlana Aivazova. I saw her then for the first time. I remember that I did not talk to her at that time. I met Galina Grishina at that event. She already had her own organization, some organization called...

**NP: Consortium<sup>33</sup>.**

LS: No, no, no, not Consortium. I don't remember what it was originally called, but later it became the Women's Union "East-West"<sup>34</sup>. They received a great deal of support from

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<sup>29</sup> Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov were Soviet authors from Odessa. "Ostap" refers to the con-man hero, Ostap Bender, of their two picaresque novels, *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*. ("Ilf and Petrov." Wikipedia. February 28, 2018. Accessed March 08, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilf\\_and\\_Petrov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilf_and_Petrov).)

<sup>30</sup> Masha Arbatova was a writer and playwright whose work focused on the female body and reproduction and included themes such as abortion, gynecology, and children born out of wedlock.

<sup>31</sup> GUM (Main Universal Store) is the largest department store (a large store which sells many different kinds of goods) in the territory of the former Soviet Union. It is unique in the fact that it is more than just a department store, but also a place for popular culture and gatherings. ("GUM. TIMELINE." Accessed February 15, 2018. "Department Store." Collins Dictionary. Accessed November 11, 2019. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/department-store>)

<sup>32</sup> A doctor of Political Science and lead research fellow at the Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>33</sup> The Consortium of Women's Organizations

<sup>34</sup> "East-West: Innovative Women's Projects." Started in 1993, the organization's website (which looks to have been updated last in about 2004) describes it as an "information-analytics agency." Their work entailed, for instance, the dissemination of information, conduction of surveys, annotation of publications,

a German woman, Steffi Engert<sup>35</sup>. She did so much to attract funding. The first projects came from that. And I remember, oh, what didn't we learn... We learned entrepreneurship and some other courses. So...

**NP: That was with "East-West" or...?**

LS: Yes, yes, yes. "East-West." That's Galina Grishina.

**NP: At the beginning of the 1990s.**

LS: Yes, at the beginning of the 1990s.

That's when I first saw computers! I remember I had such reverence for this young woman from Germany, I don't even remember her name, Steffi Engel's partner. She was sitting and typing something on a computer, and she appeared to me almost godlike. And she tried to explain to me that she was just a user (she didn't use this term). She said that it was simple, just like a typewriter. And so thanks to our contacts with Galina Grishina and her organization—we still had the status of a women's club at this time—we made these contacts and Galina. invited us to take part in the project "Computer Literacy for Women". That's how it all began.

And when I was hanging around Moscow, I remember, I was in the metro, going down the escalator, and... just by way of association, I began thinking: we need to establish a regional organization, it must be large and regional... What would we name it? The Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula! I got that idea in my head, and when I returned home to Murmansk after the training, at our club's gathering, I said, "You know, I have this idea. I think we need to do these things. So let's begin preparing a conference now, let's write to all the organizations!" All kinds of clubs, small and tiny clubs, existed already – many for mothers of disabled children, for single mothers were in our oblast.<sup>36</sup> These were our seeds from which we would grow... And we sent letters to all of these clubs. I'll tell you... I'll tell you that in general, no one was inspired by this idea of a social and political association, because the majority of women in these clubs were interested in cultural and recreational activities. They had their dating clubs or clubs to meet foreigners. Murmansk had a club like that, which, by the way, collected a lot of contributions, bought vodka, and organized parties... But I kept true to my agenda, Vera

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and other projects dealing with issues of gender. The group is responsible for the owl.ru site (OWL = open women line), which hosts information and resources; they also supported publication of the Dictionary of Gender Terms (Slovar' gendernykh terminov), ed. A. A. Denisov (Moscow: Informatsiia-XXI vek, 2002).

35 Women's rights activist based out of Germany, headed that country's Women's Fund (FrauenAnstiftung). In the early '90s she began focusing on cooperative women's advocacy between Russia and western European nations, and was thus president of "East-West" for a time. Source: "10 лет в стиле "Женские Инновационные Проекты"" owl. Access Jan 17, 2020. [http://www.owl.ru/win/womplus/2003/02\\_01.htm](http://www.owl.ru/win/womplus/2003/02_01.htm)

36 Oblast is an administrative division, usually surrounding a city. The Russian Federation is divided into 85 subjects, of which 46 are oblasts ("Oblasts of Russia." Wikipedia. February 28, 2018. Accessed March 08, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblasts\\_of\\_Russia.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblasts_of_Russia))

Fogt supported me. Svetlana Parshkova was the director of the House of Pioneers<sup>37</sup>. She... She allowed us to meet there because we knew each other from our time in the Komsomol. It would have been awkward for her to refuse the space, but she didn't participate in our work. We created a Sunday school at her House of Pioneers. There we conducted just the same kind of mix of training I spoke about earlier: communication standards, pro-feminist ideas of independence and choosing your path – so the roots implant in your head and from those roots eventually grow flowers. We brought our vision into practice.

I returned in June, and we started some things. Then there was period for summer vacations; we returned in September and started to work actively. In November, we had our first regional gathering...

**NP: In November of 1992?**

LS: Yes, it was 1992, at the end of October or in November... Now I can't remember exactly, but it's all written in the history of our organization. I just can't remember it now. And we, then, put it together... we put it together as best we could. Well, what did we know at that time? We ran it as we ran things at the Komsomol. Then we had our first fund-raising event – the word fund-raising was unknown then, but that's what we did.

**NP: Whom did you contact?**

LS: For example, we approached entrepreneurs, believing that they would help. I remember a very cool businessman in those days, Vladimir Baglaev, he's still there, he has an extensive network of businesses in Murmansk. I remember I came to persuade him to give us some funds, and I said that "we want to unite women, to discuss what's going on, to present our views, to have a voice." He said. "I don't believe in this," and like, "I don't like it, but since you came to me you can have ten grand!"<sup>38</sup> Or, I don't remember, five grand, he gave me right out of his pocket. Or ten, I don't remember. Yes. "Here you go, ten grand!" And we said, "thanks!"

And when... And we met every week. We had regular weekly gatherings. Right, I was telling you how I went and collected contributions. So, by chance, a businesswoman comes to us, she had a small store. And she says, "Baglaev gave you ten grand? Okay, I'll give you twenty grand. I'll get it tomorrow." But our biggest contribution came from the pension fund. Its leader was a man who knew me when I worked at district Komsomol committee, and he worked at the district Party committee as an instructor.

**NP: Your old connections still worked!**

LS: Yes, despite the fact that we didn't personally know each other. We just wrote letters blindly and someone suggested that a pension fund is just like a bank, "they have the money, just ask." And so after he read my letter and saw my signature he said, "is this

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<sup>37</sup> The House of Pioneers is an after-school activities center in the Russian city of Taganrog that existed before 1991. ("House of Pioneers (Taganrog)." Wikipedia. Accessed November 11, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\\_of\\_Pioneers\\_\(Taganrog\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Pioneers_(Taganrog)))

<sup>38</sup> It is not actually clear what currency it is.

that same girl from the Komsomol? Alright, let's make a contribution and allow them to do a good deed." Something like that.

**NP: Is that how the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula got its start?**

LS: Yes, from this the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula got its start! And the Women's Congress as an organization as well. By that I mean that the first event was called the First Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula.

**NP: How many people came as delegates? Or how many were there?**

LS: There were about 200 people there. Yes.

**NP: You're kidding.**

LS: Now it's funny to remember how we calculated everything. First, we paid for travel. We knew that... well, we assumed that... we're simple women and we knew that not everyone could just take money out of their wallet for the trip. So we paid for travel. They stayed in a dormitory at the college where we had the event. The space was free, the college hall I mean. The border guard lent us a vehicle for transportation (women who worked at the border guard headquarters helped). We had simple food - pasta with some sauce.

**NP: The times were like that, the early 1990's.**

LS: It wasn't just the times! We had our budget, we calculated how to do this. And we had a coffee break—we already knew what a that word—for which we bought rye bread, cut slices into quarters, and spread some jam on top. That was our coffee break. We had these mini-sandwiches. That's how it all began.

**NP: What were the goals of this organization that was so painstakingly created and which united in those times...?**

LS: We wanted to agree on collaborative actions. It turned out to be very difficult, and it became immediately obvious with different groups of women. At our very first meeting. Different women's groups had different interests. Those who were inclined to get involved in politics by using a gradual approach, and those who really understood that we shouldn't be begging for scraps and dividing them up amongst the hungry. But that what we really needed was status and power, to build our influence. Just as Igor Semenovich Kon said, "the force of your knock at the door matters." For our "knock" to matter there should be many of us, we have to be organized and support each other ideologically, we must be in agreement on our positions. And we have to, as they say, sing the same song. Our main message then was like this, "Listen to us! What we see happening in our country."

**NP: Women wanted to be heard by society.**

LS: We said... We felt that changes should come about in an intelligent and thoughtful way, that you can't just tear it all apart... That things that work well should be

preserved... something like that. Of course, we didn't have any Lenins<sup>39</sup> among us, who had already spent many years writing. All this was done on the fly, at the level of understanding of some common goals. But these common goals and objectives were understood very differently by different people. We could not come to agreement at our first Congress. We agreed only on one thing, that we needed a regional organization.

**NP: To fast forward: how many congresses were there? General ones, those that united women, with many delegates or guests in large numbers?**

LS: Hmm, five. Five-six.

**NP: Five. Well, five-six. Does the organization still exist?**

LS: Nominally, yes. That is, it has not been closed, it maintains its legal status. Just a few days ago, Svetlana Parshkova came to Moscow; she is now serving as the chairwoman for the Congress.

**NP: So the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula, has existed for a quarter of a century? But in what years was it most active?**

LS: In the 1990s and up to 2006 things.

**NP: Up to 2006. What was the most successful activity connected with the work of the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula, which you would view as a personal achievement? Something that you accomplished at a gathering or something through which you brought together a large number of women who remain in contact with one another? I mean to what extent were the objectives formulated when the organization was created fulfilled?**

LS: It depends on how you look at it, and you can come to various answers. On the one hand, much has been achieved. In my opinion, there has been a radical change in the perspective — at least in the region— on the position of women and on women's rights. They have a right to participate in politics and in business, and their participation is good. And women can talk about more than just recipes. That they are concerned with policy issues, social problems, governance, etc. This is very visible in the media.

**NP: What caused the organization to lose its momentum after 2006?**

LS: Natal'ia, I want to keep answering your previous question. Our second, real achievement was in our address of issues of violence against women and domestic violence. With the help and support of our neighbors from Norway, that is, the Norwegian Labor Party, we opened in Murmansk oblast our first independent women's crisis center.<sup>40</sup> It existed for fifteen years and was only recently closed. Relatively

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<sup>39</sup> V. I. Lenin is a crucial theorist and first official leader of the Soviet Union. He was a prolific writer and his works inspired Russian's to action, and set the intellectual groundwork for the progress of the Revolution and development of subsequent Soviet state.

<sup>40</sup> The Norwegian Labour Party is a political party that promotes a moderate form of Socialism and was the ruling party in Norway after World War II until the mid-1960's. (Weibull, Jörgen, and Jan Christensen. "Norway." Encyclopædia Britannica. March 08, 2018. Accessed March 08, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Norway/Government-and-society#ref296429>.)

recently, I mean, it was closed sometime in 2008. Simply because we didn't have the financial means, because it was not part of our objectives to support such structures. Our objective was to shed light on the issue, to show the ways and the infrastructure needed for a solution. In this sense, we learned a lot from Canadian, German, and Norwegian women. We are very grateful to the Norwegian women – those who participated in conferences, those who participated in the projects – specifically, to the Kirkenes Crisis Center, with whom we collaborated, and to the city of Tromsø<sup>41</sup>, from which it all started.

We succeeded! And then we promoted all of this, we explained that now there is a crisis center for women, victims of domestic violence; we handed it over to the state, and now there are several centers for women who are victims of violence in Murmansk oblast. Now not only women, men and children as well. The problem of violence toward people in close relationships, it was invisible and was not discussed at all. At first, the problem elicited sarcasm, even from those with whom we worked on these issues. I am referring to our city mayor, law enforcement, the media... For example, there were publications such as "Shelter for Ever-Beaten Wives." That is, journalists wanted to help us and to write about the Women's Crisis Center! And that's what they called it, you know... The name "ever-beaten," instead of something more acceptable, triggers how others perceive it. But we succeeded.

We began to offer computer training to women on a large scale. After I met Galina Grishina and learned about her projects in which we participated for the first five years – we are so thankful to Galina Grishina's organization and to Steffi Engel. Great thanks to her... I don't know whether they thought we were doing the right thing with these computer trainings, but these computer technologies – they raised our confidence. they provided us with communication tools to interact with the world, to get information, to exchange [[ideas]]... Irina Fogt and I bought our first computer with our own money.<sup>42</sup> It was the result of a little bit of playing the market! At the time there were sugar shortages. It varied in price, just like the dollar. And I got this idea, and Irina supported me... We collected money from the teachers who wanted to buy sugar in bulk; we bought it at wholesale price and sold it at retail. And we purchased our computer with the profits! Our organization, our core group of 40 people learned electronic communications technology on this one computer for six months. We learned how to use email and the text programs, Lexicon. We started to publish our newsletter on that first computer and distributed it. It contained several A4 sheets of paper stapled together, we regularly sent it out to keep others informed about what we were doing. And they say that our newsletter was highlighted all over in some of the country's major offices.

And I need to note that after a while, we received feedback. In other words, women from offices of the authorities came to us and said, "I've read your newsletter thoroughly and

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<sup>41</sup> City of Tromsø is a city in Troms county in Norway. It is situated on the island of Tromsøya. The city is a cultural center of the region. ("city of Tromsø." Wikipedia. Accessed November 11, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tromsø\\_\(city\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tromsø_(city)))

<sup>42</sup> Irina Aleksandrovna Fogt teaches information technology at the Murmansk College of Economics and Information Technologies.

I want to be part of this!" That's when I understood the impact of the methodical presentation of information. I did not have any special training in this area, I learned this from life. We have achieved such results by following our instincts.

**NP: Fifteen years of such intense activity and success – why did this all collapse? How did this happen? Was it because of the overall political context or some other circumstances?**

LS: First and foremost, it was definitely linked to the political context. When I was in Canada, and I learned how the women's movement developed there,<sup>43</sup> I remember, I wrote an article on the subject "Canadian Meditation." It was on their women's movement because we proceeded in a nearly identical manner. They also started with clubs, then created a movement, then they acted and so on... But we ended up with different results, and the situation is different. I was in Canada in 2004, at that time the Women's Congress was still fairly active and we still had projects.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear that we were slowing down. That is, not just us, but the Russian women's movement in general, because we were part of a network of women's organizations, we were part of the Consortium of Women's Organizations<sup>45</sup>, of the Independent Women's Forum. We felt that everything was stagnating and collapsing.

And then... the backsliding started. It began with pure formalities, changes in legislation, which complicated the lives of organizations. What is a social organization? If it is truly social, there are usually no paid positions. There are no accountants, office managers, and staff who get paid for their work. None of that! That is, you live your normal life, you work, raise children, take care of your home, and then you spend all your free time serving your community. And suddenly some guy (or woman) from the bureaucracy comes and interrogates you. Stony-faced, he or she demands your paperwork. I was particularly astounded by our tax authorities who began trying to fine us all the time. It's ironic, given that, unlike our wonderful "socially responsible" companies, we could never even conceal our taxes. How could we? When we get a grant it's deposited to the organization's account, then every expense, every small item that we purchase – all of

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<sup>43</sup> The Women's Movement in Canada started around 1985 and continues today. It is sometimes referred to as fourth-wave feminism and involves many issues, including anti-racism, disability rights, and same-sex marriage. (Strong-Boag, Veronica. "Women's Movements in Canada: 1985–present." The Canadian Encyclopedia. Accessed March 08, 2018. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/womens-movements-in-canada-1985present/>.)

<sup>44</sup> The Congress of Canadian Women was a feminist organization created in 1950 that lobbied for women's equality. It was comprised of several organizations. It was famously a catalyst for peace talks between the Soviet Union and Canadians during the Cold War. ("Congress of Canadian Women." Wikipedia. March 03, 2018. Accessed March 08, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress\\_of\\_Canadian\\_Women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_Canadian_Women).)

<sup>45</sup> The consortium of Women's organizations is a consortium of Women's organizations that aims at promoting the rights and interests for women in Russia since 1993. The consortium works with the authorities to improve legislation and equal opportunities. The consortium also embarked on "the Center for Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence" projects in 2018 to protect people from domestic violence. ("The Consortium of Women's Organizations." Accessed November 11, 2019. <http://wcons.net/en/>)

this is documented. All our taxes, what we pay for stipends, to our employees, all of it is fully taxed, we have to pay for everything.

I remember I wrote about how, within the first 10 years of operating our non-profit, we attracted over \$200,000, and all of it stayed in the Murmansk oblast. Everything was used to support the public sector and the budget of Murmansk oblast because all of us lived there. That's where we all worked. And all the money, \$200,000, remained there. If all of us worked with that same kind of efficiency as we did then, we would be living under communism, but under market conditions! Yes, really!

First, we were really undermined by the changing [political] climate: that is, the conversations about democracy continued, while, in fact, there was no democracy. It was so obvious in comparison, for example, with Canada, in which organizations similar to ours received funding annually from the state for the work they performed. What were they doing? They kept an eye on their government: was it properly complying with all laws for women? Such a small organization, only three people. I still have my notes. They organized women's crisis centers, and they received funding from the state for their centers. That is, the state recognized that social organizations were doing useful and needed work for society, and it therefore had respect for these organizations. In Russia, on the other hand, we were all focused on survival; the state was constantly looking to pin us with something. Clearly, this is a completely different relationship... Not only conversations about the third sector<sup>46</sup> and civil society, but also the real support for the early beginning of the nascent civil society<sup>47</sup> – that's so crucial! It's virtually impossible for organizations to thrive without this support.

The second important cause is the "behavior" of the women's movement itself. I think that our third wave of the women's movement<sup>48</sup> faded because the women who presented themselves as leaders of the movement, who led organizations and whatever association of these organizations... You know, they didn't have the passion, they couldn't put the goals and the understanding of the women's movement as a tool for working with people above their personal ambitions. Yes, above their personal interests... And I'm really shocked to see that our society continues to operate under the same patriarchal rules of flattery, servility, and boot-licking, which are part of the same

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<sup>46</sup> The third sector is a term used to describe the set of organizations that are non-governmental and non-profit. These organizations can vary in size and specific aims but are usually value driven. Common third sector organizations include charities, think tanks, private research institutes, etc. ("What is the third sector and what does it do?" Northern Bridge. Accessed November 14, 2019. <http://toolkit.northernbridge.ac.uk/engagingwithpolicymakers/engagingwiththethirdsector/whatisthetirdsectorandwhatdoesitdo/>)

<sup>47</sup> Refers to the First Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula that the interviewee started in 1992.

<sup>48</sup> The third wave of the women's movement started in the early 1990s and continued the discussion of many issues brought out in the second wave movement during the 60s and 70s. Third wave feminism also challenged the definition of femininity in the second wave and took factors such as nation, class, race, religion, and ethnicity into account. (Budgeon, Shelley. "Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity." Google Books. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NLaADAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&ots=C0pzRhWAeJ&sig=Z0-rqx75ESDmxlsmppqUIK7ShxPk#v=onepage&q&f=false>.)

masculine culture that we are fighting. We used to explain that we were different, we knew about gender, we had a gender-based approach, our culture was different, so to speak, more democratic and more ethical... But it was not at all like that! Perhaps it's impossible to be immediately transformed, right? It turns out that we pulled out of the patriarchal culture these relics and stereotypes and, in part, we then reproduced them in our relationships.

There was no self-reflection. It always amazed me that we never had an honest discussion. I always said, "Why don't we talk about the problematic behavior of some of our members? Why don't you say that she was simply drunk and rowdy at our women's gathering? Why don't you call things by their names?" It always amazed me...

**NP: Did you use the word "feminism," and did you call your organization "feminist"? What does "feminism" mean to you?**

LS: To me, feminism is my way of life. I've spoken earlier about my mother who wasn't a feminist. When I was a child, she told me that I had to stand firmly on my own feet, that it's most important to be self-reliant! To be self-reliant, to live a fulfilling life and to take a stand against everything that gets in the way – that's what feminism is for me.

It's about seeing oneself as a human being – all of this is feminism.

I've seen plenty of great quotes... whenever I stand up for my dignity, they call me a feminist – and I agree with all of them. I haven't memorized all these sayings about feminism that I've liked. I know that this word still carries a negative connotation in our society, because the term "feminism" has received so much bad publicity... Yes, every time when we had disagreements with people who came to us, especially men, they always maliciously asked, "What are you? Feminists?" And we responded, "What do you mean by feminism? What is feminism to you? "To us, feminism is..."

**NP: Was this term used in your organization's charter or somewhere else in your organization's public face or was it not?**

LS: In the charter? To tell the truth, I don't remember. But not because we were afraid of something. I think that it didn't make sense or was inappropriate to mention it in the document, and we used other words. But we ourselves knew that we were feminists, that we acted like feminists. That is, we really...

**NP: Could you talk about it? I mean not in the West whenever we went there, but during your meetings with women, during your congresses? Was this term used?**

LS: It was used but was perceived variously among our members just as it was in society. Because the women's movement is a very tolerant community, not like a political party where they tell you what you may and may not talk about and if you think differently, you should join another party. No, our community is liberal and democratic! That is both its strength and its weakness. Because you have a right to say anything that's on your mind, no matter what, even if you don't agree with us. And when you disagree with us, it appears that we're not united. And sooner or later, this crack or this dent would become visible. Yes...

**NP: Where and how did your research on gender pedagogy <sup>49</sup>and the work of your organization intersect?**

LS: They very much intersected. I would say that my involvement in the women's movement helped me realize what I am really interested in and what subjects I care about. Because I intuitively felt that I was rubbed the wrong way back in my days in the Komsomol when it was normal to hear, "A woman cannot be a first secretary because she is a woman. A woman's place is the in a school sector!" It was openly said. Supposedly, women are "third-rate"!

What was the school sector? It was the lowest level in the hierarchy of Komsomol work in the USSR<sup>50</sup>. And this always rubbed me the wrong way. Or they told me something like this whenever they were transferring me from one job to another and the pay was lower in the new: "Well, it's a good salary for a woman". , And I would say, "Why for a woman? Why do you want to get paid, for instance, 300 rubles, and I have to get only 240 and be content about it because I'm a woman?" I've always seen that there were inept men, men who are much less capable than me in terms of their organizational skills, character, convictions, loyalty to the cause... but they were in higher positions simply because they were men. Subconsciously, this always irritated me. And I remember when they told me, "You don't understand..." I answered, "YES! I don't understand, I don't understand why it is this way!" The men who spoke to me, they were so surprised that I didn't understand it. It seemed to them that all women should know that they have to stay behind and follow them. And the qualifications of the person ahead of you don't matter, you just have to follow.

When I became involved with the women's movement, I remember my first conversation with Tat'iana Klimenkova<sup>51</sup>, when I first arrived at the Institute of Social and Economic Studies of Population (ISESP RAS)<sup>52</sup>. Elena Kochkina<sup>53</sup> worked there at the time... The conversation concerned the Women's Forum, which we didn't get into. <sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "Pedagogy is the art, science, or profession of teaching" ("Pedagogy." Merriam Webster. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pedagogy>)

<sup>50</sup> USSR is the acronym for Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Commonly known as the Soviet Union. ("Soviet Union." Wikipedia. Accessed November 14, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union))

<sup>51</sup> Tatiana Aleksandrovna Klimenkova is a Candidate of Philosophical Sciences and researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>52</sup> Founded in 1988, the Institute of Social and Economic Studies of Population aims at conducting research regarding population well-being, quality of life, demographic factors' influence on economic growth, and so on. ("Our Institute" The Russia Academy of Sciences. Accessed November 14, 2019. <http://www.isesp-ras.ru/en/>)

<sup>53</sup> The Global Feminisms Project has an interview with Elena Kochkina. See the GFP Russia Site for more details at: <https://glblfem.sites.uofmhosting.net/en/russia>

<sup>54</sup> Starting around 1991/1992, women met at the Independent Women's Forum to network with other female organizations that supported the development of an interconnected social infrastructure. (Information Center of Independent Women's Forum, Moscow. Accessed December 05, 2017. <http://www.owl.ru/eng/women/aiwo/iciwf.htm>.)

We, the Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula, had no idea that there was this Forum, in Moscow<sup>55</sup> because our communications weren't as good then. We learned about it after the fact. And we even did things at the same time. That is, the first Forum was held exactly on the same dates when we held our first Congress in Murmansk. At the end of October 1992. And we had no idea there was something similar going on in Moscow.

Incidentally, this suggests that across Russia more or less similar things were happening at this time: women activists appeared everywhere in this realm of social and political activism. But then when I arrived at the institute, I, of course, didn't know anyone. Tat'iana Klimenkova in this conversation, she told me how she first used the word "gender" for the first time. And she said, "You know, it's a type of culture." Despite my background in pedagogy, being a Candidate of Sciences, I struggled to understand what she was talking about. I didn't understand, but I felt that it was meaningful. Tat'iana also said, "You know, patriarchy is a type of culture." A type of culture? It wasn't at all in my pedagogical vocabulary. What is a type of culture? Well, it wasn't clear. But I started reading. It was very difficult to separate gender from sex; they had so much in common. I remember, I was at a conference in St. Petersburg. Ania Temkina<sup>56</sup>, and my favorite Elena Zdravomyslova,<sup>57</sup> and Sergei Oushakine<sup>58</sup> were there as well. They asked me, "In your opinion, why does patriarchy exist and maintain itself?" And I said, "Because of gender stereotypes!" And they responded, "It's not only about stereotypes." And I said, "what do you mean? Of course its gender stereotypes." Now though I get it, I know the vocabulary. It was new to me then and it was hard to sort it all out in my head... It took me five years to understand it clearly, five years. During that time, I attended and participated in the First Summer School for Women and Gender Studies at Valdai<sup>59</sup>. I remember that I was annoyed by the lectures of Zdravomyslova and Temkina because I only -understood half of what they were saying.

I remember Ania Temkina<sup>60</sup> using the English word, "frame, frame...". Only a few years later, when we were together at a seminar, I asked her, "Ania, what's a "frame?" And she said, "Oh, Liubov, oh, I'm so sorry, you understand..." Yes, of course, later I read that it was just like the Russian word for frame. And so I asked her, "Ania, why not just use the Russian word for "frame"? You really confused me with this word and I was completely

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<sup>55</sup> LS misspeaks here. The forum actually occurred in Dubna, which is in Moscow oblast.

<sup>56</sup> The translator notes that "Anna Ariadovna Temkina is a professor at the European University in St. Petersburg."

<sup>57</sup> The translator notes that "Elena Andreevna Zdravomyslova is a professor at the European University at St. Petersburg."

<sup>58</sup> The translator notes that "Sergei Oushakine is a professor at Princeton University."

<sup>59</sup> Valdai is an upland region in central Russia that's a popular tourism destination especially for fishing. ("Valdai Hills". Wikipedia. Accessed November 14, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valdai\\_Hills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valdai_Hills))

<sup>60</sup> Ania Temkina is currently a professor of the Sociology of Public Health and Gender at European University in St. Petersburg. She is also the co-coordinator of the gender studies program at the university. She is interested in gender issues in the post-soviet society and has multiple publications on the subject. ("Temkina, Anna." European University of Saint Petersburg. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://euspp.org/en/people/temkina>)

lost because you use such words." And she explained, "Please understand, we have this fault, especially the sociologists who know English and who read books published in the West..."

It was also very difficult to understand what "gender" meant. What was the methodology that analyses such processes and shows how it works. But I knew it was exactly what I needed. And just like all the other educators, I tried to implement it in the classroom. I remember at the time I was working at the Department of Continuing Education for Leaders in Education in Murmansk oblast, and my students were school principals. In my course, I lectured with fire in my eyes on what this "gender" is, what it gives us, what we are beginning to understand about the oppression of women. I used statistics. I remember it was received very coldly. Only once they blew up when there was one man among them, a psychologist who, it turned out, worked in a prison. He was silent for a long time and then suddenly said, "What at all are you talking about? Women have to make babies, and men have to go to war and die!" And that's when the women blew up, "We make babies for you to kill?"

So, you know, some of these things started to hit home eventually. I'm certain that my students later tried to bring what they heard home. And I remember when one woman came the next day and said, "look, after your lectures, I came home and started to tell my husband and my son, that they were oppressing me. I said that they don't do any housework, blah blah blah..." That got me thinking about how... gender and pedagogy are intertwined. Because nothing was said about pedagogy. They talked about sociology, history, philology, gender in language, and so on. So, of course, all of it is intertwined. All of this was extremely interesting, although not always understandable. So I began to think about how to adapt it to pedagogy... Why do we need gender? How do we adapt it, how do we get to it? Because I knew that it was rooted in childhood, upbringing and socialization, which is taught by parents and teachers. That is, of course, we interact with all of this, we use it all, and as a result we have these. relationships. Subservience instead of partnerships. And the expectation that a person is going to take care of another, to serve another, that one person has to sacrifice for another – all of this instead of finding compromises. So I started working in that direction, and I am still excited. I am still interested. Very interested.

**NP: Could it be said that your work with the organization influenced your academic work, or, vice versa, your academic work had an impact on your work with the organization?**

LS: Well, to say that it went directly into the organization...

**NP: Pedagogy involves not only working with small children, but also teenagers and young people.**

LS: That's right! That's right! But when I was involved in the organization, I didn't have within myself the confidence, the strength, and sufficient knowledge to bring my academic work to the organization. It's another matter entirely! I discussed the subject of gender within a very wide circle of my colleagues who specialize in history and

sociology... Natal'ia Pushkareva<sup>61</sup> specializes in women's history; she's is a leading expert. You know, all this academic work and my readings expanded my horizons. Because pedagogy and gender... Better to say that sex, gender, and pedagogy... So pedagogy cannot give answers by itself. To give the right answers, pedagogy has to be created with a view to its consequences – and that's sociology. It has to be created with a view to its genealogy<sup>62</sup>– and that's history. And...

**NP: What about Western publications? Were they helpful or not at the time? Were there, or to what extent did you rely on the work of Western scholars in regards to gender pedagogy? Perhaps they were relevant or useful to the advancement of gender pedagogy here? Because here, other than you, I can't name anyone who work on gender pedagogy as the principal theme of their research.**

LS: Well, actually...

**NP: I've seen, of course, some individual presentations at conferences, but it's only your name that comes to mine when I hear gender pedagogy or when I google it. So here is the question: did you have productive contacts with foreign colleagues and to what extent were they useful for your organization or were they only useful for your scholarly pursuits?**

LS: Foreign publications, particularly if they are translated well (because it's easier to read and understand in your native language) are extremely helpful. Extremely helpful... Here, for example, Shawn Burn and his gender psychology.<sup>63</sup> Oh God... Sandra Bem.<sup>64</sup> She's great! I read her again and again. I bookmarked her books all over. In addition, there are other publications by men, that is male academics who work in this area. Foreign works on masculinity. They are extremely interesting to me, and I marked them up all over. But we always need to adapt theory to the particularities of our culture. That is, the Slavic culture<sup>65</sup> and our...

**NP: Mentality.**

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<sup>61</sup> Natal'ia L'vovna Pushkareva is a Russian historian and the director of the Women's and Gender Studies Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences. Pushkareva is one of the major founders of women's studies in Russia. ("Russia." Global Feminism Project. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://globalfeminisms.umich.edu/en/russia>)

<sup>62</sup> "an account of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or from older forms." ("Genealogy" Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/genealogy>)

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Shawn Burn is a Professor of Psychology at California Polytechnic State University where she covers topics such as social psychology, gender and women's studies, and group dynamics. ("Shawn M. Burn Ph.D." Psychology Today. Accessed March 08, 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/shawn-m-burn-phd>.)

<sup>64</sup> Sandra Bem was an American psychologist known for her studies in androgyny and gender. ("Sandra Bem." Wikipedia. March 08, 2018. Accessed March 08, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandra\\_Bem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandra_Bem).)

<sup>65</sup> The slavs are an Indo-European ethnic group that speak various Slavic languages. Geographically speaking, there are East slavs, South slavs, and West slavs. ("Slavic Cultures." Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoptions. Accessed November 14, 2019. <http://www.frua.org/countriesandculture/slavic>)

LS: Yes, our mentality. It would be ineffective to apply theory without an eye to particularities. And when we've tried to follow theory without adapting it, we've, as a rule, failed. We always need to understand cultural differences. Western academics think that their women are more oppressed. On the other hand, our pedagogic discourse is full of a pity for "poor boys," who have been allegedly oppressed by feminine ways of organizing education in schools because most of the teachers there are female. Even in this aspect, there is a difference.

**NP: And the contacts between your Congress of Women of Kola Peninsula and foreign organizations, those in the 1990s. What new subjects did you come to and begin work on thanks to these contacts? The subject of violence against women and domestic violence... What else...**

LS: Yes, violence in close relationships. Here domestic and family relationships are only part of the problem. Violence in any close domestic or family relationships, also in relationships outside the family- they are close relationships as well, because before marriage a person may also be in a close relationship. And another subject is the trafficking of women. That is, trafficking...

**NP: And with what organizations did you collaborate at that time? Who helped you or possibly guided you ideologically thanks to your reading of their work, their sites, their studies? Were there such, as they say, I can't...**

LS: In terms of organizations, because we live in the Northwest, I mean, I lived in the Northwest, in Murmansk oblast, our most active contacts were with Swedish and Norwegian women's organizations. With Norwegians, we worked on crisis centers of Barents region,<sup>66</sup> these are women's organizations. I can't recall the name now. But in Tromsø, in Kirkenes, in Sweden there was this women's organization, its name evades me too, but it died, you could say, it collapsed in 2008, during the recession. When the recession unfolded, it just collapsed because of lack of funding.

**NP: Did they help you? Could they even help financially?**

LS: Yes, because we had joint projects. The budget holder was this women's organization, its center was in Stockholm<sup>67</sup>. We worked not only in Murmansk oblast but also in Karelia<sup>68</sup>, partly in Moscow<sup>69</sup> and Yaroslavl<sup>70</sup>; we had a fairly wide network.

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<sup>66</sup> The Barents region is the geographic area that contains Finland, Sweden, northernmost part of Norway, and North-West Russia. Murmansk Oblast, Republic of Komi, and Tromsø are all part of the region. ("The Barents Region." Beac. Accessed November 18, 2019.

<https://www.barentscooperation.org/en/About/Learn-More/Barents-region>)

<sup>67</sup> Stockholm is the capital city of Sweden. It has been the cultural, political, and economic center for Sweden since the 13th century. Stockholm is also hometown to Alfred Nobel. Every year, the city holds the Nobel Prize ceremonies at the Stockholm Concert Hall and Stockholm City Hall. ("Stockholm." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm>)

<sup>68</sup> Karelia is a region in the Northern Europe that is currently divided among the Republic of Karelia, Leningrad Oblast, and Finland. Historically, it was closely related to Finland, Sweden, and Russia. ("Karelia." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karelia>)

With their help we developed violence prevention and assistance programs for women and children who were victims of sexual trafficking.

**NP: Did you contact American foundations? The Global Fund for Women?<sup>71</sup>**

LS: The Global Fund for Women really helped us in the beginning, when we did not have our own space, and we needed a place to work and get together every week. We asked for money to cover space rental. And we received \$3000. We used it for two years to rent a space that we later bought. Because we had a lease-purchase contract. We agreed on lease to purchase. So, little by little, we collected grants. In addition, the Soros Foundation<sup>72</sup> was very helpful and their small grants (for example, \$10,000) were a huge help for us. You have to understand, because of our work, our regional focus on women from the regions, from small towns – that money went a long way and allowed us support our work.<sup>73</sup>

The Canadian Foundation for the Support of Women also greatly assisted us. Firstly...

**NP: The Canadian Foundation for Gender Equality, correct?**

LS: Yes, for Gender Equality, which was in Moscow at the Canadian embassy. With their support we conducted a remarkable educational project in which Natalia Pushkareva, among others, participated. The purpose of the project was precisely what our group had been talking about at the moment, i.e. that we needed to transfer a common understanding of strategies of gender and gender-based approaches to pedagogy. And we started at the very foundation – with pre-school education. Thanks to my work at the Institute and my personal connections, we agreed with kindergartens at one of the administrative districts of Murmansk to train their teachers on gender issues and the gendered structure of society, and then to work together with them. We would decide together what kind of importance these things had for children beginning at the earliest

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<sup>69</sup> Moscow is the capital city of Russia and the Soviet Union. It is the largest European city both by population and by area. It is also a center of culture, politics, and economy for Russia. ("Moscow." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow>)

<sup>70</sup> Yaroslavl is the administrative center for the Yaroslavl Oblast (which is like a province or a state). It is one of the oldest cities in Russia. The historic part of the city situated at the confluence of the Volga and the Kotorosl Rivers and has been chosen as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. ("Yaroslavl." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaroslavl>)

<sup>71</sup> The Global Fund for Women is a global champion for human rights established in 1987 that offers funding to different progressive and social-welfare oriented organizations. ("Global Fund for Women History & Mission." Global Fund for Women. Accessed March 08, 2018. <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/about/mission-history/#.WqHB1ijwbIU>.)

<sup>72</sup> The Soros Foundation, also named as the Open Societies Foundations, is the largest private funder for independent workers in the field of democratic governance, human rights, and justice. George Soros, the founder and chair of the Foundations, first began funding internationally in 1979. Currently, the Foundations fund individuals and groups in over 120 countries. (Open Society Foundations. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org>)

<sup>73</sup> Open Society Foundations is a philanthropic organization founded by George Soros that supports civil society groups projects with the aims of promoting justice, education, and social welfare. ("Open Society Foundations." Wikipedia. February 13, 2018. Accessed February 15, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Society\\_Foundations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Society_Foundations).)

of ages. And because this was 2001, I ran into the problem of who would read lectures for this program. As they say: “grain by grain, the hen fills her belly.” I remember, I was at my dacha<sup>74</sup> with Zoia Khotkina, who was my guest, and we were trying to figure out who could talk about this.

And we knew that if it was gender, then there had to be history, economics, sociology and family. It had to be about girls and boys. There had to be children's literature. We sorted through everyone who was involved in anything like this in Russia, and we put together a very strong team. Liudmila Vasil’evna Popova<sup>75</sup>, who was literarily the only scholar whose conducted research on the basis of Russian material on gender differences among schoolchildren, came to us and read lectures to kindergarten teachers. We invited Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva, who went above and beyond. Using her foreign language skills she collected unique material and developed lectures, which are still very popular today. In her lectures, she analyzed fairy tales and using a gender analysis and approaches, she detailed their purposes. Next, we had Marina Arutiunian, who had a very interesting study, which showed the consequences of mistakes of gender education in childhood, youth, and adulthood: how men and women, who were raised according to traditional gender roles, behave and what problems come about because of this. The icing <sup>76</sup>on the cake of our group was Igor Semenovich Kon<sup>77</sup>. He is a renowned and well-respected sociologist, psychologist, anthropologist, and sexologist, whose works to date are still the greatest, the best works offering an analysis of masculinity. That is, they ask, “what is wrong with men?” from the point of view of changing cultural conditions, in terms of the changes that have taken place in the twentieth century and are actively continuing now. What issues do men face? And how can our analysis and scholarship address these issues?

The Economist Zoia Khotkina lectured on gender differences and gender segregation in the economy, in employment, and labor, and so on.<sup>78</sup> So the project participants got a "360-degree view" of everything that has to do with gender, answers to questions what comes from where and how all of it is interconnected with our everyday problems. Of

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<sup>74</sup>A “dacha” is a Russian country house. (“Dacha.” Dictionary.com. Accessed March 08, 2018. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/dacha?s=t>.)

<sup>75</sup> Liudmila Vasil’evna Popova is a psychology professor in Moscow State University’s school of Pedagogy. Her main research interest is “the realization and psychological support of gifted girls and women” and “the psychology of creativity in women.” Source: owl. Accessed Jan 17, 2020. [owl.ru/library/039t.htm](http://owl.ru/library/039t.htm)

<sup>76</sup> “something that adds to the interest, value, or appeal of an item or event —often used in the phrase icing on the cake” (“Icing.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/icing>)

<sup>77</sup> Igor Semenovich Kon(1928-2011) is a Russia/Soviet philosopher, psychologist, and sexologist. He believed that the sexology is an interdisciplinary science rather than just a branch of the medical study. He was a pioneer of sexology in the Soviet Union and was awarded the Gold Medal of the World Association for Sexual Health in 2005. (“Igor Kon.” Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor\\_Kon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Kon))

<sup>78</sup> Zoya Khotkina is a UN Expert on Gender Equality who proposes that the condition of women in Russia is largely due to unfair economic conditions, education, healthcare, and a male-dominated political system. (“Gender Equality, Individual Empowerment, and Pluralism.” Democracy, Gender, and Social Policy in Russia. doi:10.1057/9781137343215.0007.)

course, it was difficult for us at that time to understand, and for them, our students, it was difficult to participate in this “massive attack,” that is, this intellectual assault. For people who have lived their entire lives with traditional gender roles, who were raised with them and whose minds were developed under them, we were demanding that they rethink everything. Though that’s how it always is. The grant we had was given for one year, and within that time frame they had to first learn, then to analyze their practice, to think it over, what could be changed, how scripts for children's events could be rewritten, to change the way they interacted with children. And then all of us had to describe our conclusions, to create and publish a manual. We typically call this a monograph, but, in fact, what we put was a pedagogical teaching manual. And as people who work in the classrooms have told me, this manual remains the best, one of the most understandable in which not only is the theory summarized in a practical way, but also the implementation of that theory is shown, i.e. what you should do and why. Because life shows that, well, when he/she reads theory, a pedagogue doesn’t always get what to do next. How should he/she apply it?

**NP: What happened then in the mid 2000s... err, in the early 2000s, 2005-2006 when the activity of your Congress was winding down? ? How have things unfolded over the last decade in your region where the Union... err the Congress of Women of the Kola Peninsula continues to exist nominally? And in general, to what extent does your work continue to be connected with gender pedagogy and do these questions still interest you?**

LS: I’ll start with the last one. Because that one’s clearest in my memory. I continue to work on the gender approach in education. I developed this theory, I tested it in practice, I taught it to students, and I’ve seen the results: how it changed students’ awareness, their attitude to life and to children and so on. And now I have the opportunity to work exclusively on this topic. Literarily. I can spend half a year focusing only on this. Before now, I’ve had to combine my academic interests with my work for which they actually pay me. So yes, I continue to work on this and, I should emphasize, it remains very interesting to me. Just recently it was proposed to me, err, I was recently asked to help a unique, I think, educational institution: the girl's boarding school of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. So this is a sort of Cadet Corps<sup>79</sup> only for girls. It is the only one of its kind. It's located in Moscow, 800 girls in grades 5 to 11 are there. And the leaders of this institution approached us after watching the webinars, which Olga Kliuchko<sup>80</sup> and I conducted (she has a PhD in philosophy and works on gender issues). They listened to us and realized that they didn’t fully understand what gender was, and they asked for our help. That is, in fact, to create a scientific and pedagogical basis for the instruction of their girls, who are provided with a great education: 4 languages, excellent conditions, just extraordinary conditions. Just last

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<sup>79</sup> Cadet Corps were originally military schools for sons of the nobility and gentry. Over time, many Cadet Corps started to recruit students from different social classes. (“Cadet Corps.” Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadet\\_Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadet_Corps))

<sup>80</sup> Olga Kliuchko focuses on questions of philosophical approaches to gender and education. Lists among her most important publications *The Gendered Approach in Social Cognition and Education* (Moscow: Direkt-Media, 2015). Accessed Jan 17, 2020.

Friday I was given a tour of their base. Just incredible. The charm schools of the Russian Empire pale in comparison.<sup>81</sup> So very good conditions. And there's a high demand for the graduates of this institution, including in higher education, in Bauman Moscow State Technical University and others, which have programs in data security. Department of Defense Military Institute of Foreign Languages has a quota for students from this institution. But... discrimination continues to live on and thrive: the Ministry of Defense allocates only 4-5 seats for girls. Even though these girls are well prepared, they're born and bred patriots. All of them are from officers' families, the families of military service members who serve in faraway garrisons, or they're the children of service members who died in the course of duty. It's an old Russian tradition: Russia has always had such boarding schools, establishments for the education of the daughters of military officers who died defending their homeland. It was there even in Tsarist times<sup>82</sup>. And they've returned now. So now I've received this opportunity, which, as I understand it, presents a wonderful site for research.

With regard to the work of the Women's Congress of the Kola Peninsula, we truly felt that sometime in 2006-2008 the intensity of work declined. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, the situation in our country worsened because of government suppression of social organizations. Secondly, Western foundations started to be expelled, funding decreased, and it became nearly impossible to get funding.<sup>83</sup> But I always said, "When we became involved with this work we didn't think about the money, we only counted on ourselves!" So the lack of funding is not our greatest obstacle, although, for 15 years we were supported by grants... They played their role, so to speak: people become used to receiving at least some money...

**NP: Perhaps Russian activists have become disillusioned with the idea? Perhaps there hasn't been a generation of young women to replace you and say: "we share these views, we want to continue"...**

LS: Yes, such young women exist because our daughters grew up and they share our views! But besides convictions, you need this... you this charism<sup>84</sup>. But people that wanted to lead, to stand up for something – we haven't found them. The Congress

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<sup>81</sup> Across the late Russian Empire, a number of Institutes for Noble Women, finishing or charm schools for daughters of the nobility or other privileged classes in the late Russian Empire such as military officers and merchants, were founded and managed in the name of Empress Maria, the wife of Alexander III (1845-1894).

<sup>82</sup> Tsarist times are the period before the Russia Revolution in 1917, when Tsarist autocracy was the basic form of the government. In this period, all power and wealth belonged to the Tsar, the supreme ruler. In Russia, the period started in the 15th century. ("Tsarist Autocracy." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarist\\_autocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarist_autocracy))

<sup>83</sup> Western countries provided funds to Russia after the post-soviet period after 1992 in an attempt to promote democratic and free-market institutions. (Menges, Constantine C. "An Initial Assessment of U.S. Aid to Russia, 1992-1995 And a Strategy for More Effective Assistance." [https://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/04-04\\_menges.pdf](https://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/04-04_menges.pdf).)

<sup>84</sup> Charism is "an extraordinary power (as of healing) given a Christian by the Holy Spirit for the good of the church" ("Charism." Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charism>)

continues to be headed by people of our generation, the same Svetlana Parshkova, who wasn't eager to join us at first but has since come around. She's a great organizer and a very responsible person. And up until now...

**NP: She's the leader now?**

LS: Yes, she's the leader. She's now a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation<sup>85</sup>. Thanks to her work in the leadership of the Congress, , she worked... for the administration, was in charge of the public relations department. But with the next changing of the guard, the new governor, who, by the way, came to us from Moscow, brought his own team and disposed of everyone who worked there before, without regard to their skills and achievements. Our government system is awful, just awful! Just a perfect storm of awfulness. And only recently she came to Moscow to talk with me and told me that she was exhausted. And, frankly, women's activism has declined.

**NP: Why?**

LS: It's hard to say give just one answer... I think that firstly, we've become accustomed to losses because our initial passion was from shock. The shock of the 1990's<sup>86</sup>, the collapse of the system, when everything was falling apart and we needed to stay together, united in order to resist it.<sup>87</sup> You know, 25 years ago everything collapsed, but now people have adapted to a certain extent. Somehow, they learned to survive in various ways.

Second, there is a disillusionment with the mechanisms of control of our so-called civil society. We put so much energy to create the organization, we participated in elections so many times, you have no idea... We participated in every election! And we didn't have money. It was all for free, door-to-door canvassing, all these American techniques. By the way, these techniques don't work in our society either! Because we don't live in villages, but rather in these huge, densely populated housing developments. Every attempt to use this technique directly – I did it too and I can say that it's clearly a total failure. It's a total failure in our circumstances. All of this takes energy and time... Every election is... it's like the end of the world. But after it's over, there's still work, family, and everything else. It's just a nightmare. And we lost election after election, because our experience has shown that money and people are easily bought. Including those who are part of women's organizations. For many, getting theirs right here and right

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<sup>85</sup> Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was organized in 2005 to oversight the parliament and the government of Russia and its Federal subjects as well as analyze draft legislation ("Civic Chamber of the Russia Federation." Wikipedia. Accessed November 18, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\\_Chamber\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_Chamber_of_the_Russian_Federation)).

<sup>86</sup> The interviewee here refers to the dissolution of the Soviet Union

<sup>87</sup> The period of time between the 1980's and early 90's in Russia was categorized by policy and leadership changes towards a communist regime. The Soviet government began to collapse during this period of time and was officially dissolved in 1991. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia had its first direct presidential election and went through a number of years rehabbing their political and military systems. ("History of the Soviet Union (1982–91)." Wikipedia. December 02, 2017. Accessed December 03, 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union\\_\(1982%E2%80%9391\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Soviet_Union_(1982%E2%80%9391)))

now turned out to be more important than the idea of moving forward, fighting, staying united, and insisting on our position. And is it difficult blame them?

**NP: A final question: Are you optimistic about the future? I mean in the sense of the impact of gender pedagogy, of our efforts to change the women's movement through our research and through the activism of our organizations. Or have recent years brought more disappointments than hopes as to what we can fix and contribute and so on?**

LS: Despite everything, I am optimistic. The idea of gender equality feels right to me. Our techniques, perhaps, weren't the most effective. So we have to work on that. And to continue supporting the idea of gender equality. We have to stay true to it... Between you and me, I have a deep disdain for those who betray it. Because many quite intelligent and educated people among us turned out to be traitors. That one, oh God, Mizulina.<sup>88</sup> I've known her for 20 years.

**NP: She used to be a Yabloko member and now she's something else entirely.<sup>89</sup>**

LS: Yes, yes! This is a person who had always said, "I've worked with men at the prosecutor's office and I know what we are worth! I've earned what they have myself, I defended my thesis when I was working there! We can do anything!" And 20 years later... She is a completely different person who talks nonsense. It's a complete shame that she is also a woman because we are judged by her actions.

There are also others.

This is especially true for female politicians. They betray their ideals because they want to keep their cushy jobs. And they gain nothing. Although, we are partly responsible for this. Because, for example, Ekaterina Lakhova.<sup>90</sup> I have a lot of respect for her despite some rough edges in our relationship; she also used to support us. She *used to* support us! She was with us. But as soon as it became necessary to address a specific legal issue,

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<sup>88</sup> The translator notes that Elena Mizulina "is a PhD in Law, professor, and a Russian state and political leader. She is now a Federation Council Senator." In that role she has "advocated for banning abortions and other repressive reproductive policies." Policies Mizulina has supported in her time in the Russian Parliament (1995-2003 and from 2007 to the present) include bills that would prevent women from obtaining a higher education before having children and decriminalization of first-time domestic violence offenders. ("Yelena Mizulina." Wikipedia. March 03, 2018. Accessed March 09, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yelena\\_Mizulina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yelena_Mizulina).)

<sup>89</sup> Yabloko was a Russian social-liberal electoral bloc and political party founded in 1993. It enjoyed some success in the Yeltsin years but under Putin has had minimal success. NP here notes that Mizulina used to espouse liberal views and was a member of this party. She quit the party in 2001 and joined the Union of Right Forces, a neoliberal, free-market party, and in 2007 she was elected to Parliament as a member of A Just Russia, a social-democratic party that presents itself as an alternative to United Russia, the party of power, though many are skeptical of that nominal opposition.

<sup>90</sup> Ekaterina Lakhova is a Russian politician and in 2016 she served as the chairwoman of the Women's Union of Russia, member of the Federation Council Committee for the Federal System, Regional Policy, Local Governance and Affairs in the North. (Interview by Vladimir Nesterov. Exclusively for Vestnik Kavkaza. "Ekaterina Lakhova: "A woman is designed so that she can save family, peace, Russia"." Vestnik Kavkaza. Accessed March 09, 2018. <http://vestnikkavkaza.net/interviews/Ekaterina-Lakhova-%E2%80%9CA-woman-is-designed-so-that-she-can-save-family-peace-Russia%E2%80%9D.html>.)

to argue for it and to support our ideas, she began to overintellectualize<sup>91</sup> and waffle over the matter like: “it can only be this way, and no other.” She demonstrated no flexibility, no intelligence. And, of course, she wanted to be popular and to present herself in the best light, and all these things led to her failure. She became disillusioned with us. I understand her: she became disillusioned with us because we were an organization that could have supported her.

**NP: But you’re still optimistic about the future?**

LS: Yes, of course.

**NP: Can international organizations help us any?**

LS: I would say this: I believe in what I have always believed and again, there is the truth: do what you have to and what will happen, will happen. I believe in this idea – not blindly, not because someone says so, but because I embraced it, because I became an academic expert in this area. I’ve convinced myself, and I believe in it. So I’m going to do everything possible to promote it. If I come to an understanding that this idea is erroneous, perhaps, I may change something. Now I still believe that the idea is right. So I must go on!

**NP: Thank you so much, Liubov Vasil’evna, for everything you have shared with us today.**

LS: And thank you.

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<sup>91</sup> Overintellectualize is “to intellectualize (something) to an excessive degree” (“overintellectualize.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/overintellectualize>)