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A STALINIST CELEBRITY TEACHER:

Gender, Professional, and Political Identities in Soviet Culture of the 1930s

E. Thomas Ewing

In 1936, a Moscow elementary teacher named Olga Fedorovna Leonova attended the All Union Congress of Soviets which approved the "Stalin Constitution." Emulating pledges to increase productivity made by factory workers, Leonova promised the other delegates, including Joseph Stalin, that all of her third graders would receive above-average grades. When the forty-eight pupils all passed final exams with "good" or "excellent" grades, she had fulfilled her pledge.¹ Leonova's nomination to the Congress and the publicity surrounding this promise transformed her into a celebrity teacher. In the four years that followed, she was the author or subject of some forty articles describing her experience, activism, and philosophy. Leonova was praised for lively and engaging methods, careful attention to pupils' conduct, and advice to parents about raising children. She was also described as a dedicated political activist on "the cultural front," one of the most advanced Soviet women, and a loyal fighter for the "Leninist" cause. Throughout these accounts, finally, Leonova was celebrated for "her big heart and exceptionally sensitive soul."²

Leonova's celebrity status was characteristic of a Soviet political culture in which the elevation of "heroic" individuals was intended to demonstrate both the achievements of communism and the loyalty of the people. While Stalin was the most visible, and certainly most powerful, example of this kind of personality cult, the 1930s saw the emergence of many thousands of "ordinary celebrities."³ The most famous heroes were workers designated as "Stakhanovites" after breaking production records, but aviators, explorers, and others also attained celebrity status. These heroic images represented part of a propaganda effort to substitute an idealized world for the "realities" of social dislocation, low living standards, and political repression. Scholars have argued recently, however, that Stalinist political culture was not merely imposed by the regime, but also constructed by the lived practices and shared meanings of society.⁴ By looking at the public image of Leonova, this article explores the layers of meaning that shaped and were shaped by the identity of a Soviet teacher in the Stalinist context.

As a woman just over forty years old, with some twenty years of experience, who possessed a secondary education with limited special-

ized training and who was not a member of the Communist Party, Leonova was actually a very "typical" teacher. At this time, slightly more than one-half of Soviet teachers were women; nearly one-fourth had more than ten years of experience; approximately three-fifths had at least a secondary education with limited pedagogical training; and just over two-thirds were "non-Party" (not members of either the Communist Party or its youth affiliate, the Komsomol).⁵ Leonova became a Stalinist celebrity when her personal history, professional practices, and political role were transformed into ideals to be emulated, and her identity embodied the authoritarian ideals of the emerging Stalinist political culture.

Gender also shaped the celebrity image. Leonova's very appearance—functional clothing and a modest hairstyle—reflected the gendering of professional identity. Yet even the idealized image reflected tensions that complicated a woman teacher's position within the classroom, the political realm dominated by Party officials, and the private world of her family.⁶ Leonova's image thus reflected, and in turn confirmed, the ambiguous location of Soviet women balancing the multiple obligations of family responsibilities, occupational duties, and political obedience.⁷ By looking closely at these tensions, this article argues that public images that obscured the persistent inequality of Soviet women also illustrated the gendering of public authority.

In addition to the regime's propaganda objectives, the authoritarian values of Stalinism, and the uncertainties of a woman professional, Leonova's identity as a teacher was shaped by her employment in a school enrolling children from elite families, including Stalin's son and daughter. But the "mini-cult of Leonova" never acknowledged her actual relationship with these powerful forces.⁸ Deconstructing Leonova's image thus demands attention to the silences present in the layers of public adulation. By recognizing that Leonova existed on multiple levels—as the idealized myth of the "good teacher," as an experienced woman teacher, and as an individual connected to Soviet elites—this article explores the relationship between historical actors and the "authoritative discourse" of the dictatorship.⁹ Rather than trying to "expose" the "real" Leonova—an undertaking that is questionable as an interpretive strategy and impossible given the sources—this article argues that this public image confirmed and reproduced, even as it obscured and blurred, important aspects of Soviet women teachers' identities. By representing state power with a professional and feminine face, Leonova's political identity served to mediate the repressive character of the Stalinist dictatorship.

"We Soviet Teachers are a Fortunate People"

As shown in this account of the 1936 Congress, Leonova symbolized the regime's claims to have strengthened the authority of teachers: "Sitting in the Kremlin Palace, among delegates representing the entire nation, Leonova thought of Lenin's words: 'Our teacher should be raised to a standard he has never achieved, and cannot achieve, in bourgeois society.' . . . Where, when, in what other country could a teacher, having the least rights of all those without any rights, receive such honor by participating along with government officials in shaping the basic laws of the country. She realized that she had done very little to fulfill the great trust that had been bestowed upon her."¹⁰ The "great trust" referred to 1931 educational reforms in which the Communist Party mandated more "traditional" forms of instruction, including a subject-based curriculum, standardized examinations, and teacher-centered pedagogy. The new stress in Soviet education on order, discipline, and achievement drew upon and reinforced similar trends in the management of industry, the state apparatus, and the administration of everyday life. Rejecting the egalitarian elements of revolutionary ideology, the regime offered teachers greater responsibility in exchange for more efficient production as well as complete obedience. The slogan, "the teacher decides everything," echoed Stalin's phrase, "cadres decide everything," in symbolizing these principles of political accountability.¹¹

Glorifying Leonova thus marked a convergence of new educational policies with the emerging political order. Published descriptions of teaching methods reinforced the message that adherence to prescribed forms was essential to achieving desired outcomes. Leonova's lessons exemplified Stalinist ideals: the teacher defined the significant knowledge, materials were straight-forward, and Soviet patriotism infused all content.¹² Rather than stimulating pupils to find their own paths to understanding, these methods required them to follow the teacher in mastering a standardized curriculum. Even Leonova's deviations, such as setting aside the textbook account of Tsar Peter I to tell in her own words about Leningrad or spending less time lecturing about industry to devote more attention to reading skills, shared the same objective of placing the teacher at the center of the learning process.¹³

The most celebrated examples of Stalinist education were teachers' promises that their pupils would earn only satisfactory or better grades. By setting production goals, teachers emulated industrial Stakhanovites. Although Stakhanovism was never fully adopted in schools, the publicity surrounding "honored" teachers testified to similar strategies for raising productivity.¹⁴ Just as the Stakhanovite campaign "proved" that political

mobilization and individual effort could overcome “technical” limitations, very high grades “proved” that all Soviet children could be excellent if they only received attention and encouragement from determined teachers. Leonova’s statement, “There can be no limits on pedagogical work,” expressed the full potential—as well as the coercive implications—of Stalinist pedagogy.¹⁵

Although instruction received considerable attention, disciplinary strategies reveal even more about authority in the classroom. The “struggle for Bolshevik order” was repeatedly credited for Leonova’s effectiveness: “In my work, I always make real efforts to strengthen conscious discipline because children must understand that unless there is excellent discipline, neither studies nor work can be of high quality.”¹⁶ Depictions of Leonova’s classroom reinforced this impression of a teacher exerting considerable authority over obedient and respectful pupils: “Children came into the third grade classroom and sat down at their places. Girls and boys are dressed neatly in blue smocks. The sense of order is pervasive. Books and notebooks lie in even piles. Each notebook has a cover with first and last names, the class, and the subject written neatly and accurately. The same order and neatness is evident inside the notebooks. Light confident steps are heard in the corridor. The children grow quiet. Olga Fedorovna [Leonova] enters the classroom. Dozens of children’s eyes lovingly follow her every movement. “Greetings, children!” Olga Fedorovna calls out in her soft voice.”¹⁷ Published comments by pupils, such as this letter from fourth-grader Tania Rubashkina, also revealed the effects of this disciplinary strategy: “Olga Fedorovna [Leonova] did not yell at us once during the entire year. If we made noise, she would remain silent, but gave us such a look that we were immediately ashamed.”¹⁸ These accounts demonstrated how the teacher’s role was not just to teach, but also to train Soviet children to conform to a system that stressed hierarchy, obedience, and subordination. Discipline was most effective, however, when rules of conduct were so internalized that just the sound of footsteps or “such a look” would bring conformity.¹⁹

Leonova’s public image thus integrated productivity and discipline into a model to be emulated. Through its control of public discourse, the state associated respect for teachers with loyalty to the Soviet regime. Leonova echoed Stalin’s claim that “life has become more joyous” with her own assessment of teachers’ opportunities and responsibilities: “I always loved my work, but now I have such a desire to work that I simply never want to leave the school. . . . We Soviet teachers are a fortunate people. We are entrusted with the upbringing (*vospitanie*) of our remarkable Soviet children. . . . No task is more honorable than cultivating children’s love for the homeland and preparing them for their fortunate

and happy life."²⁰ By strengthening teachers, Soviet officials expected them to reinforce hierarchies in the interests of a more disciplined social order.

These normative descriptions reveal little of what actually happened in classrooms. In fact, oral histories collected by Holmes suggest that discipline actually worsened during Leonova's tenure as school director.²¹ More generally, inspectors' reports, teachers' statements, and accounts by former pupils document that ineffective instruction, poor discipline, and professional shortcomings were widespread in Soviet schools during the 1930s.²² To a certain extent, the glorification of celebrity teachers revealed the failure of educational policy and school administration. Rather than ensuring that all teachers had necessary training and all schools had suitable facilities, elevating individuals to celebrity status fulfilled specific political objectives cheaply and simply. By becoming a Stalinist teacher, Leonova also became an instrument of this authoritarian discourse.

Yet these idealized images could also become resources for individuals. In a context marked by chronic shortages, ideological instability, and political turmoil, teachers sought to protect themselves from perceived insults, abuse, and neglect by invoking the discursive construct of the "honored profession."²³ An incident involving teacher D. Kylasov suggests that while criticism was not always well-received, the persistent invocation of a public identity could result in real change. In 1932, Kylasov criticized local administrators for failing "to implement Party Central Committee decrees concerning schools." Following public discussion of these criticisms at a conference, he was dismissed and put on trial for slander. Despite this intimidation, Kylasov continued complaining to higher-level officials. When Kylasov's allegations were investigated, he was cleared of charges and his tormentors were arrested. An account published under the heading, "Just retribution for the persecution of a teacher," indicated that teachers could access certain kinds of power as long as they expressed their grievances in terms of the failure to implement Central Committee instructions.²⁴ Teachers such as Kylasov recognized the advantages of aligning themselves with central authorities by assuming a specific professional identity.

The combination of professional respect and pedagogical authority was also evident in recollections of former Soviet teachers. According to Semën Khoze, whose teaching career began in the early Stalin era, teachers drew upon both official images and personal relationships to define their role: "In the 1930s the well-known slogan of Lenin—the teacher should be raised to a position higher than any previous position—was far from realized. Unfortunately, the Leninist proclamation was received in many areas of the country as a declaration and a slogan, but was not put into effect. Nevertheless, the teacher enjoyed recognition and authority

among various strata and different social groups and the attitude of society was passed on to pupils. I have in mind respect, attention, and, if you like, obedience to the teacher."²⁵ For Vladimir Samarin, a former teacher who emigrated during the war, Stalinist policies significantly improved the teacher's position: "The teacher came to enjoy the great esteem and affection of his students . . . [and] unquestionably began to command greater respect. . . . The teacher rose in the students' eyes both as an intellectual authority, a source of knowledge, and as a mentor, an elder comrade, a moral authority."²⁶ These comments suggest that as teachers "took on" official identities, they also acted with more authority. Teachers still lacked any power to force others to act in specific ways, but they could acquire authority if they aligned themselves with official values. Although teachers may have believed that this authority was essential to their professional identity, these actions required them to conform to regime values. Teachers thus participated in the shift toward a more disciplined and ordered political culture.

The fact that these three teachers were all men raises questions about the relationship between gender and authority. Was such respect, recognition, and esteem equally available to women teachers? By asking how gender may have shaped professional identities, the next section explores the contradictory location of women teachers in Soviet society.

Constructing, and Deconstructing, the "Mother-Teacher"

A careful analysis of Leonova's identity reveals the narrative of a life that preceded, accompanied, and, at times, diverged from the celebrity image. A biographical approach thus demonstrates how gender shaped both the professional identity of the individual and the regime's deployment of a public image. Leonova was born into a Moscow working-class family in 1895, the eldest of six children. Her father was a sign-painter and mother was a seamstress. After completing primary school, Leonova worked for the city administration and studied at night for her teaching certificate. She passed her exams but was not offered a position in Moscow schools, so at age seventeen she left to work in a village school. Four years later, Leonova returned to Moscow to care for her family after her mother died. Once again denied a teaching position in Moscow, she relied on private lessons for income. After the 1917 revolution, Leonova worked in a Soviet school while attending evening pedagogical courses. She taught in Red Army literacy schools during the civil war and then spent twelve years working with *besprizorniki* (homeless and orphaned children). In 1930, Leonova began teaching in Model School No. 25, one of the elite schools in Moscow. She was recognized in 1936 as one of the "best teachers" in the

Soviet Union. When the "model school" distinction was eliminated a year later, Leonova became the new director of renumbered School No. 175, a post she held when war began in 1941.²⁷

Elements of Leonova's story were typical of the life-course of women teachers cross-culturally: family background in the "respectable" working class, individual determination to continue schooling and become a teacher in spite of material deprivation, and the interruption of career to care for family.²⁸ Other biographical elements represented the collective experiences of the revolutionary generation.²⁹ In late 1937, for example, Leonova declared: "Despite being forty-two years old, I consider myself the same age as the revolution, because my real life, my new life when I could work freely in our Soviet school, began with the October revolution."³⁰ Upward mobility from a working-class family to an educated profession evoked the experiences of millions of Soviet citizens during the "Stalin revolution," as rapid economic and educational expansion generated a mass social transformation.³¹

Although Leonova's biography affirmed Stalinist values, a closer look reveals significant silences, tensions, and even contradictions. The fact that Leonova was not just a common teacher but in fact taught at an elite school was an obvious silence, but other omissions were revealing in more subtle ways. While describing at length Leonova's childhood, primary education, and work in Tsarist schools, these accounts refer only in passing to her work with homeless children in the 1920s.³² By skipping from the hardships of the Tsarist era to the glorious present of Stalinism, these narratives echoed the official repudiation of pedagogical "experiments" in the 1920s.³³

Published articles also contained little information about Leonova's professional training, which is especially surprising given that her celebrity coincided with a national campaign to certify teachers.³⁴ Leonova's formal schooling ended at the secondary level; she did not complete the secondary-level pedagogical training program, a minimum requirement for teachers.³⁵ When Leonova received her certificate in a special ceremony, she did so through an exemption offered to teachers with more than five years of experience but lacking formal qualifications.³⁶ While the inattention to Leonova's education may have been a deliberate effort to conceal this "deficiency," it also suggests that professional credentials were less influential in defining a teacher's identity than such factors as achievements in classrooms, relations with pupils, and activism outside the school.

Gender was certainly the most intriguing tension in the celebrity image. Because the Russian word for "teacher" is gendered both masculine and feminine as *uchitel'* and *uchitel'nitsa* respectively, virtually every reference to Leonova indicated her female identity. An examination of

Leonova's representation as a "woman teacher" uncovers tensions between professional and personal identities that demonstrate both the remarkable aspirations of and the real constraints upon the state's efforts to use this idealized image for political objectives, revealing disruptions and silences in gendered discourse.³⁷

Leonova's celebrity emerged from the Soviet strategy of advancing women into public roles as evidence of sexual equality under socialism.³⁸ During the 1937 Supreme Soviet elections, women made up approximately one-fifth of all candidates. Sixteen women and five men teachers were nominated. While teachers made up a relatively small proportion (8 percent) of women candidates, women were a more significant proportion (76 percent) of teacher candidates.³⁹ Despite the seemingly obvious link between gender and professional status, however, the only times Leonova was explicitly linked to women's particular situation came in specific organizational contexts, such as a ceremonial meeting to discuss women's progress since the revolution.⁴⁰ Other than these passing references, however, articles by or about Leonova rarely addressed any themes specific to women teachers' professional interests or personal concerns.

The most strikingly gendered aspect of Leonova's public image involved her personal life. Of the forty articles discussing Leonova as a model teacher and public activist, only two referred to her family. During the 1937 election campaign, a picture of Leonova and her daughter, Nina, appeared in the newspaper *Izvestiia*.⁴¹ The most sustained, and certainly fascinating, attention to her motherhood came in a 1939 article entitled "Thoughts of a Mother-Teacher on Upbringing." In this article, the need to combine a mother's love for her child dovetailed with the disciplinary strategies of a teacher. These themes were woven into a detailed account of a school holiday, which Leonova had promised to spend with her daughter, but then was obliged to meet parents at the school. At breakfast, Leonova told her daughter to use the morning to finish her homework so they could spend the afternoon together. When Nina defiantly announced that she would go out on her own, Leonova described her conflicted emotions: "As her mood of opposition and obstinacy grew, my attitude was sharply divided. On the one hand, I felt sorry for her as a child, sorry as her mother. It is no secret to any of us that we are so busy that we almost never see our own children. On the other hand, I wanted to show that she was wrong so that she would understand." When Nina refused again to do her homework, Leonova replied: "This is your free day, spend it as you wish, but my advice is to spend it working, so you are finished by the time I am free." A few minutes later, Nina came to her mother in tears, saying, "Mama, I am wrong." Several hours later, Nina appeared at the school where Leonova was lecturing parents on proper approaches to

childrearing. After listening to the discussion, Nina wrote this note: "Mama, I am still in a very bad mood, but now I understand that I was wrong. I finished my lessons, and now I will wait until you are free so we can go home together."⁴² In her conclusion, Leonova used the incident to affirm that love tempered with firmness, rather than force, was the best way for mothers and teachers to discipline children.

The incident illustrates two less obvious, yet equally significant, aspects of Leonova's public image as a Stalinist celebrity. First, these exchanges captured the dilemma of the working mother, for whom the competing demands of occupational and maternal identities persisted in constant tension, even for an educator with expert knowledge of child raising.⁴³ Second, the narrative echoed the dominant discourse of Stalinist terror. Although Leonova and her daughter began with common objectives, conflict erupted when Nina rejected her mother's new plan, at which point the critical issue became the subordinate's refusal to yield to higher authority. Nina's total submission ("now I understand that I was wrong") reinforced the asymmetrical power relationship. Published in 1939, just a year after show trials saw former Communist leaders admitting their mistaken defiance of Stalin and confessing in the most self-abasing language to acts of treason, Leonova's narrative strikingly evoked this broader discourse.⁴⁴ While it is impossible to know how contemporaries read the article, these similarities illustrate the mutually reinforcing dynamics of political and professional discourse. An autobiographical narrative that proceeds from irrational defiance through an appropriate exercise of authority to willing submission served to reframe repression into more personal terms that may have appeared less arbitrary and thus more reasonable.

Yet "Thoughts of a Mother-Teacher" was also significant, ironically, because the dual roles as mother and teacher were so rarely acknowledged in published accounts. Although newspaper articles and photographs of female Stakhanovites, pilots, and explorers often referred to or depicted husbands and children, the absence of such associations in accounts about Leonova illustrate a tension in the Stalinist construction of motherhood. In particular, this silence reflected a broader reluctance to acknowledge gender or motherhood in the identities of women teachers.⁴⁵ Soviet authorities proclaimed women's full equality in education, celebrated successful individuals such as Leonova, promised equal pay to men and women, and proclaimed "to be a female teacher is an honorable occupation," but they rarely made any direct connections between gender and the duties, opportunities, or identities of women teachers.⁴⁶ Even as Leonova embodied the idealized qualities of a woman teacher, the gender dimension of this identity was assumed but remained largely unstated.

Deconstructing the image of the “mother-teacher” thus reveals complex intersections between gender and professional identities. In 1937, the same year that Leonova became a celebrity, thousands of Soviet women teachers lost their jobs because their husbands were arrested as “enemies of the people.”⁴⁷ Any kind of association with an accused person could lead to allegations, dismissal, or arrest, but women teachers experienced a particular sense of vulnerability because their marriages implicated them in the professional and political networks of their husbands. For these teachers, the gendered position of wives suddenly became the decisive element of their professional identity. Gender also mattered to women teachers who compromised their professional activities and public commitments because of family responsibilities. Some left teaching; those who remained complained of the burdens of preparing lessons, fulfilling public responsibilities, and caring for children.⁴⁸ These women did not have the flexibility implicit in Leonova’s image to deploy their status as “teacher-mothers” most strategically.

Recognizing the interplay of presence and absence provides new insights into Leonova’s public identity. The silence concerning her family life, for example, served to deny any dilemma between work and family that might have compromised Leonova’s idealized dedication to all Soviet children. In a similar manner, the lack of information about Nina’s father may have reflected concerns about acknowledging the sexuality of women teachers, confirming high divorce rates, or admitting that Leonova had given birth outside of marriage.⁴⁹ These aspects of Leonova’s biography were simply excluded from the public view. Because women teachers occupied a traditionally “feminine” position, their identity as working women was less disruptive than those holding “masculine” positions in engineering, management, or mechanical fields. The disruptive potential of the latter trajectory generated the reassertion of gendered identities—through such devices as pronatalist rhetoric, abortion bans, and legal reforms to “strengthen” marriage—while still facilitating the mobilization of women’s productive resources. In the case of women teachers, however, this rhetoric was generalized to the “maternal concern” shown to all pupils, while the actual experiences—and encumbrances—of mother-teachers remained invisible.⁵⁰

The ambiguous relationship between emphasizing the special role of women as educators and obscuring the actual experiences of women teachers can be made more visible by comparing Leonova’s public image with that of a male teacher. Georgii Ivanovich Spirkov, a village teacher near Leningrad also nominated as a Supreme Soviet candidate, provides for effective comparison because his biography, experience, and qualifications closely resembled those of Leonova.⁵¹ Both teachers were praised for long

teaching careers that began before the revolution, for outstanding teaching records, and for absolute loyalty to the Soviet system, the Communist Party, and Stalin. A closer look reveals, however, subtle differences that are best explained by gender.⁵²

Although both biographies included similar references to excellent teaching, public service, and political activism, descriptions of Spirkov's public role included repeated assertions of authority outside the school whereas Leonova's identity encompassed a more nurturing role that emphasized personal relations. The difficult conditions of Tsarist Russia, for example, were represented differently. Leonova's biography drew attention to her impoverished home, the economic costs of her schooling, and the need to quit teaching after her mother's death, while accounts of Spirkov emphasized "the poverty of the teacher's life, the lack of rights, and the arbitrary power of tsarist bureaucrats." Descriptions of Leonova's professional work tended to focus on her classroom activities, personal relations with pupils, and advice offered to parents. Stories about Spirkov, by contrast, emphasized his political engagement as a member of "the committees of the poor," as a leader during collectivization, and as a secretary for village committees. While both teachers were praised for earning pupils' love and community respect, the basis for this recognition differed: Leonova was recognized for advising mothers on childrearing, while Spirkov was recognized for earning the respect of older (and presumably male) peasants. Leonova's determination to become a leading teacher was rewarded by meaningful personal relationships: her appearance at the Supreme Soviet prompted children to shout, "Greetings, auntie Leonova." Spirkov's "great authority," by contrast, was confirmed by growing prestige outside the classroom: in 1937, Spirkov consulted with prominent government leaders about educational policies.⁵³

These comparisons illustrate how the gendered nature of educational discourse reinforced key dynamics of Soviet political culture. Invoking cultural assumptions about the nurturing qualities of women while proclaiming the attainment of gender equality denied the real pressures and constraints in Soviet society. Analysis of Stalinist discourse has demonstrated how the rhetoric of gender equality and the visibility of women concealed, and thus perpetuated and reinforced, powerful distinctions between male and female.⁵⁴ The strategic invocation of the "mother-teacher" rhetoric facilitated the exploitation of a gendered public image. While Leonova's actual experiences as a mother were suppressed, the meaning of this identity was fully deployed. The elevation of a woman teacher symbolized not only the inclusion of the masses in politics, the increased prestige of the teaching profession, and equality for women—all of the publicly acknowledged messages—but also the ideals of obedi-

ence, subordination, and acquiescence that the culture defined as normative qualities for women and especially for women teachers.⁵⁵ This image also served to mediate increasingly repressive forms of state power.

“Stalin is Wise and Simple, Like Truth Itself”

Leonova’s public image was part of a broader propaganda effort to build support for the Stalinist regime. Almost every article included declarations of complete loyalty to Stalin’s Communist Party, appeals to all Soviet citizens to worship the motherland, and celebrations of “the happy life” of the present and future.⁵⁶ When Leonova spoke to a reported 50,000 people at a 1937 election rally, she appeared on the rostrum with state prosecutor Andrei Vyshinsky and looked upon a crowd carrying portraits of Communist leaders.⁵⁷ Such assertions were expressed in the most exaggerated language, as in Leonova’s hymn to Stalin, “Great Teacher and Friend”: “In the name of comrade Stalin, the working people of our great motherland advance triumphantly to create the new communist society. The development of every single aspect of our life is directly connected with the great Stalin’s name. . . . Stalin is wise and simple, like truth itself, and the clarity of his leadership will guarantee all victories.”⁵⁸ Political propaganda also permeated Leonova’s pedagogy. In 1936, for example, she pledged to teach children not only to understand but also to love and value the new “Stalin” Constitution.⁵⁹ Her lessons were cited as models of how patriotism should be infused into medieval Russian history by emphasizing exploitation by princes and the roots of popular nationalism, and into modern Soviet history by emphasizing socialist economic development under Stalin’s leadership.⁶⁰

Whereas these accounts depicted Leonova as a symbol of absolute loyalty, the available evidence presents more ambiguous and even contradictory impressions of teachers’ political identities. At the other end of the spectrum from such “Bolshevik teachers” as Leonova were “enemies behind the mask of the teacher” facing threats of denunciation, dismissal, and even arrest. Some were openly anti-Soviet, but far more were inadvertently victimized by personal associations with designated “enemies,” by ill-advised statements reported by informants, or simply by running afoul of excessively vigilant officials. While only a small proportion of teachers were repressed, these measures intimidated the entire profession. At the same time that Soviet propaganda proclaimed teachers’ loyalty, educational officials promised to “unmask” every teacher who failed to adhere strictly to the “Party line.”⁶¹

While neither idealized images nor exaggerated accusations can be interpreted as evidence of teachers’ political attitudes, Leonova’s celeb-

riety does suggest how the coercive dynamics of Stalinism could be transformed in more professional and even personal directions. Through this public image, the crude violence of state terror could be integrated into more familiar practices and represented in more acceptable forms. This strategy was evident in the similar representations of Leonova's authority as a teacher and Stalin's authority as "the great teacher." In 1938, Leonova described how Supreme Soviet delegates responded to Stalin's presence: "When comrade Stalin allowed his warm, affectionate, and fatherly gaze to wander around the hall, everyone was overcome by joy. We felt that his sincere look was directed at each of us. As you look on our Stalin, you have a powerful feeling of greatness, wisdom, and extraordinary modesty."⁶² This imagery closely resembled a description of how pupils responded to Leonova's presence in class: "At every lesson, she is greeted by forty-nine pairs of children's eyes, forty-nine children for whom she is the highest authority, the supreme judge of their actions, the source of knowledge, and their best comrade. She cannot help being cheered by the happiness of her students while also taking on their sorrows and misfortunes. But externally, Olga Fedorovna [Leonova] is always calm and composed. She is demanding of her children and most of all of herself."⁶³ The celebrity teacher thus embodied aspects of the emerging Stalin cult: the reverential atmosphere associated with the leader's presence, the combination of concern for the individual with control of the collective, and, finally, the joy of submitting to the absolute power of the leader. Leonova's references to Stalin as "our dear teacher" and promises "to work like Stalin teaches" further illustrate how patterns of authority, obedience, and loyalty were discursively reproduced.⁶⁴

Yet Leonova's public identity remained tenuous because her authority derived from symbolic relationships lacking any "real" power. Even idealized descriptions underscored this uncertain position by locating her authority in the "small worlds" of school, family, and children.⁶⁵ In contrast to the tangible products of engineers, managers, and workers, for example, Leonova's most significant outcomes were defined by the later achievements of her pupils, as in this interview: "When Olga Fedorovna [Leonova] talks about [former pupils], her voice becomes warm and gentle and her face is illuminated by a bright smile: 'They have become excellent citizens, just as I had hoped. Please do not talk about me, but talk about my pupils. All of them are remarkable children.' Modesty is always the best adornment of a Bolshevik, and this word can be applied completely to Olga Fedorovna. She is truly a non-Party Bolshevik, a representative of the best people of our country, dedicated totally to her work, our children, and our homeland."⁶⁶ Although modesty was one of the "approved" values, Leonova's position was defined to a remarkable extent by this de-

rivative discourse of personal relations with children. When Leonova was elected to the Supreme Soviet, for example, a pupil asked if she would stop teaching; her promise to continue teaching while fulfilling her new duties reportedly brought visible relief to the young boy.⁶⁷ At the very moment she ascended to new heights of activism, this statement undercut her public profile and reasserted her primary responsibility for children. Even when Leonova wrote about the terror, as in a 1938 report on a show-trial, she brought politics back to the level of the school by describing her relief that “enemies” no longer threatened “the happy and fortunate life” of her children.⁶⁸ Reducing Stalin’s dictatorship to teacher-pupil relations, deferring credit for her achievements, asserting the primacy of her caretaking roles, and justifying the purges as protection of children demonstrate how underlying elements of her professional and gender identities ultimately shaped, and subverted, Leonova’s public and political identities. Embedded within the celebrity image was the tension between the great individual as the moving force—the “little Stalin” in the school—and the more traditional image of the submissive woman teacher, who thinks first about her children, steps into the background to allow them all the credit, and becomes socially active only to protect their welfare.⁶⁹

But these implicit tensions did not mean that Leonova’s words and actions lacked significance. Infusing political repression into personal and professional relationships was far more significant than any symbolic role or public statement. Adhering to a central tenet of Stalinist pedagogy, Leonova broadened the responsibility for enforcing the teacher’s will to the whole class, as in this recommendation that pupils assume collective obligations for enforcing self-discipline: “When one student received a ‘satisfactory’ grade in geography, the entire class became concerned. All the children gathered around with their maps, explaining to the pupil where he made mistakes, and demonstrating how they could be corrected.”⁷⁰ Leonova also promoted a more pervasive state power by urging teachers’ direct involvement in pupils’ family life. Asserting that the teacher’s influence should extend to any sphere of child development, she personally visited the parents of each pupil to discuss appearance, friends, and behavior. Exhorting parents and teachers to follow her example, Leonova called for “a closely-connected, united, and cooperative front” that made children recognize that “our word is law.”⁷¹

Leonova’s public image thus became a forum for guidance on childrearing. One father described how Leonova called him to the school, asked about his son’s behavior, and gave advice about proper methods of upbringing. When a pupil complained about his father’s drinking, Leonova spoke to the father, had him admitted to a treatment facility, and then received his public thanks for ending his alcoholism. Leonova applied the

same pedagogical approach to her constituents. When a woman complained about her son's academic and disciplinary trouble, Leonova offered to speak to the school director but also promised to have "a serious conversation" with the boy.⁷²

Leonova thus participated actively in critical aspects of Stalinist political culture, including systems of collective surveillance, demands for absolute conformity, and direct intervention into the personal sphere. These practices were justified in ideological terms as necessary for developing socialism and defeating "anti-Soviet elements." In the discourse of the celebrity teacher, however, these practices acquired different meanings; they became strategies to raise achievement, manage classrooms, and extend schooling into the community. The political meaning of these practices was undeniable, however, because they contributed to a more repressive state power. Leonova's identity as a woman teacher may not have fit securely in the Stalinist public world, but there is little evidence of similar tensions in the effort to bring politics into her professional world. In this respect, Leonova truly embodied the teacher's contribution to making state power a more direct presence in the lives of Soviet people.

Celebrity Teachers and the Stalinist System

Although the glorification of Leonova emerged from the heroic discourses of the late 1930s, her actual position rested on a more complicated foundation. In particular, Leonova's celebrity was connected directly to her professional relationship with Soviet leaders. Stalin's two children attended School No. 25, and his daughter Svetlana may have been in Leonova's homeroom. Stalin took a personal interest in teachers at the school, and almost certainly knew Leonova by reputation if not in person.⁷³ In a September 1935 letter to her father, Svetlana wrote that her teacher had introduced the new subjects of history and geography: "At first she just talked with us, but now we have begun real lessons." Although no names were used, this teacher was quite likely Leonova.⁷⁴

The connection to Stalin almost certainly influenced the decision to make Leonova into a celebrity. In her memoirs, former pupil Dina Kaminskaya claimed that Stalin's intervention was the only explanation for this action:

One incident in my school was characteristic of the time. A teacher in one of the lower grades named Leonova was awarded the title "Honored Teacher of the Republic." The event in itself was of no interest to me or my classmates, but the rumors that went around about that award thrilled us. I don't know whether what we were told was entirely true or not, but I can vouch for the accuracy of

its retelling. Among the staff were many excellent teachers whose names were well known and respected, but we older students had simply never heard of Leonova and could not fathom why she was chosen for this honor. Then some friends in the senior class told us, quoting a teacher as their source. Leonova, it seems, was the home-room teacher of Stalin's son, Vassily. Dissatisfied with both his behavior and his grades, she had written a note to his father, Joseph Stalin, firmly requesting him to give more attention to his son's upbringing and see to it that he did his homework. Stalin was apparently so delighted by Leonova's boldness and adherence to principle that he immediately gave orders for her to be given the title.

It is hard for me to judge the courage of Leonova's action in those days when the Party leaders still maintained a semblance of the egalitarian tradition that survived from the 1920s. I am certain, however, that only a few years later it would have been simply impossible; no one would have dared to write such a note.⁷⁵

Kaminskaya's assertion that Leonova was neither well-known nor well-respected even in her own school certainly calls into question the propaganda claims that she was a leading Soviet teacher. Stalin's personal involvement also contradicts public claims that Leonova's celebrity reflected personal achievements, the gratitude of pupils, and the support of colleagues. Most remarkably, however, this account of a teacher's note to Stalin complaining about parental negligence suggests that Leonova practiced what she proclaimed, even when dealing with the most powerful father in the land. While undermining the image of Leonova as a leading or representative teacher, this account actually supports the repeated proclamations of her determination to take any measure needed to educate children.

Published accounts, by contrast, never acknowledged any connection between Leonova and the elite parents of School No. 25.⁷⁶ The only references to direct encounters with Stalin occurred at ceremonial occasions, where Leonova could be depicted as representing all teachers.⁷⁷ The complete suppression of these relations testified to the state's power to manipulate public discourse, but this silence was necessary to enable Leonova to personify the myth that success resulted from effort, determination, and loyalty. Anything is possible, Leonova declared in 1938, when you love your work and love children.⁷⁸ Any suggestion of political connections and personal influence would have undermined this image, and thus her actual ties with Stalin had to be concealed from public view.

But the connection to Stalin cannot be considered the only reason for Leonova's prominence. Her fame came at a time when many members of the Soviet elite, including individuals with much closer connections to

Stalin, were arrested and executed. This period ultimately saw deliberate efforts to undermine institutions and individuals identified as too influential or pretentious. Even as Leonova became more famous, her school came under sustained assault: Communist officials denounced instructional and disciplinary methods, revoked prizes and distinctions, and re-assigned school administrators. Leonova actually benefited directly from this turn, as she became director of the renumbered school No. 175 in fall 1937.⁷⁹ The decline of the elite school and the ascent of the "common" teacher reflected a shifting political culture, as the power of established structures, which always contained the destabilizing potential to generate alternative forms of authority, gave way to celebrations of individual heroes for their humble origins, great accomplishments, and above all dedication to Stalin.⁸⁰ The contrasting trajectories of School No. 25 and the celebrity of Leonova illustrate the complexities of Stalinism, where visibility determined vulnerability as well as power. Leonova's ties to Stalin certainly contributed to her prominence, but an array of converging factors amid these contradictory processes ultimately determined her public identity.

Leonova's upward mobility during the terror raises troubling questions about possible involvement in Stalinist repression. To what extent did Leonova, like contemporaries throughout Soviet society, seek self-promotion through accusations that removed possible rivals while currying favor with powerful superiors? Did she understand how her demands for the "crushing" of "fascist spies and jackals" could also be brought to bear against friends or colleagues?⁸¹ Did she ever watch as pupils were removed from her classroom because their parents had been arrested as "enemies of the people"?⁸² The public record contains no evidence of Leonova's involvement with these aspects of the terror, but her known connections with Party leaders, willingness to speak in accusatory language, and proclamations of absolute loyalty certainly raise questions about the full implications of becoming a Stalinist celebrity teacher.

These same sources also reveal little about perceptions of Leonova. Was she viewed as a model of professional achievement to be emulated, as an enforcer of the politicization of education, or as evidence that enhanced status was available only to those favored by Party leaders? Unfortunately, published materials reveal far more about the dissemination than the reception of images. Archival documents from the 1930s provide rich evidence of educational policies and classroom practices, but shed little light on responses to regime propaganda.⁸³

This question can be partially addressed, however, by drawing on comparative and theoretical studies of how teachers use images in defining professional identities. From these perspectives, identities are shaped

by more than just classroom instruction. They are also learned from families and other educators and absorbed from the cultural and social environment surrounding the school. If these images are sufficiently authoritative, teachers may change their self-perceptions and practices to adhere more closely to particular models. The crucial factor is that particular images make sense to teachers by improving the quality of their work, helping them accommodate to outside forces, or defining the meaning of professional relationships. One especially meaningful image has been described as the teacher as "paragon": a true professional who selflessly gives everything to pupils, embodies the excitement of learning, promotes the dominant values of the society, and protects children from harmful influences. This image offers teachers an important role in and out of schools, reassures society's fears about children, and allows the profession to become self-regulating.⁸⁴

Interviews with former Soviet teachers suggest that images of celebrities did in fact shape their professional identities. A former teacher described "People's Teachers of the Soviet Union" as experts who had dedicated their lives to teaching and to the Communist cause. More importantly, this teacher defined his own professional identity to incorporate elements represented by Leonova: "People who go into teaching should go into their profession only as into a calling. . . . You must give all your time, all your talents and all your efforts for the school and in essence that is correct. You are a father to the students, you are a father and a friend. Then, the students don't forget you. They write you letters for a long time and don't forget. You are a teacher by calling."⁸⁵ A young woman recalled how her mother had been recognized in the 1930s by Soviet officials, yet received few benefits: "She was what you might call an *udarnitsa* ('shock worker'), but she did not get more money for it. It meant more responsibility and more work for her." From the daughter's perspective, this designation accurately reflected her mother's lifetime of commitment and achievement: "She taught mathematics since her graduation and had always been doing it, all her life. She was an outstanding teacher." Perhaps most intriguingly, this "outstanding teacher" was the daughter of a peasant sent into exile by Soviet authorities. At a time when "social origins" were a source of vulnerability, public visibility may have offered her mother a measure of protection.⁸⁶

Another former teacher described public recognition that echoed the celebrations of Leonova, but in this case representing a different combination of personal, political, and professional factors: "I worked carefully and took pains to prepare my lessons well. When a teacher's commission came to check on my work while I was teaching in Belorussia, they voted me a model teacher after having observed my teaching in the classroom. . . . I

would never have gotten very much farther ahead in my teaching career. All I could fall back on was my ability . . . all my male relatives had been arrested."⁸⁷ While suggesting that public images were made meaningful by their incorporation of desirable and respected attributes, these firsthand accounts indicate both a critical understanding of context and a sophisticated appreciation of the implications of these identities.

The examples and comparative studies cited above suggest a complex answer to the question of whether teachers "believed" in Leonova. To the extent that Soviet teachers defined their identities relative to a set of professional ideals, Leonova's image fit the model of a paragon: her life-long dedication to schooling, unceasing concern for children, ability to make pupils achieve at high levels, and appreciation earned from parents. The hundreds of letters that Leonova received from teachers suggest that she was seen as representing her profession as well as a Moscow district.⁸⁸ To the extent that the image of a paragon corresponded with immediate needs and broader aspirations, Leonova's public identity may have acquired real meaning for Soviet teachers in the 1930s.

But these examples and interpretations also raise questions about the extent to which teachers embraced the celebrity image. Most everyday concerns, including material deprivation, administrative interference, and political repression, were completely excluded from this discourse. The tensions evident in Leonova's image—her position in an elite school, the teacher's tenuous location in the public sphere, and a woman's double burdens of professional and personal duties—may have been more meaningful than the idealized version presented in public. Any interpretation of the potential influence of Leonova's identity must recognize that while individuals define identities in relation to images, they do so selectively, partially, and critically. Leonova's image probably did influence teachers as they defined their identities, but the greatest significance probably was associated with specific traits that reinforced their authority, influence, and presence in schools and across society.

This interpretation of Leonova's identity can be extended to the broader relationship between the Soviet people and Stalin's regime.⁸⁹ Her image became meaningful to the extent that it corresponded with the experiences and aspirations of Soviet teachers; it became a political instrument to the extent that it shaped the attitudes and actions of citizens. The Stalinist regime projected itself as an "educational state," in which the exercise of interventionist and authoritarian power was mediated through the image of the woman teacher.⁹⁰ Recreating an idealized classroom relationship, this state governed through acceptance of its authority by subordinate groups. Disregarding personal boundaries in the same way that the teacher socialized children, the state interfered in any sphere of life

related to the welfare of the nation. Finally, internalizing strict rules of discipline, accepting established hierarchies, and adhering to collective values promised to make the use of force unnecessary by eliminating all potential for disobedience. These discursive constructions did not acknowledge the state's use of mass violence to enforce submission to an increasingly arbitrary leader. Yet this image of mediated power probably made a great deal of sense to Soviet teachers. Promising social stability, respect for knowledge and expertise, a sense of collective responsibility, and a strengthened civic community, this political vision supported a professional identity that offered teachers an influential role in building a better society along the narrowly circumscribed lines demanded by Stalinist authorities.

Leonova remained in Moscow following the German invasion, and then accompanied pupils who were evacuated away from front-line cities. Re-elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1944 and 1946, Leonova's duties expanded to Communist Party membership, service in the Supreme Court, and appointments to Moscow school commissions. Teachers, parents, and pupils sought her guidance. One school director wrote to Leonova "both as a people's deputy and as a teacher to another teacher" for assistance with building repairs; another Supreme Soviet deputy asked for help to make her son a better pupil. Yet "Leonova was a teacher and remains one—this is her life's work" and always "found time for everything connected with the school." During the war, Leonova resumed teaching at the primary level in Girls' School No. 173.⁹¹

On 10 December 1949, Leonova published an article hailing Stalin's seventieth birthday.⁹² One week later, writing as one of Moscow's "leading teachers" and a Supreme Soviet deputy, Leonova declared that communist education required order, coordination with parents, and public activism.⁹³ At this point, however, Leonova disappeared from the public eye. She was not a candidate for Supreme Soviet elections in 1950.⁹⁴ An examination of leading educational publications through the early 1950s yields no further mention of Leonova. An end had clearly come. Whether it was the end of Leonova's life remains an open question, but her role as a Stalinist celebrity teacher had certainly come to a close.

NOTES

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¹*Vecherniaia Moskva* [hereafter VM] 11 December 1936, 1; O. F. Leonova, "Obeshchanie dannoe tovarishchu Stalinu vpolneno," *Russkii iazyk v shkole* no. 5 (1937): 110–11.

²In addition to newspaper articles in *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Za kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie* [hereafter ZKP], *Uchitel'skaia gazeta* [hereafter UG], and VM, these articles included O. F. Leonova, "Pis'mo tovarishcham izbirateliam Sverdlovskogo okruga Moskv," *Rabotnitsa* no. 33 (1937): 6–7; Leonova, "Po-drugomu nam, sovetskim uchiteliam, rabotat' nel'zia," *Nachal'naia shkola* no. 11 (1937): 59–62; Leonova, "Sovetskii pedagog," *Obshchestvennitsa* no. 19 (October 1937): 21; Leonova, "Sovety uchitel'nitsy," *Pioner* no. 9 (1938): 5; Leonova, "Velikii uchitel' i drug," *Nachal'naia shkola* no. 11–12 (1939): 3–5; Leonova, "Mysli materi-pegagoga o vospitanii," *Sovetskaiia pedagogika* no. 3 (1939): 119–126; Leonova, "Sem'ia i shkola," *Molodoi bol'shevik* no. 14 (1940): 24–29; Leonova, *Public Education in the U.S.S.R.* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939); I. Z., "Nasha Ol'ga Fedorovna," *Ogonek* no. 33 (1937): 7; "Ol'ga Fedorovna Leonova," *Sputnik agitatora* no. 22 (1937): 18–20; S. Aleksandrov, "Uchitelia-deputaty," *Nachal'naia shkola*, no. 2 (1938): 17–24; *Ol'ga Fedorovna Leonova dlia detei shkol'nogo vozrasta* (transcript of radio broadcast, Moscow, 1938).

³Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 71–75.

⁴Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.

⁵Statistics are from E. Thomas Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), 122–27, 139–40, 164–65.

⁶These issues are explored in Christine Ruane, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers, 1860–1914* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994).

⁷Choi Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines and the Language of Modernity, 1930–1939," in *Women in the Stalin Era*, ed. Melanie Ilić (London: Palgrave, 2001), 49–68; Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Rebecca Balmas Neary, "Mothering Socialist Society: The Wife-Activists' Movement and the Soviet Culture of Daily Life, 1934–41," *Russian Review* 58 (July 1999): 396–412; David L. Hoffmann, "Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist

Pronatalism in its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (2000): 35–54; and Thomas G. Schrand, "Soviet 'Civic-Minded' Women in the 1930s: Gender, Class, and Industrialization in a Socialist Society," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 126–50.

⁸Larry Holmes, *Stalin's School: Moscow's Model School No. 25, 1931–1937* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 134; Holmes, "Part of History: The Oral Record and Moscow's Model School No. 25, 1931–1937," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997): 279–306.

⁹The phrase "authoritative discourse" was used by Mikhail Bakhtin, and cited in Jeffrey Brooks, "Socialist Realism in *Pravda*: Read All About It!" *Slavic Review* 53, no. 4 (1994): 975.

¹⁰*Izvestiia* 26 November 1937, 3.

¹¹Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 151–225.

¹²Lesson plans are in VM 11 December 1936, 1; S. Dziubinskii, "Vospitatel'naia rabota na urokakh istorii SSSR," *Nachal'naia shkola*, no. 2 (1939): 67; Leonova, "Rabota," 94–98; Leonova, "Sem'ia," 24–29; Leonova, "Po-drugomu," 59–62.

¹³These examples are cited in Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 89, 96; Holmes, "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931–1937," *Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 553.

¹⁴For Stakhanovism in schools, see ZKP 18 October 1935, 1; 28 October 1935, 1; N. S. Reznikov, "O Stakhanovskom dvizhenii i zadachakh shkol," *Uchitel' i shkola*, no.1 (1936): 16–23; Harvard Interview Project on the Soviet Social System, A, no. 61, 15; no. 91, 10; no. 111, 15; no. 1664, 11.

¹⁵"Ol'ga," 20.

¹⁶Leonova, "Mysli," 119.

¹⁷*Ol'ga*, 1.

¹⁸VM 9 December 1937, 2.

¹⁹For disciplinary strategies, see Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 193–94, 207–11.

²⁰VM 7 September 1936, 2.

²¹Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 161.

²²Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 151–54, 171–83.

²³See examples in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF) f. 5462, op. 13, d. 158, l. 303; op. 14, d. 176, l. 191; ZKP 15 February 1932, 3; 3 November 1933, 2; and Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 256–59. For uses of Stalinist discourse, see Amy E. Randall, "'Revolutionary Bolshevik Work': Stakhanovism in Retail Trade," *Russian Review* 59 (July 2000): 439–41; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 163–89; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 198–237; Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 7–9, 108–109, 141–48, 174, 190; and Neary, "Mothering Socialist Society," 411–12.

²⁴ZKP 22 May 1934, 1.

²⁵Interview with Semën Efimovich Khoze, Moscow, November 1992.

²⁶Vladimir Samarin, "The Soviet School, 1936–1942," in *Soviet Education*, ed. George L. Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 33. Similar perceptions are in Harvard Project, A, no. 111, 6A, 14; no. 166, 7; no. 1434, 4, 24.

²⁷VM 19 October 1937, 2; 14 November 1937, 2; *Izvestiia* 26 November 1937, 3; UG 7 November 1937, 4; 19 November 1937, 2; 5 December 1937, 2; Aleksandrov, "Uchitelia," 21–22; Ol'ga, 1–7; Z., "Nasha," 7; Leonova, "Po-drugomu," 59–62; Leonova, "Pis'mo," 6–7; Leonova, "Sovetskii pedagog," 21; "Ol'ga," 18; and Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 134, 160–61.

²⁸Leonova certainly fit Margaret Mead's "distillate" of the American norm: "a grade school teacher who teaches perhaps the third or fourth grade; this teacher will be a woman of somewhat indeterminate age, perhaps in the middle thirties, neither young nor old, of the middle class, and committed to the ethics and manners of a middle class world." Margaret Mead, *The School in American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 5. See also Sari Knopp Biklen, "Can Elementary Schoolteaching be a Career? A Search for New Ways of Understanding Women's Work," *Issues in Education* 3, no. 3 (1985): 215–31; and Geraldine Clifford, "Man/Woman/Teacher: Gender, Family, and Career in American Educational History," in *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work*, ed. Donald Warren (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 311–16.

²⁹E. Thomas Ewing, "Silences and Strategies: Soviet Women Teachers and Stalinist Culture in the 1930s," *East/West Education* 18, no. 1 (1997): 24–30; Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines," 55–56; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 75.

³⁰"Ol'ga," 19.

³¹Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 85–88.

³²Z., "Nasha," 7; "Ol'ga," 19; Leonova, "Sovetskii pedagog."

³³James Bowen, *Soviet Education: Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962).

³⁴See E. Thomas Ewing, "Stalinism at Work: Teacher Certification (1936–1939) and Soviet Power," *Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (1998): 218–35.

³⁵"Ol'ga," 19; and *Biulleten' NKP* 1 June 1936, 11.

³⁶VM 5 January 1937, 1.

³⁷Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5–7, 28–50.

³⁸Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines," 54–59; and Susan E. Reid, "The New Soviet Woman and the Leader Cult in Soviet Art," in *Women in the Stalin Era*, 206.

³⁹Aleksandrov, "Uchitelia," 18–20.

⁴⁰UG 28 February 1939, 2; and Leonova, "Velikii," 3–5.

⁴¹Izvestiia 26 November 1937, 3.

⁴²Leonova, "Mysli," 123–24.

⁴³For Soviet working women and childcare, see Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, 237–41, 273–74; and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 147–50.

⁴⁴See defendants' pleas in Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen, eds., *The Great Purge Trial* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1965), 604–680.

⁴⁵For comparative analysis, see Ewing, "Silences and Strategies," 24–54.

⁴⁶M. Gol'tsman, ed., *Kadry prosveshcheniia* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1936), 14–15; and N. K. Krupskaiia, *Zhenshchina strany sovetov—ravnopravnyi grazhdanin* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1938), 148–49.

⁴⁷See discussion in Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 232–36.

⁴⁸See examples in ZKP 6 June 1936, 2; 8 September 1936, 3; 6 February 1937, 2, and the analysis in E. Thomas Ewing, "Coping with the Triple Burden: The Professional, Family, and Public Burdens of Soviet Teachers in the 1930s" (unpublished paper, 2003).

⁴⁹Ironically, Leonova responded to concerns about single mothers by declaring "it is really abnormal for a child not to know who her real father is." Leonova, "Mysli," 126.

⁵⁰For Stalinist discourse on motherhood, see Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines," 59–62; Schrand, "Soviet 'Civic-Minded' Women," 135–36; Hoffmann, "Mothers in the Motherland," 40–42; and Neary, "Mothering Socialist Society," 399–403.

⁵¹UG 25 November 1937, 2; "Narodnyi uchitel'," *V pomoshch' uchitel'iu* no. 10 (1937): 40–41; and "Narodnyi uchitel'," *V pomoshch' uchitel'iu* no. 11 (1937): 17–19.

⁵²This analysis derives from comparisons of male and female teachers in Tsarist Russia and male and female heroes in the 1930s. Ruane, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers*, 115–116; Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR*, 233; Schrand, "Soviet 'Civic-Minded' Women," 133–145; Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 53–56, 71–75; and Neary, "Mothering Socialist Society," 410.

⁵³Izvestiia 26 November 1937, 3; VM 19 October 1937, 2; 14 November 1937, 2; 9 December 1937, 2; 9 April 1938, 2; UG 25 November 1937, 2; *Pravda* 14 January 1938, 2; Leonova, "Mysli," 119–26; "Narodnyi uchitel'," 40–41; and "Narodnyi uchitel'," 17–19. Leonova was consulted during a review of history textbooks and even challenged the Commissar of Education on a policy question, but this involvement was never mentioned in published accounts. See Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 96, 209–210. Archival records also indicate that Leonova criticized other teachers for their silences at public meetings, which suggests a potential for critical engagement absent in the public image of the nurturing teacher. GARF f. 2306, op. 69, d. 2298, l. 46. An analysis of the gendering of Soviet men teachers' authority is beyond

the scope of this work. For contemporary discussion in the American context, see Willard Waller, *The Sociology of Teaching* (1934; repr. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1961), 209, 421.

⁵⁴For promises of gender equality and continued sex discrimination, see Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 95–119; Stites, *Women's Liberation*, 386–391; Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines," 50–52; Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 73–75, 190; Goldman, *Women, the State*, 296–344; and Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, 225–231.

⁵⁵This interpretation was suggested by Christine Ruane.

⁵⁶See examples in *UG* 19 November 1937, 2; 5 December 1937, 2; and Leonova, "Pis'mo," 6–7.

⁵⁷*Izvestiia* 21 November 1937, 1; Leonova, "Sovetskii pedagog," 21.

⁵⁸Leonova, "Velikii," 3–5.

⁵⁹*ZKP* 22 December 1936, 4.

⁶⁰*Ol'ga*, 3; Dziubinskii, "Vospitatel'naia rabota," 67–68; and Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 80.

⁶¹For state repression and teachers' responses, see Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 211–63.

⁶²*VM* 17 January 1938, 1.

⁶³*Ol'ga*, 1.

⁶⁴*ZKP* 22 December 1936, 4; *Pravda* 14 January 1938, 2; Leonova, "Velikii," 3–5; Leonova, "Pis'mo," 6–7; Z. "Nasha," 7; and "Ol'ga," 21. For women's authority in the Stalinist public sphere, see Chatterjee, "Soviet Heroines," 59–64; Reid, "New Soviet Woman," 207–212; Schrand, "Soviet 'Civic-Minded' Women," 133–39; Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 71–75; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 74; and Neary, "Mothering Socialist Society," 396–412.

⁶⁵Teachers' assessments of uncertain public roles are discussed in Kate Rousmaniere, "Good Teachers are Born, not Made: Self-Regulation in the Work of Nineteenth Century American Women Teachers," in *Discipline, Moral Regulation, and Schooling: A Social History*, ed. Rousmaniere, Kari Dehli, and Ning de Coninck-Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 117–34.

⁶⁶*Ol'ga*, 7.

⁶⁷*Pravda* 12 January 1938, 2.

⁶⁸*VM* 4 March 1938, 2.

⁶⁹This analysis draws on Ruane, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers*, 73; and Rousmaniere, "Good Teachers," 117–34. For "little Stalins," see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 30–35.

⁷⁰VM 11 December 1936, 1.

⁷¹*Pravda* 12 January 1938, 2; Leonova, "Mysli," 120, 124–26; and Leonova, "Sem'ia," 28.

⁷²VM 11 December 1936, 1; 19 October 1937, 2; 9 December 1937, 2; 17 January 1938, 1; *Izvestiia* 16 November 1937, 3; 26 November 1937, 3; *UG* 7 November 1937, 4; Leonova, "Mysli," 126; and Leonova, "Sem'ia," 24–29.

⁷³Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 71–75, 167; and Holmes, "Magic," 560.

⁷⁴"Svetlana Allilueva I. V. Stalinu," (2 September 1935) in *Iosif Stalin v ob'iatiiakh sem'i*, ed. Iu. G. Murin (Moscow: Istochnik, 1993), 52–53.

⁷⁵Dina Kaminskaya, *Final Judgement: My Life as a Soviet Defense Attorney* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 22–23. Holmes notes that Stalin's son Vasilii was never a pupil of Leonova and concludes that Kaminskaya's account was mistaken. Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 167. Leonova was not the only teacher at School No. 25 to earn the title "Honored Teacher of the Republic." While these rumors may have referred to another teacher or, more likely, a combination of individuals, the account provides insight into the creation of Stalinist celebrities.

⁷⁶In 1937, the journal *Obshchestvennitsa* included picture of Leonova with her pupil, the grand-daughter of prominent author M. Gor'kii, but the accompanying article made no mention of the elite status of Model School No. 25. Leonova, "Sovetskii pedagog," 21.

⁷⁷ZKP 22 December 1936, 4; VM 17 January 1938, 1; and Leonova, "Velikii," 3–5.

⁷⁸*Pravda* 12 January 1938, 2. For patronage, see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 109–114.

⁷⁹Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 128–48.

⁸⁰For these shifts, see *Ibid.*, 160–61; and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 71–75.

⁸¹This language referred to the 1938 show trial. VM 4 March 1938, 2.

⁸²Iu. L'vova, "Is Pashchitskii Present?" in *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 244–45; and Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 227–29, 253.

⁸³For educational sources, see Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*, 13–14; and Holmes, "Part of History," 279–306. For responses to Stalinist propaganda, see Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 45, 83–84, 141–48, 184–93, 204–205; and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 72–73, 138, 178–89.

⁸⁴Pamela Bolotin Joseph and Gail E. Burnaford, eds., *Images of Schoolteachers in Twentieth Century America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Waller, *Sociology of Teaching*, 49–50, 60–63, 413–21; Deborah P. Britzman, "The Terrible Problem of Knowing Thyself: Towards a Poststructuralist Account of Teacher Identity," *Journal*

of *Curriculum Theorizing* 9, no. 3 (1992): 23–46; Rousmaniere, “Good Teachers,” 117–134; and Ruane, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers*, 64–76.

⁸⁵Harvard Project, A, No. 387, 35.

⁸⁶Harvard Project, A, No. 1354, 8, 28.

⁸⁷Harvard Project, A, No. 1495, 8–10.

⁸⁸*Pravda* 12 January 1938, 2.

⁸⁹This analysis draws on Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 198–237; and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 164–217.

⁹⁰The phrase “educational state” comes from Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836–1871* (London: Altare Publishing, 1988). For schools as a metaphor for Stalinist society, see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 226–27; and Holmes, *Stalin's School*, 149–159.

⁹¹*UG* 12 January 1946, 1, 3; and O. F. Leonova, “Moia rabota,” *Sovetskaia pedagogika* no. 11 (1947): 102–103.

⁹²*UG* 10 December 1949, 2.

⁹³*UG* 17 December 1949, 3.

⁹⁴*UG* 22 February 1950, 1; and 25 February 1950, 2.
