

Introduction

Suzanne LaFont

Our women rule over many men: some in administering small rural districts, towns, and estates; others by making profit and still others through inheritance. These women rule, spurred on by passion, under the pretext of girlhood or widowhood, they lead unrestrained lives, pestering their subjects, they persecute some with their hatred, others because of blind love, they promote here, demote there.

—Secretary to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Mykolas Lietuvis, 1550.¹

Anyone interested in Lithuanian women quickly learns three interesting facts. (1) In 1529, unique to “civilized” Europe, the First Statute of Lithuania (the legal code) ensured gentry women’s inheritance and property rights; (2) When the Russians banned the Lithuanian press (1864–1904), brave Lithuanian women ran underground schools to keep the Lithuanian language alive; and (3) The most revered Lithuanian woman is the internationally famous archaeologist, the late Marija Gimbutas, whose research suggests that much of paleolithic Europe, including Lithuania, was populated by a nonpatriarchal, matristic culture. She is a national icon, and her theories are enthusiastically embraced by women scholars.

While these facts are interesting on their own, also noteworthy is the pride that surrounds the telling. Rather than focusing on

prejudice and discrimination, Lithuanian women are quick to detail their contributions and strengths. They are eager to have their voices heard, tell their stories, and teach us about their culture. For the past fifty years, the identity of Lithuanian women has, to the outside world, been subsumed with that of Soviet women. Yet, Lithuanian women are different and proud of their differences. In this volume—the first ever published in English—we finally have the opportunity to learn about our Lithuanian sisters.

HISTORY

In 1990, after a civil uprising in which fourteen unarmed civilians were killed, Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union. So began another era of independence for this small strategically located country.

Since its declaration of nationhood in 1236, Lithuania has been invaded by the Teutonic Order, the Russians, Napoleon, the Swedes, the Germans, and the Poles. However, far from being a passive European doormat, Lithuania established in the beginning of the fifteenth century an empire that extended almost all the way from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This feat inspired—and has helped maintain—immense pride in the Lithuanian national heritage through the many years of subsequent foreign invasions. In fact, prior to 1990, Lithuania experienced only twenty-five years of real independence during the last two hundred years.

Foreign occupation has always meant oppression and resistance, and, for this, many Lithuanians have paid the price. Between 1941–1953, the Russians deported more than one hundred thousand Lithuanians to Siberia and martyred Lithuanian forest freedom fighters who fought bravely for independence. All the attempts to destroy Lithuania, the country, the people, the language, and the culture have failed. The essays in this volume reveal that Lithuanian women share well-deserved credit for these failures and take immense pride in their roles in maintaining Lithuanian culture.

The first chapter of this volume, written by Dr. Viktorija Baršauskienė and Giedrė Rymeikytė, offers a historical overview of the role of women in Lithuania. They provide basic information about Lithuanian history. They trace women's educational and economic opportunities from thirteenth century to the Soviet take-over in the 1940s, and they discuss how wars shaped the status of Lithuanian women. We learn that Lithuania's frequent involve-

ment in warfare has inadvertently had a positive impact on the role of women who gained power in the absence of men. Despite the high status which Lithuanian women held prior to the Soviet takeover, discrimination in education and employment predated communism, and the occupational segregation that solidified under Communist rule had its roots in precommunist Lithuania. Dr. Baršauskienė and Ms. Rymeikytė also discuss the rise of Lithuanian national pride. Indeed, the style of their essay demonstrates that pride. Their essay inspires appreciation for the hardships which Lithuanians have endured to retain their cultural identity, their language, and their lands. We begin to understand why this small country is so proud of their big heritage.

Approaching women's history from a different perspective, Dr. Dalia Vyšniauskienė writes in chapter 2 about Lithuanian women in literature. Her descriptions of the works and lives of women writers provides insights and depth to our knowledge about the role of women in precommunist Lithuanian culture. Through Dr. Vyšniauskienė's analysis of their works, we see the historical and symbolic meanings of womanhood. She demonstrates the ways in which literary topics have reflected—and continue to reflect—historical transformations. For example, the agrarian lifestyle made so precarious through war and foreign occupation is reflected in the many stories that are "rooted" to the land. Lithuania's women authors have, at times, mourned the urbanization processes that stripped them of their land. They write about modernization and the ensuing loss of traditional ways of life that leads to alienation and uncertainty. However, they also write about the freedoms to explore and question new lifestyles, sexual mores, and moral issues. Dr. Vyšniauskienė shows us the strengths of Lithuanian women and the hardships which they have endured through the lives of the nation's women authors and the women characters of those authors' books.

Chapter 3—*Life Histories: Three Generations of Lithuanian Women*—is written by a Kaunas University student, Agnė Pankūnienė. She writes about her grandmother's life, her mother's life, and her own life. Her heartfelt narrative offers a glimpse of the difficulties which Lithuania women faced prior to, during, and after the Soviet era. We learn about the demands of rural life, the hardships caused by deportations to Siberia, the transition from rural to urban life, the Soviet labor machinery, the ways in which social policies and day care impacted women's lives, the consequences of privatization, and their uncertainty about the future. These three life histories beautifully encompass the experience of

Lithuanian women and offer a sharp contrast to the way in which this period was once viewed by the Western feminists.

In the 1960s and 1970s, American feminists viewed Soviet women from afar and envied their situation. We read about the "protectionist" laws governing Soviet women—laws that provided three years of maternity leave; widely available, state-sponsored child care; and secure abortion rights. We thought we were seeing emancipation. It appeared that Soviet women had been given many of the things that we were fighting for. Pictures of women in hard hats, women technicians, and women doctors supported the illusion that women in the Communist countries had, indeed, been liberated.

Yet, rather than experiencing complete emancipation, Lithuanian women were forced into a pseudo emancipation, mainly because their labor was needed for Communist industrial development. The importance of women's role as the producers of future workers was recognized, while, at the same time, state ideology encouraged women's participation in the labor force and deprived housewifery of status (Korovushkina 1994). Work was a duty, not a right, and low wages necessitated both wives' and husbands' incomes for family survival. The equality that the Communist governments proclaimed translated into women working like men in the labor market. Importantly, no counter "equality" existed for men's involvement in the domestic domain. Pre-Communist patriarchy remained intact, with women shouldering the burden of economic and domestic labor. Instead of truly liberating women, state communism turned into a system that doubly exploited women in their roles as producers and reproducers.

Not surprisingly, Lithuanian women did not feel emancipated. They recount feeling exhausted—an understandable state for women who worked an average of seventy-two hours a week, at least five more hours a week than men did (United Nations Publications 1995). Lithuanian women experienced the same double burden that many women in other Communist nations experienced, that is working for paid employment and performing the majority of domestic duties—a task that increased significantly when shortages set in.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD

The collapse of the totalitarian regime has provided Lithuanian women with increased opportunities for dialogue and criticism on one hand, and, on the other, they are degraded in new ways through pornography and beauty contests (Pavilionienė 1995). Communism,

at least, promised to liberate women through increased opportunities in education, employment, and political representation (Goldman 1993). It failed, because it neglected to eliminate patriarchy. Unfortunately, the introduction of the market economy and democracy holds no such promise.

Lithuanian women face many of the same problems as do other post-Communist women. The transition to a market economy has created many social and economic problems, such as growing unemployment, inflation, a decline in real wages, and general economic insecurity (Funk 1993).

Many of the same contradictions concerning the role of women are also apparent. At a glance the women of Lithuania are relatively homogenous. Eighty-one percent are ethnically Lithuanian, while the remaining 19 percent are predominately Russians and Poles. Diversity is apparent, however, in the growing discrepancy between the rich and the poor, and variations in lifestyles. It is not unusual to see young women with dyed blonde hair and heavy makeup wearing miniskirts, and tottering down "Main Street" in high heels. Currently, however, these Lithuanian Barbies might be sharing the walkways with young women who look like they came straight from Greenwich Village in New York City. These fashion statements contrast with that of many elderly women who are cloaked in babushkas, worn-out coats, and old woolen stockings. Regardless of age and attire, there is growing evidence that Lithuanian women are being disadvantaged in the post-Communist era (Andrisiunaitė 1995).

Chapters 4, 5, and 6—which discuss the familial, educational, and economic status of Lithuanian women—all suggest that equality, as defined by the Soviet government, has lingered, and is as fraudulent now as it was prior to 1990.

FAMILY, EDUCATION, AND LABOR MARKET

In chapter 4, Giedrė Purvaneckienė details the attitudes, beliefs and aspirations that Lithuanians hold regarding family life. She begins her essay with a history of women's roles in the family and the laws regarding her status. She points out that Christianity and Russian rule undermined the traditional high status of Lithuanian women. These influences were viewed as temporary setbacks, after which Lithuanian women renewed their high status in the family. Dr. Purvaneckienė discusses how important family is to Lithuanian women, and how important women's roles in the

family has been to Lithuanian culture. Yet, despite the high status which women enjoy in the domestic domain, patriarchy has persisted in Lithuania.

Dr. Purvaneckienė's research reveals the conservative attitudes of both Lithuanian women and men regarding familial roles. Many women who were over-burdened during the Soviet years now long for the luxury of traditional family life with man as provider and woman as homemaker. Most women, however, do not have the option of being homemakers because households need two incomes. In lieu of staying home, Dr. Purvaneckienė's research identifies an ideal but seldom-realized work model for women which is based on their reproductive role. That is, women should work full-time prior to childbirth. After the birth of the first child, women should remain home until the child or children are of school age. Then, women should work part-time until the children leave home. At this point women should resume full-time employment.

However, given the current job market, this scenario seems unrealistic. It advocates that women leave the labor force, at least as full-time employees, for several years. Yet, rapid changes in technology and the competition fostered by the market economy mean that mothers who choose to stay home with their children will be qualified only for the lowest level of employment, if they can find employment at all.

Chapter 5, *Lithuanian Women and Education: Discrimination and Career Choices*, details Lithuanian women's status in the education system. We learn that Lithuanians are well-educated, and that women's enrollment in higher education exceeds men's enrollment. Despite this, women experience discrimination in academe, with most appointments to dean and full professorships being given to men. Palmira Jucevičienė argues that this discourages women from pursuing academic careers. Instead, women tailor their educational aspirations on realistic career choices. A sex-specific choice of studies occurs in Lithuania with women concentrated in education at both primary and secondary levels, and pre-medical, while most of the students at technical schools are men.

Patriarchy in the home also takes its toll on women's educational goals. Many women experience increased difficulties in graduate school because, by that time of their lives, they are already mothers and have to perform the majority of domestic duties within the household in addition to their studies. Thus begins the cycle of women's under-representation in positions of money and power. Men are free from domestic constraints to pursue advanced degrees

and secure top positions, whereas women get lower-paying jobs because they are viewed as unreliable workers as their familial duties prevent them from being model employees.

The communist government tried to address this issue but failed. Early communist social policies relating to women's reproductive role—as seen in maternity leave and the like—facilitated women's involvement in the labor market. Yet, they also reinforced women's traditional roles in the domestic domain by granting benefits to mothers and excluding fathers (Einhorn 1993).

Chapter 6, *Women and the Economy*, written by Vida Kanopienė, discusses the fact that Lithuanian women, like their Soviet sisters, did make inroads into traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering, medicine, and higher education. Their employment rates reached 80 percent, a level unknown in the West. Despite this, sex segregation in the labor force persisted with women concentrated in the low-status, low-paying jobs, and being passed over for promotions and important positions because their child-care and domestic responsibilities prevented them from being reliable workers. Furthermore, as Dr. Kanopienė notes that, when women became concentrated in traditionally male professions—such as professors and doctors—the profession itself became feminized, and tended to lose both status and remuneration. For the most part, women were confronted with a highly sex-segregated job market which rewarded them with low status and low-paying employment. Most women worked in the caring and service fields, while male workers were concentrated in more valued fields of heavy industry, construction, and transportation. Education, health care, retail, and light industry were almost completely feminized.

Men dominated the top of the occupational pyramid during the Communist era, and that situation has not changed. The more competitive job market now threatens to inhibit women's potential to benefit from the transition from a command to a market economy. Dr. Jucevičienė's research in chapter 5 found that 40 percent of the women students she surveyed had personally experienced sexual discrimination in the job market. Newspapers have numerous sex-specific job advertisements. A glance at the "Help Wanted" section of local newspapers reveals that foreign joint ventures openly prefer men. Want ads specify, not only which sex is desired, but, when woman applicants are sought, the additional qualification of "attractive" is often added. The Lithuanian daily paper, *Lietuvos Rytas*, carried an advertisement placed by the Ministry of Transportation which sought women secretaries and

male technicians. This is in direct conflict with the country's Constitution which has outlawed sex discrimination.²

Ironically, for young women, discrimination in the new job market is linked to the Communist legacy. Social entitlements which were designed to facilitate women's participation in the workforce are creating increased discrimination. Although the new Lithuanian constitution has made social entitlements gender neutral—for example, fathers are eligible for parental leave—it is usually mothers who take time off from work for child-care responsibilities. As the state begins to shift the economic burden of social entitlements to private industry, women, as potential mothers, become expensive to employ. Alina Žvinklienė (1995, 12) writes, "New social insurance clearly ensures women's unemployment, since opportunities in the private business sector have clearly decreased, especially for women who have small children, because the employer is not interested in paying women-mothers the social guarantees prescribed by the law."

Without the totalitarian state to enforce employment policies, there is a greater potential for them to be ignored or misused. Standard employment applications include questions related to age and marital status. As a group of graduating students had asked for my help in filling out applications for a foreign company operating in Lithuania, I remarked that employers in the United States were not allowed to ask about age and marital status. They stated that this was standard practice in Lithuania, and that young married women had difficulties securing employment from foreign and local companies. Later, an unemployment counselor explained to me that women are being asked by employers to sign contracts waiving their legal rights to employment benefits.

Given this scenario, it is not surprising that women's unemployment rates are increasing at an alarming rate. Dr. Kanopienė found that, in 1992, 62 percent of unemployed persons were women. Despite the dismal employment situation, it does not seem that women are abandoning the job market. The economic decline means that families continue to need two incomes for survival. This fact, coupled with the early, almost universal marriage at an average age of 22 and subsequent early childbearing, means that most mothers work. Lengthy maternity leaves however are available, with reduced compensation even though most families cannot afford the loss of income, and state-sponsored child-care centers are closing down or unaffordable. Basically, the new governments are shifting the economic burden of

child care to unpaid labor in the home, and, in the vast majority of cases, it is women's unpaid labor.

As inequality in Lithuania grows very evident, winners and losers are emerging. The winners represent a very small elite group of successful entrepreneurs and those who profit from the "gray economy" that is the Lithuanian Mafia (Milanovic 1994). Given the urgency of the economic crisis, the needs of women as a specific group have been easily ignored. Particularly prone to poverty are single mothers and older women, and the largest percentage of unemployment is found in middle-aged or older women. The closer they are to pension age, the less desirable they are to employers. In addition, pensions are inadequate and sex-specific life longevity is pronounced in Lithuania, with women living on average eleven years longer than men (Lithuanian Department of Statistics 1994). Consequently almost all of the beggars I have seen in Lithuania—as well as Russia, Estonia and Poland—have been elderly women. The same dynamics that have created the feminization of poverty in the West are evolving in the post-Communist economies. Women without the strength, skills, determination, or time to participate in the struggle for resources and power soon might not have the safety net of the Soviet welfare system to catch them from falling into economic and political despair.

LITHUANIAN NATIONALISM

Nationalism has emerged in popular and political discourse as the new government tries to reestablish a national identity. Lithuania is proud and nostalgic of its pre-Communist history which is portrayed as a happier time without such problems as high divorce rates, unmarried mothers, and juvenile delinquency. Political propaganda, the media, and the church point to women's participation in the labor force as the cause of social ills, in contrast to the idealized pre-Communist era when women stayed at home and took good care of their children and husbands. The sentiment is that if women would only return to the family where they belong, this past period of supposed societal bliss could be recreated.

Dr. Purvaneckienė's research in chapter 4 reveals that the history of the pre-Communist eras is, indeed, being reinvented. Society was not free from the social ills found today, nor were women staying at home. The truth is that Lithuania was agricul-

tural, and women worked alongside men in the fields until the Communist push for industrialization. The traditional family of man as provider and woman as homemaker never existed. The direct shift from agriculture to communism meant that the one-income family wage never developed.

Unfortunately, the Lithuanian sense of national pride is being manipulated by a small but vocal part of the population. In chapter 7, *The Church, Nationalism, and the Reproductive Rights of Women*, Dalia Gineitienė critiques the current rise in nationalism and what it means for Lithuanian women. She points out that the recent rise in nationalism and nostalgia for tradition has many serious consequences for women. For women, the dangers of nationalism are twofold. First, by emphasizing women's roles as the reproducers of future citizens, the conservative nature of nationalism relegates women to a secondary role in civil life. Second, by granting primacy to the importance of the ethno-nation, nationalism masks gender-based, as well as class-based, inequality.

The current push to return post-Communist women to the domestic domain is linked, not only to increased familial stability, but also to the need to increase birth rates. Slogans such as "We are a perishing nation" are popular. Fertility rates in Lithuania are low—2.0 during the period of 1990–1995, it was 2.1 in the United States for this same period—and are well publicized (United Nations Publications 1995). Many of my students expressed concern over the fact that more people are dying than being born. The level of anxiety relating to this issue is such that policies are being promoted which would prohibit the adoption of Lithuanian orphans by foreigners, even if it meant that the child would be raised in an orphanage.

Young women who watched their mothers struggle with the double burden are being encouraged to see their devotion to motherhood and family as a solution to the nation's problems. In essence, the idea of returning women to the home kills two birds with one stone. With unemployment levels reaching record highs and birth rates reaching record lows, successfully persuading women to stay home and have children can superficially solve both problems simultaneously.

Some Lithuanians believe that one way to increase fertility is to outlaw abortions, consequently measures restricting abortions have been discussed. Ms. Gineitienė points out that the Catholic Church, the most powerful religious institution in Lithuania, sees this transition period as an opportunity to end abortion rights. It has sponsored public ceremonies mourning aborted fetuses as lost citizens. Nuns and church members parade down the streets holding

candles representing lives lost to abortion. International organizations are also arriving on the scene and joining the Church's battle.

I myself attended two conferences relating to the issue of family and family planning in Lithuania. In September 1994, an International Right-to-Life conference was hosted at Vytautas University. The Catholic Bishop was the guest of honor, and speakers from the United States and Poland all spoke on the evils of abortions and pledged support to the Lithuanian right-to-life cause. The following month, a conference titled "Lithuanian Family: Traditions and the Future" was held at the parliament. The Prime Minister, the Bishop, a United Nations representative and others formed an all-male panel to discuss family issues. No one protested as the Lithuanian Catholic Bishop used this government-sponsored conference to argue for, not only a ban on abortion, but on all forms of birth control other than natural family planning. The pronatalism of the Church, conjoined with nationalist propaganda, creates a moral, spiritual and patriotic basis for reproduction.

Most women I talked to did not seem concerned about the anti-abortion movement. They felt that their abortion rights were so secure that there was no need to form an opposition. To place the abortion issue in context, we must remember that abortion was and remains the main form of birth control in Lithuania. With little or no sex education and lack of information and access to affordable contraception, abortion rates are high (eighty abortions for every one-hundred live births, in the United States there are thirty-four abortions per one-hundred live births) (Purvaneckienė 1994, World Wide Web 1997). In 1994, Dr. Purvaneckienė found that only 11 percent of the Lithuanian population (11 percent of the men and 10 percent of the women) thought that abortion should be totally banned, while 70 percent (68 percent of the men and 72 percent of the women) felt that abortion should not be restricted. Women's reproductive rights in Lithuania seem safe, at least for now.

WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

Lithuanian women have a history of being active in civil life. As early as 1907, women's organizations were campaigning for equal rights, and, when Lithuania declared independence from Russia in 1917, women petitioned for the vote, equal rights, and representation. They were granted the vote, equal rights and also elected six women to the Lithuanian Seimas or parliament of St. Petersburg (Voverienė

1995). When independence was established in 1920, the new Lithuanian constitution guaranteed equal legal rights for women and men. Women's roles in public life flourished until the Soviet takeover in 1940.

Under the Soviet regime, women were guaranteed 36 percent of the positions in the legislative body of the Supreme Soviet (Purvanekienė 1994). Yet, the entire concept of representation during this period should be considered within the context of totalitarianism.

The quota system and the entire concept of representation has been severely criticized as misleading (Corrin 1994). Nevertheless, the post-Communist government has replaced the quota system with democratic elections. Not surprisingly, the number of women as elected and appointed officials has decreased dramatically. In 1994, only ten (7 percent) women were elected to the Seimas. This figure increased substantially in 1996 when twenty-four women (18 percent) were elected to the Seimas. The agenda of these new women politicians seems promising, as fourteen of the women elected have agreed to unite in efforts to address women's issues (Pavilionienė 1997).

Independence brought political prominence to at least one Lithuanian woman. In 1990, Dr. Kazimiera Prunskienė was appointed as the first woman Prime Minister. Her reign, however, was short-lived, and she resigned in 1991. Dr. Prunskienė considers herself to be an exception rather than part of a trend toward the acceptance of women in high office, and she complained that the male dominated Seima would not allow her to appoint any women ministers. She writes, "Having won independence, government posts became objects of competition, and the rules of the game changed. In seeking to win higher positions and to reinforce their influence, and monopolist positions, men started to form intrigues and to compromise me. Attempts were made aggressively and incorrectly to shove me out of political activity . . ." (Prunskienė 1995:16).

Now that the public sphere of politics and business is gaining in value, women are being assigned to the private sphere of the home. At the same time, the home which enjoyed a heightened value under communism as an antitotalitarian sanctuary is losing its guarded status. In other words, women were guaranteed representation when representation was little more than a formality, and, now that the political arena is being empowered, they are being poorly represented.

To counter male dominance in the Lithuanian government, Dr. Prunskienė and other involved women established the

Lithuanian Party of Women on 25 February 1995. Women politicians, such as Dr. Prunskienė, who did not want to align themselves with any of the existing political parties found that they could not run for elected office without a party affiliation. Hence, they formed the Lithuanian Party of Women. However, that party has not garnered enough support even among the small group of women espousing women's issues to make it a viable political force. Some women believe that the party can never again enough popularity to make it a real force in politics, nor can it challenge the existing male-dominated political machinery. Other women believe that the party will serve only to further divide women, many of whom, already have firm loyalties to another party. During the 1996 elections, the women's party captured less than 5 percent of the vote, but Dr. Prunskienė was elected as an independent candidate. At this point the future of the women's party seems uncertain.

In chapter 8, Dalia Teišerskytė, chairman of the Lithuanian Party of Women council, details the reasons why the party was formed. Her testament—a heartfelt plea for the betterment of women—is an example of perhaps the largest school of thought regarding women's roles. She argues that Lithuanian men have handled the running of the country very poorly, and that women, who are the backbone of society, can transform politics into a harmonious forum supporting women and men together. She also quotes many different women's ideas about what's happening with Lithuanian women today. Their views run the gamut from prolife to poststructural perspectives. Ms. Teišerskytė's essay is at once idealistic and inspirational.

In chapter 9, Marija Pavilionienė critiques the Lithuanian Party of Women's platform and political strategies. Her criticism, in addition to being insightful, also illustrates a lack of consensus among women in terms of political empowerment. It seems that Lithuanian women do have something in common with their Western sisters—namely lack of consensus regarding women's roles.

With reproductive rights being threatened, wide-spread sex discrimination in the labor market leading to women's higher unemployment rates, and lack of a voice in the new governments, it would seem that Lithuanian women would be organizing to counteract these trends. Yet, the Lithuanian women's movements are poorly supported. The reasons for this are complex and relate to a combination of social, political, and economic factors.

Rejecting the idea of Communist equality is seen by some women as liberating (Petrova 1994). My experience in teaching women's studies in Lithuania supports this idea.

During my first lecture on Western feminist theory, after a few minutes of murmuring among my students, one student raised her hand and asked, "So, we are wondering, who is more liberated.² The woman who works, or the woman who stays at home?" They felt that having the choice to stay home was liberating. Remember that, to them, work was a duty, not a right, and that the patriarchal division of labor in the household persisted. Thus, women who have the option of being oppressed by two systems—domestic patriarchy and the discriminatory labor market—or by only one system of patriarchy, could certainly construe staying home as liberating. For many women, opposing the patriarchal division of labor in the home was not perceived as being possible or even desirable.

Nationalism also inhibits a women's movement. Unlike many of the other communist countries—such as Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria—that retained formal independence, Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Their church and national identity were suppressed. Currently, everything Lithuanian is valued because it is not Soviet. Criticizing the new Lithuania is wrong because it is unpatriotic. Consequently, the Lithuanian women's movement seems to be inhibited by love of nation. Most women identify with other groups—most prominently the ethno-nation—before they identify as women in terms of group interests. Their role as citizens is to build the national image.

I was invited to speak at a women's club in Kaunas. On the way to the meeting, I was discussing one of my student's research with my colleague. The topic was rape, and my student had found a high incidence of rape and attempted rape among university students. At the meeting, my colleague brought this up. Some of the women seemed interested but one visibly upset woman burst out shouting that she did not believe a word of it, and, furthermore, this type of discussion was not the intended purpose of their club. It was as if Lithuanian men could not possibly be rapists. The subject was quickly replaced with the need to distribute Christmas presents to local prisoners.

Women who take an interest in women's issues are at risk of being labelled feminists. The entire concept of feminism has been discredited with the term being misunderstood and associated with the most extreme of Western feminists. The Lithuanian stereotype of a Western feminist is a masculine, domineering woman who hates men. Although many women lead their lives in ways which most Western feminists would label as liberated—that is, obtaining high education, achieving economic independence, and valuing their

careers—most post-Communist women are reluctant to use the term. For example, when one of the founders of the Lithuanian Party of Women told me she would be visiting New York City, I offered to put her in contact with politically active American feminists. She vehemently responded that she was not interested in meeting any feminists.

Even the role and direction of the Women's Studies Centres at Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda Universities is unclear. The Women's Studies Centre at Vilnius was set up and runs in the Western classic model of Women's Studies which focuses on Western feminist discourse and theory. The Women's Studies at Kaunas University offers more practical how-to courses such as "Women and a Healthy Life," and "Women in Business." A small group of women debate the concept of correct feminism, and an even smaller group discusses the concept of feminist imperialism. Regardless of the adapted or adopted feminist model, the important issue is the fact that this small country already has three departments, which is an impressive accomplishment.

Lithuanian feminists often point out the stages through which the Western feminist movement went to reach its current level, and they suggest that post-Communist feminism is in its infancy. The privileged origins of the Western feminist movement is so different from what Communist women experienced that they cannot relate to it. In fact, the very language of feminism is not necessarily found in Lithuanian. The English word gender has no translatable counterpart, and sexual harassment is not translatable linguistically, although the act itself was very well-known. Even the concepts of equality, justice, and liberation have been revised to fit into the Communist discourse. Many ideas and concepts are tossed about and inadequately defined or understood. It is clearly going to take some time to clear the smoke, breakdown the stereotypes, redefine or mutually reconstruct the meaning of many concepts and ideas.

In chapter 9, Dr. Pavilionienė details the inception of the Women's Study Centre at Vilnius University, and she discusses the trials and tribulations of its short history. The Centre suffers from lack of funding, faculty, and books. It has been assigned a low priority within the university system, and insecurity concerning the future is a constant reality.

In addition to the political arena and Women's Study Centres, Lithuanian women are active in many ways. There are currently thirty-three women's organizations operating in the country. Several

women scholars are members of East/West Network of Women, an on-line forum for post-Communist and Western feminists. Lithuanian women also attended the United Nations' Beijing Conference in 1995, and they compiled a report on the status of women in Lithuania for that conference. A *Woman's World* newsletter is published a few times each year, detailing women's activities and highlighting information and research concerning women. Members of the Women's Study Centre were successful in their recommendations that the Open Society Fund translate some feminist classics into Lithuanian, and a few titles are now available. The Vilnius Women's Home—the first abused women's shelter—has received funding, and will soon be operational. Numerous seminars and conferences relating to women's issues have been held in Lithuania, and Lithuanian women have been able to attend many international conferences. The Nordic countries have been most forthcoming with funds and guest lecturers to fill in when projects run short, and Lithuanian women express thanks for having such liberated sisters nearby. In 1995, Lithuania ratified the United Nations Convention Against the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Recognition of the importance of women's issues has a long way to go, and setbacks do occur. In 1995, the Women's Study Centre at Kaunas lost its annual Civic Education visiting lecturer position because the department decided to concentrate on business studies instead. In March 1997, the new government abolished the position of State Counselor on Women's Issues of the Republic of Lithuania, which had been held by Dr. Purvaneckienė, the authors of chapter 4 of this book. This was a special post-Communist position created to address women's issues. Now that it has been eliminated, women have no special voice in the upper government. Prostitution, violence against women, rape, and pornography sales are also all on the rise (Litvinaitė 1996).

As discouraging as all of these facts are, it does seem that Lithuanian women are standing strong and making progress. Renata Guobuzaitė's essay, *Modern Women in Lithuania: Finding Their Way*, which appears as chapter 10 in this book, represents the new generation of women. Twenty-two-year-old, Guobuzaitė writes about the dilemmas facing young women. The East/West dichotomy with which they are now confronted leaves women wondering about their future and how to incorporate their history and culture into the new society. Superficially, independence has brought new freedoms and choices, but the current eco-

conomic realities could actually reduce their choices and options. The transition has left many young women feeling as if they lack role models to help them find their way.

This volume ends with a tribute to Marija Gimbutas. Joan Marler's essay, *Marija Gimbutas: Tribute to a Lithuanian Legend*, details Dr. Gimbutas's life and career. Dr. Gimbutas's popularity is such that many of the contributors thought that this book should begin with this tribute. I resisted their suggestions with the hope that any reader unfamiliar with Dr. Gimbutas's work would further appreciate her life and work by first understanding her cultural heritage. Dr. Gimbutas' importance to women is twofold.

First, the international recognition she received for her research and writings is a success story which is inspirational to all women. Second, the subject of her research—identifying the importance of women in prehistory—appeals to women immensely. We are given a glimpse into the life of this extraordinary woman, her struggles, her triumphs, and her love of country.

CONCLUSION

Prior to independence, the Communist Party partially defined and redefined the role of Lithuanian women based on the demographic and labor-force needs of the Communist state. It accomplished this through propaganda, social policies, and the fact that incorporation into the social welfare system was dependent on workforce participation. It also had the power to enforce social policies, welfare benefits, and maintain child-care centers.

The quality of state-sponsored child care and the reality of benefits have been widely criticized. Yet, many policies, such as lengthy maternity leaves, were ideologically more progressive and generous than similar benefits afforded to American women. The bottom line is that these policies did offset some of the inequalities that existed in the domestic domain, and they eased the double burden somewhat.

Today, many of the social policies relating to Lithuanian women's employment remain intact. Dismantling the Communist state means that there has been a transfer of tasks and power from the government to the market. Without the totalitarian state to enforce social policies, they have the potential to be ignored or misused. In fact, retaining such policies during this period of dramatic economic reform appears to be having a negative impact on

Lithuanian women. As the state begins to shift the economic burden of social policies to private industry, policies designed to facilitate women's participation in the workforce, can actually increase discrimination. Women, as potential mothers, become expensive to employ.

Enforcement of rights, policies, and equality have all taken a back seat to the market economy, and that economy is becoming increasingly male dominated. The threat is nothing short of the devolution of women's rights. The role of the state is to ensure the rights and well-being of its citizens, but the market has no such social conscience. The goal of the state should be to enforce existing laws and policies which protect women's participation in the labor force, not to stand aside as they are eroded by the force of the market economy.

It is unlikely that women's interests will ever be thoroughly addressed in the male-dominated Lithuanian government. For women to be fully integrated, they must have a voice in the government to protect their interests, as well as appropriate legislation protecting their participation in the labor market and facilitating their double role as reproducers and producers. Yet, the state must have resources, desire, and power to enforce such policies.

The Communist government alternately denied or ignored women's inequality at work and at home. The new government seems to be taking a similar stand by concluding that the women's question will be solved later, when economic and political stability are achieved. Once this has happened, however, the women's question will already have been answered. Society will have been reorganized, leaving women behind.

The Lithuanian experience proves that the Communist model of simply increasing women's employment rates and political representation is insufficient for ending the oppression of women. The Communist and post-Communist experience of women has the potential to make a significant contribution toward understanding the dynamics of women's roles as producers and reproducers. Different countries in the world have employed different strategies to address this complex issue, but none have succeeded. Even the "woman-friendly" Scandinavian states have failed to completely eliminate those structural forces in society which produce inequalities between women and men (Siim 1993).

Ideologically, Communism created a space for equality, the current democracy should provide greater personal freedoms. A marriage of the two could produce new solutions regarding the

empowerment of women. This is clearly a crucial time for Lithuanian women. We in the West can try to learn from their experiences, and hope that the double burden has not left them too tired to teach us what they have learned in one of the largest experiments with social engineering in modern history.

NOTES

1. This quote is taken from Mykolas Lietuvis's political treatise, *Concerning Customs of Tartars, Lithuanians and Muscovities*. It is quoted in "Woman's status in the Society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Sixteenth Century," by Dr. Irena Valikonytė, in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*, a report compiled by Lithuanian nongovernmental organizations for the United Nations' Fourth Women's Conference in Beijing, 1995.

2. The Lithuanian language does not allow for gender neutral nouns, so gender neutral advertisements could become awkward or lengthy. However, there was no doubt that they wanted women secretaries and men technicians.

REFERENCES

Andrišunaitė, Aurelija

1995. *Women's Employment in the Domestic Domain*. Unpublished Masters thesis, Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Corrin, Chris

1994. "Women's Politics in Europe in the 1990s." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 17:2(289-297). New York: Pergamon Press.

Einhorn, Barbara

1993. *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe*. New York: Verso.

Funk, Nanette

1993. "Introduction" in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, edited by Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller. 1-14. New York: Routledge.

Goldman, Wendy Z.

1993. *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kanopienė, Vida

1995. "Women in the Labor Market" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 21-22, Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

Korovushkina, Irina

1994. "Gender Equality under Real Socialism: Women and their Careers in the USSR (1930–1960s)" in *Women in History—Women's History: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, edited by Andrea Peto and Mark Pittaway. 99–106, Budapest: Central European University.

Lithuanian Department of Statistics

1994. *Lithuanian Women*. Vilnius, Lithuania.

Litvinaitė, Irena

1996. "Our Combined Efforts will Stop Violence." *Woman's World: Newsletter of the Lithuanian Women's Issues Information Centre*. 3:10. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

Milanovic, Branco

1994. "A Cost of Transition: 50 Million Poor and Growing Inequality" in *Transitions*, 5:8. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publication.

Pavilionienė, Marija Aušrinė

1995. "Woman's Rights-Human Rights" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 6–7, Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

1997. Personal e-mail communication. 7 February 1997.

Petrova, Dimitrina

1994. "What Can Women Do to Change the Totalitarian Cultural Context?" in *Women's Studies International Forum*. 17:2. New York: Pergamon Press.

Prunskienė, Kazimiera

1995. "I was regarded as an exception" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 16. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

Purvaneckienė, Giedrė

1994. *Women's World*, the newsletter of the Lithuanian Preparatory Committee of the IV World Conference on Women. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

Siim, Birte

1993. "The Gendered Scandinavian Welfare States" in *Women and Social Policies in Europe*, edited by Jane Lewis. 25–48. Hants, England: Edward Elgar Publishers.

United Nations Publications

1995. *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*. New York.

Valikonytė, Irena

1995. "Women's Status in the Society of the Grand Duchy during the Sixteenth Century" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 8–9. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

Voverienė, Ona

1995. "Women's Movement in Lithuania: Historical Background" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 9–14. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.

World Wide Web

1997. <http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/socio/kuechler/309/abo.stat.html>

Žvinklienė, Alina

1995. "The 'New Right' Ideology in Lithuanian" in *Lithuania: Women in the Changing Society*. 11–12. Vilnius: United Nations Development Program.