



Continuing the Debate on Feminism

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Our kowtowing to the West has gone through some change of late. While in the past we took pleasure in kowtowing to Europe, now we kowtow to America. In the past we, as a nation, took a fancy to the high standard of education and the clean streets of Europe's cities, the fashions of Paris and English humour and the ancient stones of Europe generally. Now we prefer the culture of the masses, fast food, casual clothes, casual manners and generally all that is new, technological and hitherto unheard of. While in the past we experienced some difficulties copying western ways, today it's indeed a very hard row to hoe. Not because of our current poverty, but because of the special construction of our brains which contains special Russian convolutions which we should be proud of of course, which lends us that special Slav charm so attractive to other nations, as Gogol once observed. Even before him, the leading Russian writer of fables Ivan Krylov made similar remarks. One of his fables is of a monkey wishing to wear a pair of glasses in order to be just like people. It fiddles with the glasses, sniffs them and sets them finally on its tail only to find they don't improve its vision. That fable is, of course, about us. An American sets his glasses on his nose, we set them on our tails and tell ourselves and

others that we can see just fine and even that new vistas have opened up.

I've written this lengthy preface to ask one rhetorical question: how are we going to transplant the ideas of American feminism which I see gaining increasing popularity in the country? Of course you can't describe feminism in a couple of words. In fact, different groups of fighters against male domination adhere to opposing views: some think that women are no different from men save for one trifling detail. Others say women are so strikingly different from men that they cannot and will not ever be able to completely understand each other. But both groups are extremely aggressive.

What are we going to borrow from them? A few examples: several years ago Soviet women pounded out a ban on women being allowed to work in especially hazardous places like, say mines. American feminists pounded out a bill allowing them to work in the most hazardous conditions, including mines, if they so choose. Soviet women, thank God, are not allowed to serve in the army. Their American sisters now, after a noisy battle, may serve, if they wish to. Our women would like to have more time to devote to their family, children, their looks, to make their household chores easier. American feminists insist that men should also take some responsibility for the children so women can work

in the field of their choice.

When American recipes are offered to the Russian woman, who has already been through the mill, when they tell her that she must work twice as much, see her man as an enemy, and forget about taking it easy: that trying to look more feminine and taking care of children are unworthy things, when these recipes come from broads I dare say, spoiled by food and comforts, they sound ludicrous, insulting and peculiar. Knowing how to call a plumber may be important in American life, but it is absolutely useless in Russia simply because there is no plumber on the other end of the line. An American woman learns how to deposit money in the bank. The Russian woman knows that bringing her money to the bank means that would be the last time she'd see it because the government would grab it. An American woman invites others to share her indignations at a man trying to help her with her overcoat. In mother Russia you can't even buy a coat, and men are worth their weight in gold. Here it's not man who has enslaved woman, it's the state that has enslaved them both. The worst thing we could do is to add to our general breakdown and chaos the stupid fads of other cultures, seeing them as civilised. Let's not teach grandma how to suck eggs. □