Post Soviet Russia Essay, Research Paper

In December of 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen separate countries. Its collapse was hailed by the west as a victory for freedom, a triumph of democracy over totalitarianism, and evidence of the superiority of capitalism over socialism. It was a relief for many to watch the Soviet Union brake down, finally bringing the cold world to an end. This day made history as the whole world reformulated its political, economic and military alliances. What where the causes of the break-up and who was to blame for it?

By the time the Soviet Unions last leader came to power in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, the country was suffering severe economic and political problems. His plans for reform failed and the Soviet people criticized him. With the collapse of state socialism and transitions in the economy the Soviet people felt upset and lost as to where the future of their country was heading. Of course there were to people to blame, but it was not the political figures that received the most. Russian traditional ideology still lingered during communist transition, such as women belonged at home taking care of the children; that is why changes have been so demoralizing to women. The economic and political conditions combined with traditional ideology have had a particularly detrimental effect on women, causing them to be the poorest of the poor and most discriminated.

Stalin, World War II and an immense rate of alcoholism have given Russia one of the highest numbers of widows of any nation. Many women work full time, cook, shop and take care of their children. Yet women earn, on average, only 40% as much as men and three times as likely to be unemployed. (Jones). In comparison to men, they are the first to be laid off, are hired on the basis if they are attractive or could perform sexual favors and of course are not taken seriously by political parties. (Buckley 4). Even thought the government implemented support mechanisms to help women, they are still unable to secure a stable job and as a result represent two-thirds of the unemployed in Russia. Women in Moscow, for example, represent 78% of the city?s out-of-work residents. They also make up a large part of a new category to which Russians have only been recently introduced: the working poor. (Rhein 1).

But women face discrimination not only in the public spheres; traditional female roles are also reemerging in the private sphere. Social and political messages suggest that women should return home, raise children and not participate in the public sphere. As a result, public and private social structures in Russia not only push women out of the employment market and into poverty, but also keep them out of legislation (which is a breach of international law). Political parties are made up of a majority of men leaving women with very small to no representation whatsoever. (Buckley 5).