

**FACTORY, FAMILY  
AND WOMAN  
IN THE SOVIET UNION**

# FACTORY FAMILY AND WOMAN In The Soviet Union

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## PREFACE

MANY people have contributed to the making of this book. In 1929 and 1930, the authors were enabled to spend nine months traveling and investigating factories, construction enterprises and villages in the Soviet Union. Again in 1932, they made a second visit for the purpose of completing the observation of factories, mines, new socialist cities and old and new collective farms. The first period of study was aided by a traveling fellowship granted under the auspices of the American Russian Institute, then the Society for Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia, to Mildred Fairchild. The second visit was facilitated by a Grant-in-Aid from the Social Science Research Council, to the same author. Four years more have been given to translating source material and studying developments.

Throughout the period of investigation, an army of Soviet officials, teachers, physicians and friends gave of their time, energy and thought to facilitate the collection of material assembled and to aid in its interpretation. The list is too long to enumerate. To Valery I. Mezhlauk, chairman of the State Planning Commission of the U.S.S.R., the authors wish to make especial acknowledgment. From the outset, Mr. Mezhlauk has offered and procured every facility needed. His advice and assistance in selecting the field of research and in acquiring masses of data have been invaluable. His aid was supplemented ably by officials of the Amtorg Trading Corporation in New York City, Peter A. Bogdanov, Michael Korovay and A. A. Manuckian as well as by Boris Skvirsky and the staff of the former Soviet Information Bureau in Washington, D. C. The readiness of all members of the Soviet Government to supply published material has been a never-failing source of assistance. Particularly helpful have been the many books, pamphlets and magazines made available by the State Planning Commission and the Central Bureau of National Economic Accounting, and the manuscript reports prepared by Commissariats and organizations.

For the assistance rendered by Anna Louise Strong and Walter Duranty, as well as by many other correspondents, who have

lived in the Soviet Union over a period of years, and by the faithful and able interpreters and guides, who smoothed the way of life and travel in the Soviet Union, it is difficult sufficiently to express appreciation.

A word is desirable in regard to the use of Soviet statistics. Statistical procedure has been built anew and developed gradually in the Soviet Union during the post-revolutionary years. Trained statisticians and facilities for handling masses of data had to be acquired. Census techniques seem never to have been adequate in pre-revolutionary times, and the confusion of early post-revolutionary years did not hasten their advent.

An effort to obtain statistics of productive capacity was made by the Soviet Government, in 1918. With the early discussion of social economic planning, data began to be sought systematically. Crude figures of accomplishment for preceding years were published as early as 1925-26 in conjunction with the "Control Figures." Statistical Year Books, containing compilations and summaries of factual data, have been issued only since organization, in 1931, of the present Central Bureau of National Economic Accounting, the central statistical division of the State Planning Commission. Students, unacquainted with procedure in the statistical bureaus of the Soviet government, find that frequent reestimations and corrections of earlier figures and constant reorganization of categories render difficult the use of official publications over a period of time.

Inaccuracy of detail and large margin of error are not unusual in many government statistics. The Soviet data apparently share still many of the usual limitations. Careful study nevertheless has led the writers to feel confidence in techniques being used. Returns unquestionably are faulty as reported from many factories. Cost accounting, for example, is difficult to appraise. However, in this country a wide disparity in methods of accounting and records exists. Data from the Soviet Union have the great advantage of uniformity in principle and increasing uniformity in practice. Moreover, they come from all enterprises subject to government control. The great volume of the nation's industry and by far the largest part of agriculture at the present date are included in the periodic reports to the government organs. Certain basic figures, none the less, such as indices of cost of living and producers' prices, of man-hour productivity and production costs, are lacking for recent years.

Altogether, the writers find Soviet publications usable and, for the material given, extraordinarily complete, even while they are inadequate at certain points. As a basis for a picture of

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accomplishment and trend, in most instances, they are admirable.

The authors wish to express to Helen Kingsbury Zirkle their deep appreciation of the careful work she has done in preparing the index of this book.

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*Bryn Mawr, 1935.*

PART ONE  
INDUSTRIAL LIFE  
*BY MILDRED FAIRCHILD*





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## CHAPTER I

### WORKERS IN OLD RUSSIA

(A) Pre-war conditions

**P**RE-WAR Russia is usually thought of as an agricultural state. At the time of the Great War, nevertheless, according to the Census of 1913, manufacture was furnishing over one-fifth of the national income for European provinces of the Empire and agriculture less than one-half.<sup>1</sup> Industry, moreover, was growing rapidly. The output of iron and metals from the Donetz Basin had more than doubled since the opening of the century and the output of coal, both from the Donetz Basin and from the nation as a whole, had increased still more. A period of rapid expansion had taken place in the decade before the century and again between 1905 and 1914 that was promising a new industrialization sometime before the war.<sup>2</sup>

Growth of industry  
1905-14.

#### Character of Russian Industry

Russian industry had had even a rather wide range of development. The most of it, measured in quantity of production, was organized on a large scale. One of the characteristics of the Russian factory, from the beginning, has been its large size. The great metal plant at Sormovo, building steam engines, railway and electric cars, heavy machinery and ships, employed between fifteen and twenty thousand workers before the European War and the Putilov works at St. Petersburg were nearly as large. The textile mills at Ivanovo-Vosnesensk and many of those in Moscow and its vicinity employed from one to five thousand persons each. Out of 2,319,577 manual workers in industrial establishments listed by the factory inspector in 1913, 54 per cent were in five per cent of the manufacturing establishments, that is, in 894 concerns.<sup>3</sup>

1 Large scale industry

Highly concentrated industry was the natural result of late industrial development. The most advanced forms of industrial

2 most advanced forms adopted

<sup>1</sup> Zagorsky, S. O., *State Control of Industry in Russia During the War*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> See Miller, Margaret, *The Economic Development of Russia 1905-1914*, pp. 288-289. Also, Mavor, James, *An Economic History of Russia*, Vol. II, pp. 386-388.

<sup>3</sup> Zagorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

organization in other countries were available to Russian capitalists. The social organization of the people, with the concentration of wealth in the hands of the small upper classes as the result of long established land policies, lent itself readily to this form of enterprise. The economic policies fostered by the Tsarist government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even with petty restrictions that seemingly favored the Russian manufacturer, invited the foreign investor and entrepreneur to participate largely in the industrial growth. Russian dependence upon European capital was long established and favored foreign undertakings on a large scale.

Not all the industrial production of Tsarist days was of this type, nor indeed did it come under the jurisdiction of the factory inspection. A considerable part was what the Russians call *Kustar* industry, one form or another of small scale and home manufacture. Work was given out by large firms which maintained thereby a sweatshop system unsupervised by the government authorities. In addition, many small enterprises were individually owned and directed. A large artisan class lingered until recent years in every part of the country.

Nevertheless, in value of output as well as in the number of workers, large scale industry predominated. According to the 1913 census, the value of production coming under factory inspection amounted to four and one-half billion rubles, in prices of 1912. Industrial establishments of this class, as already has been said, employed approximately 2,300,000 workers. *Kustar* and artisan crafts in the same year yielded a total value of approximately one billion rubles and engaged something like 1,300,000 persons. Large scale industry, therefore, produced over four times as much in value of goods as did the small industries, but employed less than twice the number of workers.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover the usual assumption that in pre-war Russia, large-scale industry, with the exception of textiles, was basic in type, and that the small industries produced the consumer's goods seems to be inaccurate. Naturally enough, heavy metals were the work primarily of large enterprises, but the production of con-

<sup>4</sup> Riazanova, A., *Women's Labor* (in Russian), 1926, p. 42. The writers have found in this untranslated work an excellent discussion of the employment of women in pre-war Russia. Supplemented by the volume prepared by Zagorsky on *State Control of Industry in Russia During the War*, it gives one an adequate picture of women's position in pre-revolutionary Russian industry, although neither work had this as its primary purpose. Since both volumes are based upon original sources, and statistically are in approximate agreement, much of the material here presented will refer to them for the necessary data.

*Kustar industry*

1913  
large scale industry produced 4 times as much in value as did small industries but employed less than 2 times no. of workers

sumption goods was carried on by both large-scale and *Kustar* plants. In the metal trades, nearly half the workers were artisans, though the value of their output was, indeed, not more than 15 per cent of the value accredited to large scale production. Similarly, in the manufacture of animal products, including wool, the number of artisan or *Kustar* workers was nearly one and a half times as large as that in the great plants, while the value of goods produced was approximately one third. On the other hand, in the clothing trades nearly six times as many persons were engaged individually or in small shops as were employed in the large factories, and the value of their production was fully three times as great as that of large scale clothing manufacture. Indeed, the number and availability of individual tailors and dressmakers and the low cost of their output may have limited the growth of large scale manufacture in this field.

The greatest of the large scale Russian industries before the war, by all odds, was the textile industry. Approximately one-third of all the workmen employed in large enterprises and subject to factory inspection, throughout the pre-war years of the twentieth century, were those in textile manufacture of one sort or another. Cotton was predominant, with wool, silk and linen following considerably behind. Linen manufacture indeed seems to have remained to a large degree a *Kustar* and peasant industry in Russia until well into the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> *Textile*

The only other industry which employed any number of people comparable to textiles, even until the great war, was the metal working group. Data for the year 1902 show 423,000 workers in the metal trades, as against 453,000 in the textile trades. By the year 1913, the metal trades were employing 535,000 persons and the textile trades approximately 700,000.<sup>6</sup> *metal*

In 1902 the third industry was mining, with 175,000 workers, while all other large scale enterprises employed only approximately 100,000 people. By 1913, the food industries, particularly sugar refining, had entered into the picture, and one or two others, especially china and porcelain and wood-working, were employing over 100,000 persons in large concerns. *mining*

### Women Workers in Russian Industry

With the textile industries making up so large a proportion of Tsarist Russian industry, one may readily see that the employment of women was a noticeable factor long before the time of the Soviet government. The trade is, of course, one at which

<sup>5</sup> Riazanova, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> *Control Figures 1926-27* (in Russian), pp. 379-381.

main Reason for great no. of women workers before the Revolution Textile in main industry cheaper less complaints in industrial

they were adept in the days of household economy. Particularly the carding, combing and spinning of the fibers have been women's work throughout historic times and among nearly all peoples. Weaving has been divided between the sexes, but women have usually done a large part of it. With the development of the factory system, naturally enough, they were drawn into large scale production of textile goods.

In every country, moreover, the division of labor and the breaking down of the skill needed for mechanized production has led to the employment of women as a cheap source of labor and one capable enough for the need. In England, Germany and America, one may trace the influx of women into every trade with increased development of mechanized processes. Russia was no exception certainly. Labor of all kinds was cheap in Tsarist Russia. Peasants, presumably, maintained their connection with the villages and were only partially dependent for support upon their factory earnings. Whether among peasants or town workers, standards of living among the mass of Russian people were, and had been for centuries, so low that the cost of a man's hire was little enough. Women, nevertheless, were consistently cheaper than men, were steadier in attendance, less inclined to protest against the conditions of work or of living, and, if only because of the low wages to men, were readily available.

As early as 1869, therefore, one finds, in St. Petersburg and its suburbs, that nearly 42 per cent of the cotton spinners were women. By 1881, their proportion was no more than 44 per cent of the total but by 1900 it had increased to over 58 per cent. Fiber working of all kinds in St. Petersburg advanced their employment from 42.5 per cent in 1881 to 55.6 per cent in 1900.<sup>7</sup>

According to the reports of the factory inspection, as quoted by the Russian writer Riazanova, the employment of women, in the country as a whole, increased from 26 to 31 per cent of the total number of industrial workers, between 1901 and 1911. Of 606,000 women workers in 1911, nearly 434,000 were in textiles. All of the other 172,000 were engaged in the clothing trades, the food industries, certain chemical trades and the manufacture of boots and shoes. Even at the outbreak of the Great War, the number employed in the textile trades was still twice as great as in all other large scale industries together.

In the clothing trades, as well as in textiles, however, they made up the majority of the workers. Especially in the manufacture of women's clothing, such as there was, and of underwear,

<sup>7</sup> Riazanova, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

they greatly predominated, although men did some of the work that required skill, such as cutting and fitting. In the men's clothing industry, during the decade before the war, women were coming into the lower paid operations and those requiring the least skill; but they never were employed extensively by the men's tailors.

Other industries showed a considerable use of women, even though they did not constitute a majority of the force. The food industries employed nearly 70,000 women in 1913, or approximately 25 per cent of the 300,000 workers. The tobacco industry, especially, and the manufacture of butter and fats as well as of confectionery and biscuits used them increasingly between 1905 and 1914. The chemical industry employed approximately 70,000 persons in 1913, over 37 per cent of whom were women. Nearly half of the 14,000 workers in the rubber industry were women in 1913. Match production, a notoriously low paid industry in pre-war Russia, employed them extensively among its 20,000 workers in 1913. In the printing trades 25 per cent, and in glass manufacture, cement, china and porcelain nearly 20 per cent of the workers were women.<sup>8</sup> The accompanying table (Table 1) gives the total figures for the years 1901-1911, inclusive, showing the employment of both sexes.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO SEX IN LARGE SCALE RUSSIAN  
INDUSTRY, 1901-1911<sup>1</sup>

Year	Number of Workmen	Number of Women Workers	Total Number
1901 .....	1,251,240	441,012	1,692,252
1902 .....	1,238,042	453,352	1,691,394
1903 .....	1,192,591	447,815	1,640,406
1904 .....	1,222,866	461,468	1,684,334
1905 .....	1,202,764	457,929	1,660,693
1906 .....	1,204,614	479,955	1,684,569
1907 .....	1,209,376	508,779	1,718,145
1908 .....	1,270,195	538,484	1,808,679
1909 .....	1,259,273	545,509	1,804,782
1910 .....	1,267,572	565,211	1,832,783
1911 .....	1,345,367	606,588	1,951,955

<sup>1</sup> Riazanova, A., *Women's Labor* (in Russian), 1926, p. 35. All figures, as of January 1.

The trades that employed women obviously were those producing consumption goods. The great metal plants, employing over 500,000 workers in 1913, used less than one per cent of women and these in completely unskilled work, either as charwomen or

<sup>8</sup> Riazanova, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

to load and carry.<sup>9</sup> They were in no respect an integral part of the industry. In construction, transportation and mining likewise, they had only a small part. Apparently where they were used at all, it was mostly to fetch and carry, to load and unload. If bricks were to come to the bricklayers or bags of sand and cement to the cement mixer, the women often brought them on their backs or in heavy wheelbarrows. If lumber must come from the sawmill or to the carpenters they might load or unload it. Few of them worked in the coal mines, and while in the manganese mines they were used more than in coal, they were not employed in large enough numbers, apparently, to draw public attention or comment.

The figures that are available to show the employment of women in pre-war Russia indicate not only an increase between 1900 and 1914 but an especial increase between 1905 and 1914. The growth of mechanized processes with large scale manufacture had much influence. At the same time, according to the factory inspectors' report, as quoted by the Soviet writer who has studied the subject most extensively, the enlarged use of women after 1905 may be associated directly with the Revolution of that date. Men at this time showed a tendency to organize, both for economic resistance and for political revolt. In its mildest form the organization took on the character of trade unionism. The sudden rapid growth of these organizations during the strikes and revolts that took place over the entire country throughout the spring, summer and fall of 1905 drew sharp resistance from employers quite aside from any governmental suppression. In an attempt to check the revolutionary movement in plants and factories, manufacturers found it convenient to augment the number of women. The factory inspector, in 1906, reports an increase of 22,808 women, 5.5 per cent of the adult workers of the country, and a decrease of 1,423 men. According to the same source, and a decrease of 1,423 men. According to the same source, manufacturers were frank in their statements, both then and later, that it was advisable and profitable to employ women because they were more docile than men and were less inclined toward organization. The suppression of independent workers' organizations in 1907 by the government and the effort to replace them with so-called "legal" or "police" unions at government instigation followed. It led to a continuation of the policy to employ women by many manufacturers.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

attempt  
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1905

*Factory Inspection*

After vigorous opposition from employers for more than two decades, State Factory Inspection, which attempted to regulate conditions of labor, began in Russia by a series of laws passed between 1882 and 1897. These laws governed hours of work, employment of children and, in certain respects, of women. They set forth the terms of the labor contract, limited the rights of the employer to collect fines or to pay wages in kind, and established a periodic inspection to enforce the law, which should serve as a kind of combined welfare supervision and wage arbitration.

According to the law of June 3rd, 1897, hours of work were not to exceed 11½ by day or 10 by night. Children under 12 years were not to be employed and those between 12 and 15 were precluded from employment in dangerous and exhaustive occupations exceeding eight hours per day and from night work. An exception was made in glass-working. A six-hour night shift was allowed with a twelve-hour rest following. Children from 15 to 17 years old and women were forbidden night work in textile factories, in phosphorous match plants and in mines. The labor contract had to be delivered to the workmen, stating the amount of wage and the interval of payment. Fifteen days' notice was required from each side to terminate the contract. The employers' right to inflict fines upon employees was limited and all fines collected were to be placed in a workers' benefit fund. The right of wage earners to compensation for accident was established after the Compensation Act of June 2, 1903. By the terms of the law, however, only the factory inspector represented the worker in court, and compensation payable by the employer was not fixed adequately. Health insurance was started by a law passed under the Third Duma in 1912.<sup>11</sup>

Factory inspection before the war in Russia has been charged with extreme venality, however, and with failure to enforce the laws that existed. Such inspection as occurred did little, apparently, to mitigate conditions of labor for most people and still less for their standard of life. Hours of work were from nine to twelve a day; probably they averaged nearly sixty a week even in 1914. The writers have talked with many persons in Russia, both men and women, who remember vividly 12 and 14 hours of daily work before the war. According to one Soviet authority, the average working day for the entire Russian industry in 1904 was 10.70 hours, in 1913 9.87 hours. In the coal

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<sup>11</sup> Miller, Margaret, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-233. See also Mavor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 407-412.



mines in 1913 it was 10.06 hours; in the metal industries, iron and steel, it was 10.07 hours; in machine building 9.73 hours; in textiles and in the chemical industries 10.11 hours.<sup>12</sup> When one realizes that the eight-hour day, while not accepted as a standard in Europe until after the great war, was not uncommon practice in England, Germany and France in 1913, one appreciates the backwardness of Russian development at the time as compared with that of western Europe.

### *Conditions of Labor and Life*

Conditions of work were apparently worse than the hours. The factories, though large, were often badly designed, poorly lighted, illy ventilated and extraordinarily crowded. Low ceilings, enormous rooms with small and badly placed windows, row upon row of machines crowded together, poor seating, if any, seemed to be the rule. Ventilating systems and decent toilet facilities were quite outside the picture. One must realize that working conditions in no country were, in 1914, comparable to those of today. The advance in twenty years in this respect has been great, even though these provisions in America or western Europe are still often strikingly inadequate. Nowhere in the West, at that, to the writers' knowledge, would one have come across prevailing conditions as unhygienic and oppressive as those of pre-war Russia. Of all the pre-war plants left in Russia today, which the writers have seen, only one seemed acceptable to western standards, even of the time. The textile mills where the women worked in greatest numbers were no exception to the rule. The crowding, particularly, was great and the lighting bad. Ventilation was apparently unthought of, even in the spinning room of a cotton mill with its flying lint and high humidity.<sup>13</sup>

An adequate description of the mode of life for the great mass of the people in pre-war Russia is difficult to find. Studies were made in St. Petersburg and in Moscow as well as in outlying regions during the latter part of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century. Nothing exists comparable to the study by Charles Booth, *Life and Labor of the People in London*. Such reports and descriptions as are available give a picture of low standards of living comparable to none in western Europe or the United States. Slum conditions have been common in most of the industrial cities of the world. In Russia, they have been notorious. The census of 1890 in St. Petersburg showed

<sup>12</sup> Kraval, I. A., "Labor in Soviet Planned Economy" in *World Social Economic Planning*, pp. 412-413.

<sup>13</sup> See *post*, Chapter II, for further discussion.



7,374 underground cellars housing 49,669 persons. An additional 3,499 garrets served for another 21,804 persons. In these quarters people lived on an average of four to the room. Only 48 per cent of the lodgings in the city had separate kitchens and 14 per cent were kitchens only. Less than half had sanitary conveniences. A study in 1897 reported that in many workmen's lodgings less than 86 cubic feet of air space was available per person, that is, a space approximately 3 x 4 x 7 feet. Cellars were particularly unsuited to human habitation in St. Petersburg also, because of the frequent inundations from the Neva River; St. Petersburg was built upon a swamp.<sup>14</sup>

Living quarters in Moscow were reported as even worse, in some ways, than those in St. Petersburg. An investigation in 1898 reported by the Moscow City Council covering 16,478 lodgings in one of the poor quarters in Moscow showed 180,919 persons, 17 per cent of the population of the city, living under shocking conditions. "The details are almost incredible. The stairs which lead down to the dens which the people inhabit are covered with all kinds of filth, the dens themselves are almost filled with dirty boards, upon which there is equally foul bedding, and in the corners there is only dirt. The smell is close and heavy. There is hardly any light, because the dens are half underground and little light obtains entrance through the dirty windows. Beneath the windows it is absolutely dark; the walls are damp and covered with mold."<sup>15</sup>

These are descriptions of the poorest living quarters in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, and both antedate the twentieth century. Yet the housing shortage in St. Petersburg was more acute at the turn of the century than a decade earlier. And during the great war, the shortage of living quarters in both Moscow and St. Petersburg has been described as yet more intense.<sup>16</sup>

The textile mills in Moscow attempted to compensate for the lack of housing available to workers by building barracks alongside the mills, allowing them in some cases to be occupied without rent as additional compensation beyond the wage. The character of the barracks, nevertheless, is testimony to the inhumanity of the time. Some of the best of them seem to have housed two and three families in one room. In others, great rooms housing dozens of families together without privacy or

<sup>14</sup> Mavor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 397-399.

<sup>15</sup> V. V. Svyatlovsky, *Housing Question* (in Russian), 1902; cited by Mavor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 400.

<sup>16</sup> Compare also Florinsky, Michael T., *The End of the Russian Empire*, pp. 122 and 161-162.