DODGE

Women in the Soviet Economy

OHNS

WOMEN IN THE SOVIET ECONOMY

Their Role in Economic, Scientific, and Technical Development

A study sponsored by the Foreign Studies Group, Office of Economic and Manpower Studies, National Science Foundation, and prepared under the supervision of the Department of Economics, University of Maryland

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PREFACE

CONCERN IN recent years for the waste of women's talent and labor potential led to the appointment of The President's Commission on the Status of Women, which has issued a series of reports on various problems affecting women and their participation in economic, political, and social life.[1] For any formulation of policy directed toward the better use of our woman power, it is important to know the experience of other nations in utilizing the capabilities of women. For this reason as well as others, the Soviet experience is of particular interest at this time.

Although the lack of reported data on some of the topics under consideration resulted in many unanswered questions, during the past decade there has been a significant improvement in the flow of both statistical and descriptive materials from the Soviet Union. A great variety of statistical handbooks and other materials presenting figures on the country's economic, social, and cultural developments has been screened and analyzed for this study. Because so many of these statistics had to be related to data on population and its characteristics, the pivotal years for analysis in the present study are 1926, 1939, and 1959—the years in which national censuses for the U.S.S.R. were made. Bench marks so widely separated are of limited use, however, unless one can fill in the gaps with additional information. Thus, intercensal comparisons are supplemented when possible by other published statistics and by estimates of births, deaths, size and structure of the population according to educational attainment, employment, and so forth. Projections of the population by broad age groups are made for 1970 and 1980. As in most studies lacking a strong historical focus, the reader will find that greater attention is devoted—with a few exceptions, when current data are deficient—to more recent materials.

A somewhat analogous progression is attempted in the emphasis by topics, the greatest emphasis being placed on professional women in the field of science and technology. Four chapters do not deal specifically with the labor force but with more general aspects of women, their number, age structure, and education—Chapter 2 on population questions, Chapter 6 on educational trends, Chapter 7 on training in science and technology, and Chapter 8 on educational attainment. Chapters 7 and 8 are, of course, crucial to an understanding of the contribution of women to the scientific and technical achievements of the Soviet Union. Primary emphasis, however, is placed on the role of women in the Soviet labor force. The extent to which

[1]The President's Commission on the Status of Women, *American Women* (Washington, D.C., 1963), and other specialized reports.

women participate in the economy as a whole is discussed in Chapter 3. Some of the factors affecting this participation are examined in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapters 9 and 10, the role of women in the two most important categories of the Soviet labor force is described—the less skilled occupations in agriculture and industry (Chapter 9) and the more highly skilled semiprofessional and professional occupations (Chapter 10). In Chapter 11, I examine and attempt to assess the contribution of women to Soviet science and technology.

The sources used in this study are mainly published Soviet materials. In addition, firsthand information and impressions were gathered in the Soviet Union during a month in the spring of 1955, two months in the summer of 1962, and five weeks in the spring of 1965. During the two latter visits, which took me from Leningrad to Alma-Ata, I had both formal and informal conferences and interviews with several-score Soviet officials, administrators, scientists, engineers, teachers, physicians, economists, and others concerned with problems related to the training and employment of women. Many of those interviewed were women.

Intourist and the Institute of Soviet-American Relations were helpful in arranging my visits to nurseries, kindergartens, schools, higher educational institutions, research institutes, farms, factories, and other institutions and enterprises.

I should like to thank the National Science Foundation for its financial support of this research and to express special thanks to Mr. Joseph P. Kozlowski of the Office of Economic and Manpower Studies for his encouragement and help. This study was initiated by Mr. Michael Roof, but because of other commitments he withdrew from the project. His contribution, particularly in the early stages of the study, was helpful. Mr. Charles West was also very helpful in the initial stages, and his loyal assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are due Mrs. Elizabeth Marbury Bass for assistance on the legal sections of Chapter 4, Mr. James Brackett of the Bureau of the Census for invaluable help on Chapter 2, and Mr. Murray Feshbach, also of the Bureau of the Census, for assistance and advice on Chapters 9 and 10, as well as on bibliographic matters. The excellent collection of materials in the library of the Foreign Demographic Analysis Division of the Bureau of the Census, which was made available to me by Mr. Feshbach, yielded much valuable data.

Mrs. May Spiro ably and loyally edited and prepared the initial draft of the manuscript. Imaginative editorial assistance was given by Mrs. Mary Knight. Mrs. Janet Lugo was also of assistance in the final throes of completing the manuscript.

I should also like to thank the staff of the Slavic Room of the Library of Congress, particularly Dr. Gisela Weinfeld, for its generous help over many months. Professor Dudley Dillard, chairman of the Department of Economics, and the departmental secretary, Mrs. Helen Jenkins, have facilitated my work in many ways. Finally, I should like to acknowledge my great debt and gratitude to my old friend and former colleague, Professor Nicholas DeWitt, whose important and fundamental work in the areas of Soviet education and professional manpower has made my task easier.

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DEFINITIONS

Able-bodied age group	Officially 16 to 59 years for men and 16 to 54 years for women
Age-specific birth rate	Number of children born to a thousand women of a given age
Aspirant	Graduate student
Birth rate or crude birth rate	Number of children born per thousand of the total population
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Candidate degree	First Soviet advanced degree; roughly comparable to the Ph.D.
Doctoral degree	Highest Soviet advanced degree; senior to the Ph.D.
Dotsent	Associate professor
Dvor	Traditional peasant household
Feldsher	Assistant physician or medic; term originated in the army
Gosplan	State Planning Committee (Commission)
Gross reproduction rate (GRR)	The maternal gross reproduction rate is the number of female children who will be born per 100 women who will survive through the reproductive ages, if a constant set of age-specific birth rates prevails throughout the period
Internat	Boarding school
Kafedra	Academic department or chair in a higher educational institution
Komsomol	Young Communist League
Kulak	Rich peasant
MTS	Machine Tractor Station
NEP	New Economic Policy (1921–28), under which a wide range of private economic activity was legalized

Nomenklatura	Appointments list controlled by the party
Oblast	Governmental administrative unit subordinated to a republic; province
Philology	In Soviet usage, the field of languages and literature
Polytechnical institute	General engineering school offering several specialties
Private subsidiary agriculture	Cultivation of private garden plots
R.S.F.S.R.	Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, or Russia proper
Scientific worker (*nauchnyi rabotnik*)	Specialist working not only in a natural science field but in any field of knowledge
Technicum	Specialized secondary school
Trudoden	Labor day; a work-day unit on a collective farm
Working age group	Men and women 16 to 59 years of age
Yasli	Nursery or crèche

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INTRODUCTION

A MAJOR resource of any nation is its people, and the effective utilization of this resource is the precondition for social, economic, or technical development. This study examines Soviet utilization of human resources—specifically, the resources of women—and attempts to present a broad survey of the part played by women in the Soviet economy, particularly in science and technology. Certain other relevant aspects of the life of Soviet women are touched on. The period from the Revolution (1917) to the present, with emphasis on the recent past, is the primary focus, but on occasion it is necessary to examine conditions in pre-Communist Russia in order to gain perspective on the Communist period. This study is intended to provide a foundation for an understanding of the forces which have shaped the role of women in the Soviet economy as well as an appreciation of their contribution to Soviet economic development. Hopefully, it will stimulate further investigation into the many controversial questions which it raises but does not resolve.

In any comparison of Soviet and American manpower resources, one is immediately struck by the differences in the utilization of women. The restricted role of women in the American economy contrasts sharply with their broad role in the Soviet economy. This difference is most striking in the areas of science and technology, where women have come to occupy an extremely significant position in the Soviet Union, particularly at the semiprofessional and intermediate professional levels.

In the chapters ahead it will soon become apparent that the difference in the utilization of women in the two economies stems largely from the fundamental differences in the underlying philosophies and aims of the two societies. The importance of women in the Soviet economy is primarily the result of the profound transformation in the political, economic, and social organization under the Soviet regime. These changes, which have been compressed into a period of fewer than fifty years, are the result of policies deliberately formulated and vigorously, even ruthlessly, pursued by the party and the government. Through the mobilization of the entire society, Soviet totalitarianism has sought to reconstruct not only the economic and social institutions, but also the attitudes and minds of the people. To this end, the regime has exerted absolute control over the various means of mass communication and education and has used them to inspire, manipulate, or drive the public into supporting, or acquiescing in, the regime's programs.

There are limits, of course, to the power of the Soviet regime, even when supported by the modern devices which so facilitate the wielding of centralized power. Formidable restraints are imposed by a society's previous cultural pattern. As the Soviets discovered in Central Asia, long-established beliefs, customs, and practices can be extremely difficult to eradicate. Institutions supporting the *status quo*—the family, school, and church—may show surprising resilience. Some institutions,

particularly the school, were soon reorganized to further the objectives of the Soviet regime. Others, such as the church, were eventually tolerated after they had survived in a much-weakened condition a period of vigorous attack. The family, however, as a primary social unit, has remained a constant challenge to the state by virtue of its resistance to outside influences and its tendency to harbor traditional values.

Marxist doctrine held that women were no less subjugated under capitalism than was the proletariat. The family was considered to be founded upon the domestic enslavement of the wife. Not only did the Soviet leadership feel bound to eliminate exploitation in the home, but it also believed that the family perpetuated the outmoded bourgeois ideology. Nikolai Bukharin, a leading party theoretician, stated at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 that the family remained "a formidable stronghold of all the turpitudes of the old regime."[1] For this reason, early legislation aimed not only at improving the status of women, but also at undermining the strength of the family. Women were granted full equality with men under the law. Measures facilitating divorce, legalizing unregistered marriages, legitimizing children born out of wedlock, and legalizing abortion were designed to loosen the bonds which tied the family together.

The attitude of the regime toward the family changed as the regime gained confidence. By the mid-1930's the family was no longer considered a threat to the political control of the younger generation, and the Soviet leadership had become more clearly aware of the family's positive function in preparing children for their future roles in society. Modern industry called for the virtues of promptness, reliability, co-operativeness, and receptivity to direction on the part of workers—all virtues which the family can inculcate better than the state. As a result, much of the early legislation easing divorce and weakening family ties was modified. Soviet theoretical discussions of the dissolution of the family and the transfer of its functions to the state are now much less frequent; and they refer, not to the near, but to a distant utopian future when the transition from socialism to full communism will be finally achieved.

The family now forms a social unit which preserves much independence from the state; it also competes with the state for the time and energy of women workers. Family demands may prevent some women from participating in the labor force and some women from giving their work sufficient attention, but the government has nevertheless been remarkably successful in maintaining a high level of participation in the labor force by all age groups, even by those in the principal years of childbearing and child rearing. On the other hand, the double burden of family and work which many women bear has had the unintended social consequence of contributing to a reduction in the birth rate, which in turn may adversely affect future economic growth. It is clear from the complexity of these interrelationships that one cannot properly study women as participants in the labor force without considering how their roles as wives and mothers are affected, and vice versa. In the early chapters of this study, we shall attempt to discover the most important factors encouraging or inhibiting the participation of women in the Soviet economy.

As will be shown, the most important circumstance underlying the high level of participation by women in the labor force has been the forced-draft industrialization of the Soviet Union. The willingness of the regime to sacrifice human welfare for higher rates of economic growth has had a decisive impact on almost every policy affecting women in their economic role. For example, the large relative loss of male population caused by the two World Wars, the Civil War, and the vicissitudes of the 1920's and 1930's would not necessarily of itself have led to an increase in the participation of women in the labor force. However, the regime's determination to maintain the high rate of economic

[1]Quoted in Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 190.

growth necessitated that more women be drawn into and retained in the labor force. This determination also explains the ambivalence of the regime toward the provision of more adequate child-care facilities, cafeterias, and household durables. These would have been provided, even at the expense of investment in producers' goods, if the regime had been less preoccupied with economic growth and more with human welfare. The regime chose, however, to provide only the minimum necessary to keep a large proportion of women in the labor force. As a result, most Soviet women continue to carry heavy domestic burdens in addition to their work responsibilities. The resulting conflict between family and work is found to have important consequences for the productivity of women, especially in the more demanding and creative occupations.

The chapters on education are intended, in part, to show the rapid increase under Soviet rule in the breadth and scope of the education of women. After the Revolution, increasing numbers of girls entered the secondary specialized schools and higher educational institutions. The relative proportion of women in all fields of study increased. As the industrialization drive gained momentum, both the number and the proportion of girls enrolled in the sciences and technology, where the shortages of manpower were greatest, increased impressively. This study examines how young women in the Soviet Union are influenced in their choice of fields and shows why some professions traditionally followed by men—the medical profession, for example—are now largely the province of women. An attempt is made to explain why the relative proportion of female students shrinks as the level of education increases and why, in recent years, there has been a general reduction in the proportion of women enrolled in higher education—a reduction to a level substantially below that which would be expected from the proportion of women in the college-age population. An explanation is called for, since equal access to higher education continues to be proclaimed as one of the cornerstones of Soviet policy.

The employment of women in unskilled and semiskilled jobs in agriculture, industry, and other sectors of the economy is discussed primarily for the purpose of presenting a background against which the employment of women in semiprofessional and professional occupations can be seen in proper perspective. Although the utilization of women in the professions, particularly in science and technology, is our primary focus of interest, it is important to realize that the bulk of Soviet working women are employed in relatively unskilled work. The largest single group of women is to be found in unskilled field work in agriculture.

With this background, the final chapters turn to our central interest—the employment of women in semiprofessional and professional occupations, especially in the fields of science and technology. The role of women in the various professions and their participation as executives and administrators in various sectors of the economy are examined. As in other countries, the proportion of women in a profession declines as the level of responsibility increases. Notwithstanding this, the proportion of women in a number of professions is so large that their representation in the top echelons is substantial. The present study also assesses the contribution of women to scholarship and research in a wide variety of scientific, technical, and other fields. A number of indirect measures of scholarly productivity are devised and applied. An explanation of the apparent lower scholarly productivity of women is then developed.

The lower productivity of women—particularly in creative scholarly work—has evident implications for the determination of the optimal allocation of scarce educational resources between men and women. The hypothesis is offered that recent trends in the enrollment of women reflect the awareness of planners that women offer the nation a lower average return on investment in their education than men. Similarly, it is concluded that