WOMEN AT THE GATES

In the annals of industrialization, the Soviet experience is unique in its whirlwind rapidity. The vast transformations that shook western Europe over the centuries – proletarianization, industrialization, urbanization – were in the Soviet Union telescoped into a mere decade. The working class grew at an unprecedented rate, changing in size and social composition. Even more striking was the critical role of women: in no country of the world did they come to constitute such a significant part of the working class in so short a time. As women flooded industries traditionally dominated by men, they undercut strict hierarchies within the factories and forced male workers to reexamine their ideas about skill, “masculine” and “feminine” work, and the role of women in the workplace. The state’s use of female labor was closely intertwined with the great upheavals of early Soviet history: accumulation of capital for the industrialization drive, the urban food crisis, collectivization, and peasant migration to the cities. Based on new Russian archival materials, Women at the Gates is the first social history of Soviet women workers in the 1930s. It is the story of a world remade, from above and from below, as planners “regendered” the entire economy and women entered the ranks of waged labor in unprecedented numbers.

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WOMEN AT THE GATES

GENDER AND INDUSTRY IN STALIN'S RUSSIA

WENDY Z. GOLDMAN

Carnegie Mellon University
This book is dedicated
to Marcus Rediker
and
to the memory of our beloved friend
Steven Sapolsky
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Illustrations

Postage stamp of woman worker
Aleksandra Artiukhina

Workers and their families arriving at the railroad station in Magnitogorsk

Poster of national income and real wages

Housing for workers on the Kuznets metallurgical complex construction site

A village meeting to recruit workers for Magnitogorsk

Construction work on Azovstal’, a steel plant in Mariupol

Construction at the Serp i Molot metallurgical plant

Women miners

A young female collective farmer learns metalworking

Women concrete workers at the Dnieper River dam

An unskilled woman worker hauling stones at Ural’mashstroï, a construction site for the Urals machine-building factory

A brigade of workers at the Karl Marx machine-building factory

A woman dormitory worker welcomes a peasant to Magnitogorsk

Postage stamp of woman worker
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### Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agitmass</td>
<td>Department for Agitation and Mass Campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee of the Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delo (d.)</td>
<td>file or folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fond (f.)</td>
<td>collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARF</td>
<td>State Archive of the Russian Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosbank</td>
<td>State Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gosplan</td>
<td>State Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kolkhoz</td>
<td>collective farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkhozsentr</td>
<td>Union of Agricultural Collectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUTB</td>
<td>Committee to Improve the Labor and Life of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narpit</td>
<td>Union of Public Dining and Dormitory Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKT</td>
<td>Commissariat of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obranno (ob.)</td>
<td>back of numbered page in archival folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opis’ (o.)</td>
<td>inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabkrin</td>
<td>Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGAE</td>
<td>Russian State Archive of the Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTsKhIDNI (RGASPI)</td>
<td>Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Contemporary History, formerly the archive of the Communist Party, now Russian State Archive of Social and Political History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNK</td>
<td>Council of People’s Commissars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sovkhoz</td>
<td>state farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO</td>
<td>Council of Labor and Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsentrosoiuz</td>
<td>All-Union Central Union of Consumers’ Societies</td>
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Tsentrrozhilsoiuz  Central Housing Union
VSNKh           Supreme Council of the National Economy
VTsSPS         All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions
ZhAKT          Association of Housing Cooperatives
Zhenotdel      women’s department of the Central Committee
                of the Communist Party
ZRK            closed system of workers’ cooperatives
This postage stamp and the one on page 286 depict women workers. The stamps were issued from 1929 to 1931 as part of a set featuring two women workers and two collective farmers. They were issued as regular or definitive, not commemorative, stamps, and were reissued from 1937 to 1952. The stamps reflect the importance the state attached to the role of women workers during the 1930s.
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