



Russia's Factory Children: State, Society, and Law, 1800–1917 (Pitt Russian East European)

By Boris B. Gorshkov

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At the height of the Russian industrial revolution, legions of children toiled in factories, accounting for fifteen percent of the workforce. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, their numbers had been greatly reduced, thanks to legislation that sought to protect the welfare of children for the first time.

Russia's Factory Children presents the first English-language account of the changing role of children in the Russian workforce, from the onset of industrialization until the Communist Revolution of 1917, and profiles the laws that would establish children's labor rights.

In this compelling study, Boris B. Gorshkov examines the daily lives, working conditions, hours, wages, physical risks, and health dangers to children who labored in Russian factories. He also chronicles the evolving cultural mores that initially welcomed child labor practices but later shunned them.

Through extensive archival research, Gorshkov views the evolution of Russian child labor law as a reaction to the rise of industrialism and the increasing dangers of the workplace. Perhaps most remarkable is his revelation that activism, from the bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and children themselves, led to the conciliation of legislators and marked a progressive shift that would impact Russian society in the early twentieth century and beyond.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Much more than a pathbreaking history of child labor in Russia, this book sheds new light on a stunning array of topics, from the pioneering medical studies that identified children's distinctive brain functions and physical capacities, to the radicalizing of a generation of young Russian factory workers. You need not be a Russian historian to benefit from this book's insights into the development of social welfare policy, the construction of age categories, and the roots of revolution.”

—Steven Mintz, Columbia University

“This balanced and judicious survey provides an overview of child labor practices and legislation in the century leading up to the Russian Revolution. Gorshkov argues that the relationship with the autocracy was more 'interactional' than confrontational, and that the Russian state was capable of responding positively to public pressure. Adopting a comparative framework in his investigation of child labor laws, he problematizes the notion of 'Russian backwardness' and seeks to normalize Russian history.”

—Ben Eklof, Indiana University

“Gorshkov's seminal study of child labor in late imperial Russia displays impeccable scholarship. After analyzing preindustrial child labor, he examines legislative and public debates which resulted in the 1882 Child Labor Law. Gorshkov concludes the work with analysis of the impact of the law and references to the question of child labor in our contemporary world.”

—Alice K. Pate, Columbus State University

“Succeeds both as Russian history and as a comparative complement to studies of child labor, reform, civil society, and industrialization elsewhere. Highly recommended.”

—*Choice*

“Pathbreaking. One of the most important aspects of Gorshkov's study is its use of comparative analysis. This book will force readers to consider how accurately Russia is placed (or not placed) in its European context both in the story of Russia's industrialization and in broader fields such as world history or labor history.”

—*The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*

“Gorshkov has managed in this concise book to add a new dimension to the history of Russian labour, as well as contributing to current debates about the role of the state, the growth of civil society, and the

perception of childhood.”

—*Canadian Slavonic Papers*

“Gorshkov’s interesting and conceptually provocative book examines child labor in the countryside, the impact of industrialization, the difficult working conditions for children in factories, and, finally, the concerns of both educated society and officialdom that led to new labor laws.”

—*The Journal of Modern History*

About the Author

Boris B. Gorshkov is visiting assistant professor of Russian, European, and world history at Auburn University. He is the author of *A Life Under Serfdom: Memoirs of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii, 1800-68*, and has contributed articles to numerous books and journals, including *Encyclopedia of Europe, 1794-1914* and *Encyclopedia of European Social History, from 1300 to 2000*.

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