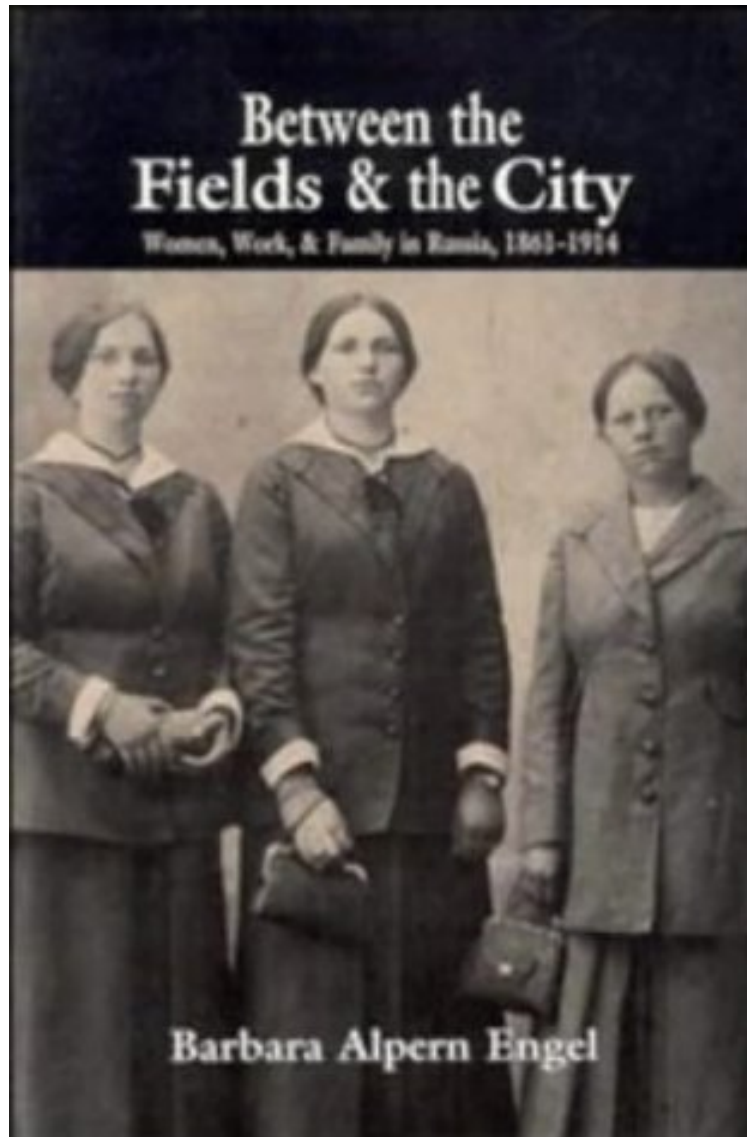


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Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914

Barbara Alpern Engel

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Barbara Alpern Engel : Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914*:

This book charts the personal dimensions of economic and social change by examining the significance and consequences of Russian peasant women's migration from the village to the factory and/or city in the years between the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the outbreak of World War I. The author uses case studies to explore the effects of urbanization and industrialization on the relationship of the migrant to the peasant household, and on family life and personal relations. It differs from other studies in looking at both village and city; in treating personal life, and in drawing on a wealth of archival data, most of it for the first time. The focus on women and the family provides a fresh perspective on the social history of late Imperial Russia.

From Library Journal University of Colorado historian Engel uses previously unavailable primary sources to provide a detailed account of Russian rural migration to the city. She gives special emphasis to the plight of women, noting that they are often overlooked in studies of Russian urbanization. Her picture of peasant life is grim: suffocatingly patriarchal families, abuse, poverty, and restrictive laws. Few women found utopia in the cities, however, where they faced double workdays, squalid quarters, alcoholism, increased infant mortality, and sexual harassment. Protections provided by the extended family were lost, leaving women powerless, impoverished, and exploited. Engel's thematic approach uses vivid case studies to buttress her statistics. She concludes that urbanization and industrialization were more advantageous to men. This absorbing, well-written study is highly recommended for academic and public libraries collecting Russian history and women's studies. - Donna L. Cole, Leeds P.L., Ala. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. "The chief contribution of Barbara Engel's important and groundbreaking study of peasant women in Russia's central industrial region lies in the sheer mass of detail the author provides for a theme rarely studied and little understood. Drawing on an impressive array of published and unpublished sources... Engel's sensitive treatment of the varying ways in which gender, class, and community together affected women's lives saves peasant women from being relegated to a special category with little relevance to the society in which they lived." Slavic "This book is a superbly researched and finely written study of the significance and consequences of Russian peasant women's migration from 1861-1914. It adds a new dimension to the growing literature on peasant migration and the formation of the Russian working class by analyzing how migration affected the village, how gender mediated change, and how the very structure of patriarchal society, whether in village, cottage industry, or urban environment, were affected by changes in women's employment and residency." Journal of Modern History "Alpern Engel's book is a helpful tool for those interested in deciphering the history of Russian women in particular and of peasant women in general. Its value lies in its use of peasant women's own voices to tell the story of their lives. By using this method, Alpern Engel is able to avoid the essentialist trap and to convey the rich diversity of peasant women's experiences of migration and industrialization." Canadian Woman Studies "...her study is rich in both erudition and insight. It treats a complex subject in depth, but efficiently; the exposition is never compressed or hurried. Historians of imperial Russia, of women, and of labor will have to read this book and will be glad they did." American Historical "...a valuable contribution to the nascent field of Russian peasant women's studies." Labour "This is an excellent book in the questions Barbara Alpern Engel poses, the research she has accomplished, the presentation of her argument, and her intellectual generosity." The Russian "This book adds new dimensions to the social history of late Imperial Russia..." Canadian Slavic Paper "This absorbing, well-written study is highly recommended for academic and public libraries collecting Russian history and women's studies." Donna Cole, Library Journal "With its readable prose and its emphasis on the life experiences of individual, poor women, this book makes an excellent introduction to its subject." J. Zimmerman, Choice "Engel's book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of peasant culture, gender, urbanization, and the circumstances faced by Russia's working class. Her perceptive and sensitive use of disparate sources, including comparative works on women in Europe and fascinating archival evidence for the experiences of individual female peasants, is particularly noteworthy. Engel also sheds light on the perplexing issue of working women's limited political involvement." Laurie Bernstein, Labor History From the Back Cover Drawing on a wealth of new archival data containing first-person accounts of peasant women's experiences, Engel provides a detailed account of the move from village to city. Unlike previous studies, this one looks at the impact of migration on the peasantry and at the experience of peasant workers in nearby factories and illuminates the personal dimensions of economic and social change.