

# Female Employment in Military Industrial Complex Enterprises of Post-Soviet Russia

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## ABSTRACT

Reforms in Russian industry caused by disintegration of the USSR had a strong negative effect on military-industrial complex. Pre-reform Russian economy possessed a powerful efficient system of high-tech industries with defense industry being a core of the system in view of the government tasks which defense industry should effectively respond to. The defense industry accumulated elite of the labor force, highly skilled and educated workers. Socioeconomic and political transformation in Russian society resulted in significant qualitative and quantitative changes in human capital of military-industrial complex. The number of employees was cut down. Highly skilled workers turned out to be unemployed. In tough competition for working places caused by contraction of industrial production women turned out to be in the most vulnerable position.

In this article results of the survey and documents analysis conducted by the author are looked at with gender perspective. The aim is to identify the basic trends in female employment in military-industrial complex of post-Soviet Russia. Job security, level of wages and managerial career chances for women are considered.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1990s women's labor conditions changed dramatically, with a trend of female employment growth transforming into drop in women jobs. Unemployment and increase in numbers of working places in informal sector of economy represent both major characteristics and challenges in labor market of that period. After official acknowledgement of unemployment in Russia (in 1991) recruitment agencies registered unemployed population in which, in terms of numbers, women prevailed over men significantly. By the end of 1999 they amounted to 70.0 % of total number of unemployed registered in state recruitment agencies while in 1995 – 62.2%. In late 1990s duration of unemployed period for women increased. In 1999 it was 7.7 months compared to 5.7 months in 1994. Women accounted to 72.0% in the total number of unemployed for more than 1 year (Феминизация бедности в России/ Всемирный Банк, 2000, p.17)

From the middle of 1990s a stable tendency for flow of workforce released from public employment into informal sector of economy could be observed. The process was more obvious in female workforce. In competition caused by decrease in manufacturing women were the first to be dismissed.

The reasons and factors of employment growth in informal economy are similar to processes in other countries. However, along with some common features Russian informal sector has a dramatic difference. In developed and emerging economies informal sector involves basically migrants, mainly illiterate and unskilled workers, the so called "underclass", while in Russia the majority of employed people have got postsecondary and higher education (Хоткина З.А., 1992, p.22).

In the period since 1990 to 1998 total number of workforce reduced by more than 11.68 million people. This process was characterized by gender asymmetry as dismissal of women was twice as much quicker than that of men (women - 7.85 million, men - 3.83 million). Such a sharply non - central downsizing in 1990s could not be explained by purely economic factors as it was accompanied by increasingly evident strengthening of women discrimination in Russian labor market. Loss of job hit women of all ages though all other factors were different. The layoff of young people was consistent with a tendency for younger workers to have lower retention rates compared to those of prime age. However, women of prime age with children also lost their jobs as employers were willing to get rid of them. Women of older age suffered double discrimination – by gender and age.

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The amount of working population kept reducing till October, 1998. By that time Russian State Statistics Committee fixed an absolute minimum – 57.9 million of working population. To be elaborate, women accounted for 27.4 million, with the numerical strength of working men continuing to reduce by February, 1999, when the size was fixed as 30.4 million. By February, 1999 working population reduction reached its peak and it was followed by a slow recovery in numerical strength of working population. For the first time in the period of intensive reforms the size of working population increased. In the period from October, 1998 when absolute minimum was fixed to August, 1999 the number of working women increased by 1.6 million (5.8%) while of working men – by 1.5 million (4.8%) (МальшеваМ.М. (Ed.), 2002, p.74)

Thus, recession was characterized by a serious unemployment growth. During the period of 1992-1998 it increased by 5%-14% in male population and by 4% - 13% in female one. Unemployment growth affected all educational groups of population. Primarily, unemployment affected people with lowest level of education. During the period reviewed the highest rate of unemployment growth was observed among people having secondary education and lower. Within male working group unemployment level increased by 2.83 – 4.25 times in absolute value, within female group – by 2.71 – 4.5 times. (ЗавадскаяЛ.Н.,1999, p.81)

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To identify typical trends of female employment in military–industrial complex in transforming post-Soviet Russia the author conducted documents analysis and survey with workers and managers of three large industrial plants: public corporation “Kirovsky Plant” (Saint-Petersburg) – further referred to as *Kirovsky plant*, scientific industrial enterprise “Era” (Penza) - further referred to as *Era*, public corporation “Krasnogorskyoptico-mechanical plant named after Zwerev (Krasnogorsk, Moscow region) - further referred to as *KOMP*. A sample was based on polar group technique. The total number of respondents was 457, among those 263 respondents in *Kirovsky plant*, including 223 workers and 40 managers, 194 – in *Era*, including 156 workers and 38 managers.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Job security and standard of wages**

During a period of socioeconomic and political transformations social discrimination against women became a topical and acute issue because of dramatic changes in socioeconomic practices and patterns of life which resulted in abandoning social benefits for families, children and women. Gender discrimination was more obvious in recruitment and dismissal processes. Such characteristics as age, having children and corresponding family responsibilities were more significant for employer than skills and education of women. In recruiting preference was given to men while in dismissing – to women. Women are more likely and more often than men become unemployed in downsizing, but not as voluntary redundancy. So, it confirms existence of the discriminating practices. Statistical data on employees dismissal collected from the examined enterprises are set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: The amount of dismissed employees per gender (in categories of employees), %**

Category of employees	Kirovsky plant		Era		KOMP	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Workers</b>						
1991	10.8	3.1	5.7	0.9	5.4	3.4
1996	8.8	3.1	5.9	0.3	5.4	5.9
2002	20.5	3.1	12.2	2.5	3.9	2.1
<b>Managers</b>						
1991	0.8	0.14	-	-	0.6	0.4
1996	0.6	0.2	-	-	0.6	0.3
2002	1.9	0.2	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.3
<b>Specialists</b>						
1991	0.7	1.1	1.7	1.0	0.6	1.2
1996	1.1	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.1	2.1
2002	1.9	1.1	3.0	1.3	1.0	1.9
<b>Employees</b>						
1991	-	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.01	0.4
1996	-	0.12	0.3	0.1	0.02	0.1
2002	0.06	0.04	0.2	0.2	0.01	0.04

Source: Author (based on statistical data of enterprises)

The table shows that correlation of dismissed employees in all occupational groups is practically the same for all examined enterprises during the period reviewed. The majority of dismissed fall into the group "Workers", the amount of dismissed women in this group being significantly less than that of dismissed men. To be elaborate, the bigger amount of dismissed male employees is correlated with absolute numerical dominance of men (as compared to women) in this occupational group in the examined plants. For the same reason the number of dismissed female specialists in general is bigger than that of dismissed men within the same occupational group. Thus, one can conclude that the highest unemployment rate is characteristic for both men and women belonging to the groups with lower educational level.

Among economic active population with a medium level of education and primarily with higher education unemployment decelerated. Rate of unemployment growth within a group with higher education was the lowest among all educational groups – 1.75% for women and 2.33% for men. Thus, in 1998 unemployment level within this educational group was, in fact, half as much in comparison to the whole population - 7% for men and women with higher education against 14% among men and 13% among women (Karaeva C.B., Tykumcev B.G., 1999, p.44).

The evidence of the tendency is given in table 1. The lowest rate of dismissals for the period reviewed falls on category "Managers" and "Specialists", i.e. highly skilled and educated people. In this category we didn't notice any marked gender asymmetry in favor of one sex. Male managers were more numerous in dismissed group only because they dominated in this category of employees.

Thus, we make a conclusion that employment has similar scale of hitting men and women belonging to the same educational group, however, it expands more intensively among working population with lower level of education. In general, female workers in Kirovsky plant are less confident in retention of their position (64.0%) as compared to male workers (31.0%). Situation in Era is totally different: 62.0% - women, 65.0% - men. One can assume that this evident difference in answers of the two examined enterprises is rooted in specific economic situation of an individual enterprise. At the moment of conducting a survey Kirovsky plant was economically viable and profitable enterprise while Era was close to bankruptcy liquidation. In our opinion, employees in Era had no grounds to speak about any discrimination against women, i. e. under bankruptcy process male and female working population had equal conditions. In case with Kirovsky plant we consider that respondents' opinions signal definite gender differences. Economically viable enterprises tend to dismiss primarily women. In Kirovsky plant the amount of female employees expecting dismissal in downsizing twice as much as the number of men with similar opinion (Table 2).

**Table 2: Distribution of answers to the question: “Is there a possibility for you to lose job in the nearest future because of downsizing or liquidation of the enterprise?” %**

	<i>Kirovsky plant</i>		<i>Era</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Very likely	9.0	5.0	16.0	32.0
There is some probability	23.0	59.0	49.0	30.0
Unlikely	50.0	16.0	7.3	8.2
I wouldn't know	18.0	20.0	28.0	30.0
Total	100.0		100.0	

It ought to be noted that women are more geared to retain their positions than men. Our analysis illustrates that 29.0% of female – against 15.0% of male workers at Kirovsky plant, as well as 19.0% of female –against 12.0% of male workers at Era are prepared to change their profession or qualification in order to retain employed in the enterprise. Probably, men are more optimistic about their further job placement (including similar position and qualification) than women. This only acknowledges above mentioned trend for employers to always prefer male workers. It is especially true for private sector of economy with a higher standard of wages. However, a big amount of both men and women are ready to actively look for a new job. Above 60.0% of employees in Kirovsky plant and about 50.0% of that in Era are bound to look for a new job outside the enterprise

Average monthly salary for women in industrial sector in reforming Russia was significantly lower than that of men with this disparity tending to increase. While in early 1990s a monthly salary of women amounted to 60.0%-70.0% of that of men, in 1999, according to general state statistics, it decreased to 52.0% (Воронина О.А (Ed.), 2001, p.224).

Statistical analysis of average monthly salary in military-industrial complex enterprises confirms the fact of women being paid less than men within the same category of employees (Table 3).

**Table 3: Pay disparity per gender in *Era***

Category of employees	Average salary, RUR			
	1996		2002	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managers	679.8	630.3	3475.8	2417.4
Specialists	269.9	265.9	1982.8	2043.2
Other employees	-	261.1	-	1321,8
Workers	279.0	158.0	1847.4	1314.2

### 3.2 Chances for managerial career

During post-Soviet reforming period Russian women in military complex were practically not involved in decision-making. This is true for all kinds of enterprises regardless of their size and forms of ownership. Women could realize the general advantage of priority in their level of education only in part: their substantial part worked as workers and specialists accumulated on the lowest positions dealing with paper work and data preparation. We analyzed the statistical data on women representation in categories of employees in the enterprises examined (Table 4).

**Table 4: Distribution of women among categories of employees in military sector enterprises in 2002, %**

Category of employees	Number of women		
	<i>KOMP</i>	<i>Era</i>	<i>Kirovsky plant</i>
Managers	4.3	6.7	2.8
Specialists	21.8	18.0	10.1
Other employees	2.4	1.8	0.6
Workers	27.4	26.7	22.6
Total	55.9	53.2	36.1

Source: Author (based on statistical data of enterprises)

The table clearly shows that in all of three enterprises regardless of their economic situation women are presented in the occupational groups more or less equally. The majority are among workers and specialists.

The percentage of women-managers is much lower. We may conclude that the general tendency for women to be taken out of decision-making sphere is true for the military sector in a given period.

The main reason of this disparity is in a woman social positioning in general. Historically, women in Russia played a minor role in all spheres including work that go beyond family. This specific attitude is imposed by men. Many employers assume that women are less productive as workers than men. These secondary research analysis shows that more than half of employers believe that the burden of family responsibilities lowers the value of women labor force. Our questionnaire for managers included some issues of women managerial career prospects (Table 5).

**Table 5: Managers' opinions about a woman's effectiveness as an administrator, %**

Answer choice	<i>Era</i>		<i>Kirovsky plant</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Man	48.0	59.0	85.0	33.0
Woman	24.0	18.0	6.0	-

Results indicate that the majority of managers prefer men as administrators. In *Kirovsky plant* 75.0% of respondents (85.0% - male and 33.0% - female) and in *Era* 61.7% of respondents (48.0% - male and 59.0% - female) believe that men are more effective as managers. Woman – administrator is highly appreciated by 24.0% of men and 18.0% of women in *Era* and 6.0% of men and no one of women in *Kirovsky plant*. The results indicate that women themselves value their role as managers even lower than men. Probably, women examined are just less self-confident than men. The experts were also asked to indicate the reasons impeding woman's managerial career. A great part of respondents gave the following as the main reasons: "having children and dependents" (50.0% in *Kirovsky plant* and 57.4% in *Era*). Then followed: "lack of self-confidence" (22.5% and 17.0% accordingly), "being a woman" (20.0% and 17.0%), "lack of knowledge and skills" (25.0% and 10.6%). Among female respondents in *Kirovsky plant* "lack of self-confidence" is indicated by 50% and "being a woman" - by 25%. No respondents gave such reasons as "having children and dependents" or "lack of knowledge and skills". In *Era* the reasons were graded by women as: "lack of knowledge and skills" - 29.0%, "having children and dependents" - 29.0%, "being a woman" - 29.0%, "lack of self-confidence" - 14.0%.

It is worth mentioning that, just insignificant part of respondents – managers recognize the fact of discrimination against women when appointing to the managerial posts - 7.5% and 25.5% of all respondents in the examined enterprises (Table 6).

**Table 6: Managers' opinions about discrimination against women in military sector enterprises, %**

Do you consider that there is any discrimination against women when appointing to the managerial posts in your enterprise?	Managers in <i>Kirovsky plant</i>	Managers in <i>Era</i>
Yes, women are unfairly ignored when appointing to the managerial posts	7.5	25.5
Women themselves are disinclined to hold managerial posts	55.0	42.6
Women have less talent for management	12.5	-
Women have no talent for management at all	-	-
Women should give more consideration to families	45.0	34.0
Your variant	-	6.3

As far as female managers are concerned, 100.0% of respondents in *Kirovsky plant* and 38.0 % in *Era* consider that "women themselves are disinclined to hold managerial posts". No one of women-managers in *Kirovsky plant* mentioned that "women are unfairly ignored when appointing to the managerial posts" whereas in *Era* such an answer was chosen by 21.0% of female respondents and 22.0% of male respondents. Hence, a fact of discrimination against women in a given enterprise is acknowledged by its managers.

The respondents were also asked to select from the list of "personal qualities more typical for female managers than for male managers". The choices in *Kirovsky plant* and in *Era* were (accordingly): "commitment" (65.0% and 61.7%), "concern for subordinates" (47.5% and 63.8%), and "honesty" (37.5% and 38.3%). From "qualities contributing to a woman's managerial career" the respondents chose "being obliging and responsible" (57.5% and 40.4%) and "being communicable and friendly" (35.0% and 40.4%). The results of the questionnaire generally show that male respondents are much more than female

respondents interested in promotion and professional development. We analyzed the proportion of male and female managers in the examined enterprises and revealed the significant prevalence of male managers (for instance, 92.5% of all managers in *Kirovsky plant*) over female ones. In our opinion, women are not motivated to strive for promotion and any managerial career as they probably have realistic vision of their chances to be appointed. It is a remarkable fact that 100.0% of male respondents admit that “women are unfairly ignored when appointing to the managerial posts”.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Data analysis in this research revealed common trends for dominant reduction in female work force in all examined military industrial enterprises. During the period reviewed women in all three enterprises were more often dismissed in downsizing than men. Generally, it ought to be noted that a big number of dismissed men were not satisfied with salary and professional status. A number of women dismissed for these reasons were significantly less. Job security is, probably, a much more important factor for women than for men. Women proved to be more tolerant to issue of salary and professional status. Career prospects for managerial positions in this industrial sector are not high. At the same time women tend to appraise men’s managerial skills higher than women’s. Still, women in all considered categories are generally more responsible and disciplined. Among employees dismissed for different violations of labor discipline men dominate.

Economic reforms in Russia in 1990s turned out to be disastrous for women working as engineers and specialists in different spheres as well as for skillful workers engaged in industry. Impact of these reforms in military industrial complex was even stronger. Massive laying off in managerial staff at lower levels (female employment here accounted to 60.0%), radical curtailing of R&D institutions which traditionally employed a big number of educated female workforce contributed to the aggravation of situation in female employment. Educated skillful women were forced to apply for lower positions in service industry, mainly trade, which did not require their skills and experience. In addition, these jobs were mainly temporary and unstable. My further target is to investigate into the current human capital state in several military industrial complex enterprises in Russia to trace and analyze the changes taken place during the decade.

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