

Women Workers and Labor Competitions in Poland, 1949

Translated by Malgorzata Fidelis

J. Musialkowski, "The Warsaw Women-Masons Do Not Give in to Men: Female Teams Achieved 11, 314 Bricks and 74 Square Meters of Plaster"

Source: Trybuna Ludu [People's Tribune], 6 July 1949

Yesterday, the developments under construction at Mlynów and Mirow became a site of brand-new records in masonry and plastering. This time, these are records by women. Women masons and plasterers, who work in PPB BOR [state construction company in Warsaw] and who had been trained by the foremen of this company, undertook a labor competition yesterday with the goal of enhancing women's teams' output and establishing female labor records.

They began breaking records immediately on the first day, since yesterday every result has already been a record. Starting today, however, in order to break new records, it's necessary to improve constantly the impressive—for women—results of work from the previous days.

The work competition was joined by a three-women team from Mlynów: ... Antonina Traczyk and two helpers – Irena Koziol and Kazimiera Wysocka. Traczyk has already worked as a mason for three years, but the others have only been working for several months. Through this "struggle against the norm" – since they don't have any other competitor at this point – just on the first day they achieved results of 74 square meters of plaster, higher than the average output of a male mason's triple (this corresponds to 799% of the one mason's norm).

"This is only the beginning," they say one after the other. "In a few weeks, we will be making as much as a good male team."

And today they are already working like men. The Plaster made by Traczyk, Wysocka and Koziol is as good as the one made by men. This was the unanimous assessment of the special construction Commission and the Labor Union of Construction Workers.

In the hall of the PPB BOR on Mirow – despite the lunch break in a regular workday – joyous couples are dancing.

"These are our women-masons," explains the manager, comrade Sobiesiak, "who show the world that despite starting independent work today on men's norms and men's wages, they are not tired at all."

Like their women-friends from Mlynów, the nine women at Mirow started their work competition yesterday without any competitor – because there is no other female team with which to compete.

“Our opponent,” they agreed, “is the previous day’s result. Every day we want to place at least one brick more than we did the day before.”

For Genowefa Michalek, Teodora Golecka, and Janina Adamczyk, yesterday’s attempt was at the same time the commission’s exam for becoming independent masons.

The exam went successfully. With their six assistants, ... working with a three-way conveyor-belt system¹ they placed 11, 314 bricks, ... within 7 hours of work. This was over 1000 bricks per team member. No male team would be ashamed of this kind of result.

This result, achieved only one day after becoming independent from their male teachers, had to be celebrated properly. No wonder that the dances – which had ceased after the lunch break– resumed after work and lasted well into the evening.

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¹ A typical method of construction work under Stalinism, in which two assistants were supplying and passing the bricks to the brick-layer. This allowed for the brick-layer to work faster.