Housewives' Brigade (January 1960)

Abstract

In the fall of 1958, in the face of a workers' shortage in the GDR, the SED started a propaganda campaign to form "housewives' brigades" throughout the GDR. The initiative, which existed until 1962-63, was supposed to encourage housewives to take up part-time employment and to renounce their pure housewifely existence, which was labeled as bourgeois. Housewives' brigades were sent to work in nearly all sectors of the GDR economy, and they were supposed to prove that household responsibilities were thoroughly compatible with participation in the build-up of socialism. Their work was either voluntary or poorly paid. The Democratic Women's League of Germany [*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* or DFD] was responsible for the creation and organization of the brigades.

The housewives' brigades were among the most important mobilization initiatives of the DFD, and their work was featured in propaganda efforts. The caption reads, "Housewives' brigades were crucial for permanent employment. Inspired by their work in a housewives' brigade, many women in Brandenburg decided to pursue permanent employment in industry. Out of one DFD housewives' brigade sent to the Brandenburg steelworks (12 members), 10 women joined in the work process and now work half days. Their children are cared for in the on-site day care center. In the photo: Elisabeth Däubert and Hilde Grassau work as keypunch operators in the Aritma steelworks. Here, they pause for breakfast at their work station."

Source

Source: Photographer: Martin Schmidt / Zentralbild © Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-69945-0003

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