

Internal Borders: Migration Regulation in Soviet-Era Moscow

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Moscow, like other urban centers in today's Russia, is the labor destination of millions of migrants from the former Soviet Union. They disproportionately work in low-status positions and are the target of restrictive state policy. However, this phenomenon is not new. Like their contemporary, international counterparts, internal migrants in the Soviet era often did not arrive bearing the same rights as long-term urban citizens. How did the Soviet state mark these "outsiders" and administer their migration, settlement, and return? What implications do these practices have for the development of hierarchies and distinction among citizens? This project focuses on a period when the Soviet state was able to use its growing infrastructural power and moral campaigns to create a lasting formal and cultural distinction between rural migrants and urban residents in major cities - the 1960s to 1991, the collapse of the Soviet state. It uses municipal archival materials and state documents to follow Moscow's street-level bureaucrats from the 1960s to 1980s as they managed temporary rural migrant laborers in a city that strictly circumscribed access to residency, work, and welfare. The project sheds light on the processes that give borders practical importance and that create lasting distinctions among citizens, regardless of their internal or international character.