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REVIEW
KAROLINA BACA-POGORZELSKA, TOMASZ JODŁOWSKI,
“LADIES ON SHIFTS”

I recently bought a book under the title of “Ladies on shifts”. The author of this unusual reportage, Karolina Baca-Pogorzelska, originally not interested in mining, gradually become fascinated by it, captivated by the atmosphere surrounding miners, atmosphere created by unusual people, between whom there is some kind of unique brotherhood. While reading this report we feel the passion with which the book heroes – women working in the mining industry – approach their work. The author, in collaboration with photographer Tomasz Jodłowski, presents the Silesian women miners working in the coal mines. It is a book about women, but addressed not to women only.

In a dynamic, though a little chaotic way, the book describes the problems of women who work in a profession and a place that for years had been reserved exclusively for men. The stereotypes they have to break each day help the female-miners become a little less exotic phenomenon than before. The determination of some of the book heroes leads them to hold high positions, such as the deputy minister of economy, responsible for mining, the vice-chairman of a big mine or a founder of Europe’s first trade union for women working in mining.

Among the many questions the book poses the most important one seems to be whether every woman is suited for this profession? The answer seems to be obvious, although many young ladies, educated adepts of this profession, may not be aware of it.

The book also shows beautiful and rich traditions of the mining profession. Cherishing those traditions is not unique to the Silesians, they however give these traditions a new family and generational character.

The book was published by the publishing house Tartak Wyraków. This is the second book of Karolina Baca-Pogorzelska (after “Drugie życie kopalń” – “Second life of mines”), journalist associated with the “Rzeczpospolita” journal. Beautiful, expressive photographs of Tomasz Jodłowski show another, a more subtle face of mining.