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WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE SOVIETISATION PROCESS IN UKRAINIAN VILLAGES IN THE 1920S AND 1940S IN TERMS OF REGIONAL PECULIARITIES

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The so-called “woman’s issue” within the Marxist concept of gender equality has at its basis been an important part of Bolshevik state policy since the beginning of its establishment. The Bolshevik Party has involved women in its active social and political life, thus, significantly expanding its social base. The very fact of raising this issue at the state level contributed to strengthening its authority, both within the state and on the international arena. With the help of professional manipulation of the slogans on gender equality and female emancipation, the government successfully mobilised women’s potential for solving numerous important tasks such as the elimination of illiteracy, collectivisation, the reconstruction of the wrecked economy after the war, and the process of Sovietisation of the incorporated territories.

Nowadays, we observe significant development of the topic of gender egalitarianism, both in the field of scientific research and at the level of public discussion. Gender democracy is one of the axiological foundations of the modern European community and is actively implemented in Ukraine. However, it should be noted that its initiation in the post-Soviet space has its peculiarities focused on both the national realities and historical experience of the Soviet past. The package of legislative initiatives to establish equal rights for women and men, approved by the Bolshevik government ruled by Vladimir Lenin, was clearly progressive. Women acted as one of the societal groups in establishing and developing party-state power institutions. A study of the process of Sovietisation in terms of the peculiarities of gender relations will allow us to analyse

its components deeper and more objectively; and to explore the goals, forms and ways that the Bolshevik authorities involved different population groups (firstly, women) in its implementation.

The gender aspect of the Bolshevik authorities' state policy is the subject of a study by a number of foreign and Ukrainian researchers. Considering the 1920s from the angle of the ruling party's emancipatory project, Maryna Voronina believes that "the drastic changes in the position of women became one of the components of this period"¹ Announcing the significant positive changes in providing women with broad civil rights, scholars highlight that "the Soviet government headed by Lenin never intended to create a state of gender equality";² as well as "Instead of trying to appease women by reforms, he actually wanted to turn women into ardent defenders of the new order to prevent them from undermining the men's revolutionary ideals"³ Despite the traditionally passive civic position of women the Bolsheviks were aware of the importance of their potential impact on the younger generation. That is why, as noted by Barbara Evans Clements, solving the women's issue was considered by them as "the chance to form a generation which places the good of the collective above all else"⁴ The vast majority of the researchers on this question believe that the years of Stalin's rule "have become a period of rigid economic mobilisation of women";⁵ as well as "the creation of a new Soviet woman",⁶ who was supposed to embody the features of the character and the types of behaviour imposed by Stalin's propaganda as the basic characteristics of the "true Soviet collective farmer", "worker", "Komsomol", and so on. Richard Stites emphasises that the authorities aimed "to draw woman directly into the work of liberation; to make her a subject rather than an object"⁷

The specifics of women's practices that were directed at adapting to the conditions of the post-war Sovietisation process of the Ukrainian SSR's western regions are disclosed in various aspects in the works by Galyna Starodubets,⁸ Ruslana Popp⁹ and Galyna Chorniy.¹⁰

¹ M. Voronina, "Bilshovytskyi emansypatsiynyi eksperyment u 1920-kh rokakh" [in:] *Ukrainski zhinky u hornyli modernizatsii* (Kharkiv: Klub simeinoho dozvillia, 2017), p. 106.

² Eadem, "«Novaadianska zhinka»: henderna polityka radianskoi vlady u 1930-kh rokakh" [in:] *Ukrainski zhinky u hornyli modernizatsii*, p. 154.

³ A. Shuster, "Women's Role in the Soviet Union: ideology and reality", *The Russian Review* July 1971, vol. 30 (3), p. 261.

⁴ S. Ashwin, *Gender, state, and society in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia* (London–New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 6.

⁵ N. Pushkareva, "Hendernaia systema Sovetskoi Rossy i sudby rossyianok", *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 2012, no. 5, pp. 8–23.

⁶ T. Cyril Amar, "Sovietization with a Woman's Face: Gender and the Social Imaginary of Sovietness in Western Ukraine", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 2016, Vol. 64, H. 3, p. 364.

⁷ R. Stites, "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women, 1917–1930", *Russian History* 1976, vol. 3, Issue 2, p. 185.

⁸ G. Starodubets, "Henderni stratehii bilshovytskoi vlady v umovakh radianizatsii zakhidnykh oblastei Ukrainy ta Bilorusii v 1944–1946 rr." [in:] *Naukovi zapysky natsionalnoho universytetu «Ostrozka akademiia»*, Series: *Istorychni nauky*, Vyp. 27 (Ostroh, 2018), pp. 270–275.

⁹ R. Popp, "Ideological-propaganda policy of the soviet system in the Western regions of Ukraine in 1944–1953 (according to the materials of Drohobych region)", *Drohobyt'skyi kraieznavchyi zbirnyk* 2018, Vyp. 8, p. 147.

¹⁰ H. Chornii, "Rol zhinotstva v konteksti utverdzhennia radianskoi vlady na terytorii zakhidnykh oblastei URSR (seredyna 1940-kh – pochatok 1950-kh.)" [in:] *Teoriia i praktyka suchasnoi nauky. Materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii (m. Dnipro, 24–25 liutoho 2017 roku)*, Vyp. 2 (Kherson, 2017), pp. 14–17.

The subject of their research is, in particular, the activities of women's councils in the Lviv, Drohobych and Ternopil regions in 1944–1949. The overwhelming majority of researchers agree that these organisations were not public since they were subjected to “total party control”,¹¹ rather these were “special bodies aimed to attract women to active social and political life”.¹² A precise analysis of the ways and methods of their creation allowed the scientists to conclude that “it was evident that situational compulsions rather than any ideological or revolutionary commitment brought women into politics during the Stalin period”.¹³ A woman searching for a survival strategy was made to adapt to new political conditions and to adjust her behavioural model to the demands of the totalitarian Stalinist government. Analysing the emancipation of the soviet woman, Barbara Evans Clements emphasises that it “was a remedy, not a product of the construction of communism, as the essence of communism was not technology and social organization, but a transformed individual”.¹⁴

The purpose of our article is to show the methods and forms of women's involvement in the process of Sovietisation in Ukrainian villages during the 1920s in Volyn, and in the western regions of Ukraine during the period of late Stalinism. The comparative analysis method was used in this investigation.

Since the process of “Sovietisation” is a subject of our analysis we consider it necessary to give a definition of this term. In the scientific literature it is usually used to define the “violent transformations in the conditions of the territorial expansion of the totalitarian USSR which included the formation of one-party power, nationalisation, industrialisation, collectivisation and mass repression”,¹⁵ as well as the extortionate “transfer of Soviet and specifically Stalinist models in politics, the economy, and culture”.¹⁶ The Polish researcher Albin Glavatsky emphasises that the policy of Sovietisation was aimed so to “forcibly impose systemic changes (social, economic, political and cultural), and also to perform an ideological experiment”,¹⁷ which had to be resulted in the birth of a new type of a person – a “Soviet” person. Thus, the process of Sovietisation “a priori” was violent and aimed at destroying the old state system and in parallel at establishing new state and power institutions.

¹¹ H. Chornii, “Diiialnist zhinochykh rad Lvivshchyn v seredyni 1940-kh – pershii polovyni 1950-kh rokov”, *Molodyi vchenyi* 2017, no. 3 (43), p. 202.

¹² G. Starodubets, “Women's experience of participation in the process of the sovietization in the western regions of Ukraine in the conditions of Stalin's regime”, *East European Historical Bulletin* 2019, Issue 10, p. 174.

¹³ K.B. Usha, “Political Empowerment of Women in Soviet Union and Russia: Ideology and Implementation”, *International Studies* 2005, vol. 42, no. 2, p. 149.

¹⁴ B. Evans Clements, “The Utopianism of the Zhenotdel”, *Slavic Review* 1992, vol. 51, no. 3, p. 494.

¹⁵ K. Bek, “Vidnovlennia stalinskoï systemy v poviennii URSR”, *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2012, no. 4, pp. 136–138.

¹⁶ T. Cyril Amar, “Sovietization with a Woman's Face”, p. 365.

¹⁷ A. Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1941* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1997), p. 15.

THE BOLSHEVIK'S GENDER POLICY IN THE EARLY YEARS OF SOVIET POWER

The first years of Soviet power in Ukraine were accompanied by a sharp armed civil opposition determined by its policy and aimed at destroying the traditional Ukrainian village community. Without any party powerful support of the policy, the Bolsheviks tried to expand their social basis with the help of separate layers and categories of the population. Thus women became an object of their special attention. The task was set to “increase the activity of women in the struggle of the working class for socialism, to put this force into action using the later (Stalinist rhetoric)”.¹⁸

In October 1919, “women’s departments” (Russian: “Zhenotdely”), within the party organisations, were created and a special state apparatus for working with women was founded – the “women’s councils” (Russian: “Zhensoviety”). They aimed to provide a process for involving women in social, political, cultural, educational and other spheres of life with a clear structure and organisation. In the autumn of 1919, Inessa Armand became the first head of the Department of Women’s Affairs. After her death, the department was headed by Aleksandra Kollontai, and then by Konkordiya Samoilo. “Zhensoviety” and “Zhenotdely” aimed to draw the women into public and political space, “to the production process in industry and the large collective farming, to use women’s labor for the help of the party and government in performing the next tasks”.¹⁹ The above mentioned organisations were based on the principles of the delegation of women from certain social groups (women-peasants, female workers, female collective farmers, housewives, and so on).

Through the “Zhenotdely” the government “tried to bring women into the revolutionary process and foster their equality in public and private lives through its various networks, created as part of party units”.²⁰ They were created at all levels of the Soviet government and in each district, city and the party’s regional committee there were separate officers responsible for working with women. Different reasons for the creation of the “Zhenotdely” have been proposed, mentioning that “on the one hand, these organizations were engaged in protecting the interests of women and on the other hand, they brought communist ideas into the consciousness of Soviet women”.²¹ These researchers do not reject the positive role that was played in defending women’s rights and their release from the patriarchal way of life. However, they note that “Zhenotdely” “served the regime as a whole by helping to create new reserves of skilled and politically conscious labor”.²² The Bolsheviks saw their main task as the re-education or education

¹⁸ N. Pushkareva, “Hendernaia systema Sovetskoi Rossyy i sudby rossyianok”, p. 8.

¹⁹ The State Archives of Zhytomyr Oblast (hereinafter: SAZhR), fund R.327, Korosten district executive committee of the Soviets of workers, peasants and Red army deputies, Korosten. Korosten distr.1, file 488, pp. 1–2.

²⁰ K.B. Usha, “Political Empowerment of Women in Soviet Union and Russia”, p. 147.

²¹ N. Korshunova, V. Plotnikova, *Transformation of state policy Soviet Union on the problem status of women in social and public-political field* (The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (The Presidential Academy, RANEP), 2016), vol. 4, p. 56.

²² R. Stites, “Zhenotdel”, p. 189.

of a woman as a new “Soviet woman”. So, they actively used the rhetoric of “liberating a woman from the dictates of everyday life, husband, father, brother”. The precise term “the new Soviet man/woman” would appear a little bit later in the middle of the 1930s but the very idea of creating a new type of a man/woman appeared in communists’ propaganda right after the October revolution.

The years of the so-called “cultural revolution” marked the activation of the state policy on the solution of the “women’s issue”. “On the background of the generally low level of education among women the issue of active propaganda campaigns among women was really crucial, so that they clearly understood the party’s policy, its goals and objectives”.²³ The ways of involvement of Volyn women with the Bolshevik Party was a separate issue that was raised during one of the meetings of women’s organisations in the district. The problem was as follows: “almost all workers were involved in agricultural activities, so there was a task to encourage to work the poorest peasants, who didn’t have any property and were illiterate”.²⁴

In order to eliminate illiteracy among the population generally and women, in particular, the Bolshevik Soviet authorities initiated the creation of an entire network of different types of training courses in schools for social education (*likneps*). Special attention was drawn to villages as they had the lowest literacy level. The “Zhensoviety” became one of the institutions entrusted with the duty to examine the issue of “involving women especially in cultural and social matters (school, household, sanitation, reading houses, organisation and care nurseries, etc.)”. They were offered to join the local departments of the “Inspectorate of Education” and the “Stop Illiteracy” society, so as to provide the conditions for the full implementation of the plan to eliminate illiteracy among women’s *likneps*. Thus achieving an increase in the percentage of women to up to 50% of the total number of pupils in the *likneps*. Moreover, they proclaimed the necessity to “involve broadly the working women in the campaign for the normal attendance of schools by children and the opening of self-paid courses for workers and peasants in preparation for professional schools (vocational schools) and universities”.²⁵ Given the difficult demographic situation caused by the consequences of prolonged armed confrontations spread through Volyn during from 1914 and into the 1920s, the “Zhenotdely” organised the custody of many orphans in several waves. Local Soviet authorities in Volyn practiced “the transfer of children from orphanages to agricultural communes and artels for labor education” starting from the second half of the 1920s.²⁶ Thus, as correctly noted by Maryna Voronina, “the authorities sought to completely replace not only purely feminist organisations but also charitable and educational women’s associations with the help of the ‘Zhenotdely’”.²⁷

The broad involvement of women in the governance process was an important aspect of the Bolshevik’s gender policy. Women’s presence in Soviet power institutions and party

²³ M. Voronina, “«Nova radianska zhinka»”, p. 132.

²⁴ The Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine (hereinafter: CSAPOU), fund 1, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, distr. 20, file 2951, p. 29.

²⁵ SAZhR, fund R.277, Volyn Regional Statistical Bureau, distr. 98, file 98, p. 112.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ M. Voronina, “Bilshovytskyi emansypatsiyni eksperyment u 1920-kh rokakh”, p. 115.

committees obviously increased. On the one hand, the percentage increase of women in the Bolshevik Soviet authorities should have been a confirmation of Vladimir Lenin's thesis that "no state and no democratic legislation has done for women even a half of what the Soviet authorities did in the first months of their existence".²⁸ However, on the other hand, the statistic proves that in reality the number of female managers remained insignificant. Such situation was common both at the level of the republic and in local government (village councils, departments of the district executive committees, and so on). According to official sources, "in autumn 1928 there were 8.4% women among the members of district committees (*raikom*) of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CP(b)U), 5.5% – in the raikom bureau, 12.2% – in the county party committee (OPK), in the OPK bureau – 4.2%". Moreover, to improve the official statistics local officials "often reported on achievement in assigning women for managing positions the information about those who, in fact, performed as the heads of orphanages, kindergartens, sellers, etc."²⁹

The main reason for this situation was that the vast majority of women did not show a desire to move out from their usual "comfort zone" delineated by their everyday life role. Mostly, they even "did not care about the meetings initiated by the village council and refused to attend them"³⁰ On the other hand, in spite of the loud declarations of equality of women and men, in practice an activist woman faced outright gender discrimination. This was manifested in the fact that "the kulaks frankly laughed at the female representatives and the village council did not pay any attention to them, as well";³¹ there was "systematic discrediting of female labour in the councils by the kulaks and various hostile elements".³² Often "it was noted that the women were not used in councils for the field that would provide the greatest benefit in the work of the village. There was an underestimation of female labour in councils and a conservative view of a woman as a council worker".³³ There was a widespread tendency for the representatives of local authorities of "kind and ironic attitude to both, women officials and their work".³⁴ It was widespread for men to forbid their wives "to attend meetings and various village councils".³⁵

The manifestations of such an attitude towards women were often criticised in public on the pages of newspapers and in the speeches of Party and Soviet officials, thus demonstrating state support for the women's movement. The state took over the paternalistic custody of a woman "which was suppressed during tsarist times and at the present moment becomes more cultural from year to year".³⁶ Inspired by the Bolsheviks' propaganda slogans about the "bright collective farm future" the village female activists believed absolutely sincerely in the fact that "under the leadership of the party and the

²⁸ V. Lenin, "Mezhdunarodnyi den rabotnyts" [in:] *Polnoe sobranie sochyneni*, vol. 42 (Moskva, 1970), p. 369.

²⁹ CSAPOU, fund 1, distr. 20, file 2951, pp. 30–31.

³⁰ SAZHR, fund R.327, distr. 1, file 353, p. 32.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ CSAPOU, fund 1, distr. 20, file 2951, p. 24.

³⁵ SAZHR, fund R.327, distr. 1, file 353, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

Soviet power the remains of capitalism will be overcome and socialism with its full emancipation of women will be established".³⁷

The topic of active involvement of women in the process of Sovietisation of Ukrainian villages continued to remain relevant during the second half of the 1920s. The issue of women's participation in the social and political life of the rural community was the subject of discussion at numerous meetings of party and executive committees of district councils. As a result of the Bolshevik Soviet authorities' increased attention to the activities of "Zhensoviety" and female representatives during 1927–1929, one can observe the increased presence of women in: "village councils, in particular, Korostishivska district – from 11.7% to 20.4%, in town councils – from 14.7% to 29.3%, in the city council – from 20% to 26.8%".³⁸ In 1929 in Ukraine there were: "348 women as Heads of village councils. 20 of them were leading village councils in Volyn district".³⁹

However, the statistics of the positive dynamics of women's participation in local authorities is not a real indicator of their increasing socio-political activity and, moreover, their role in the process of making important decisions of state importance. We share the opinion of Nataliya Pushkareva that: "[...] the process of state mobilisation of women in the service of Soviet construction in Soviet historiography was idealised and considered to be the emancipation of women and the solution of the 'women's issue', while those who elected and those who were elected could not make a determinative influence on the process of making political decisions".⁴⁰

Usually they were an instrument in the hands of the Bolshevik Party which skilfully used them to realise its political ambitions. In the conditions of the Ukrainian village in the late 1920s it was most obviously depicted in terms of "political and agricultural campaigns – grain procurement, sowing campaign, collectivisation, greed elimination".⁴¹

In the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Byelorussia (CP(b)B) as of 15 June 1929 on the tasks of the party regarding women's labour it was clearly stated: "Since the work of female peasants in a number of agricultural branches is prevailing, the Central Committee strongly emphasises that the success of the party's work in the socialist reconstruction of the village will depend on the deployment of the work on organising and activating the female peasants".⁴²

The Bolsheviks's experience of using women in the process of agricultural collectivisation gained from the late 1920s to the beginning of the 1930s, was successfully used by them in the second half of the 1940s in the western Ukrainian region.

In the second half of the 1920s the Bolshevik authorities tried to perform the policy of Sovietisation not only with repressive instruments but also with more lenient and liberal methods. To accomplish this task, political and ideological resources were mobilised: the distribution of various kinds of printed agitation materials, the regular meetings of

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, file 488, p. 2.

³⁹ CSAPOU, fund 1, distr. 20, file 2951, p. 11.

⁴⁰ N. Pushkareva, "Hendernaia systema Sovetskoi Rossii i sudby rossyianok", p. 18.

⁴¹ SAZHR, fund R.327, distr. 1, file 488, p. 2.

⁴² CSAPOU, fund 1, distr. 20, file 3115, p. 6.

different social groups with party leaders and campaigners present there, and so on. The pages of Volyn newspapers often contained articles with attractive titles “What are the rights of peasant women?”⁴³ “Girl, join the Comsomol”,⁴⁴ “From the oven and diapers to community labor”.⁴⁵ Such articles covered the topics of necessity to include peasants to activities in community. The pages of the newspapers often contained information about the meetings of women activists in a particular village. For example, in the article “The peasant is involved in community labour” it is precisely described how the activist women of Olevsk village “discuss all rural issues, in particular, the problem of opening a care nursery”.⁴⁶

The “Zhenotdely” in Volyn became one of the important components of these political and ideological resources. The focus of female activists’ propaganda efforts was, firstly, “the task of working for a massive association of poor middle-aged farms in large groups starting with the initial forms of collective farms, gradually moving to higher ones”; secondly, “taking into account the large weight of state loans and savings for the country’s industrialisation to work on timely and complete collection of money and explaining to the peasantry the benefits of long-term bonds storage ‘on the hands’”; and thirdly, “to start work on the transition of the socialist competition in agriculture involving in this process collective farms, rural communities and whole village councils and the civil society in the village”.⁴⁷

Thus, the Bolshevik Party used women as the transmitters of its policy. The authorities tried to make women its allies, first of all, in the struggle against a wealthy peasantry by covering its policy with the slogans of gender equality, liberation of women from the “slavery of life”, and so on. Activist women were among the first to join the collective farms and actively campaigned among their fellow villagers. They were the initiators of social competition which became widespread in the 1930s. However, “Lenin’s policies did not produce the desired results to prove the Marxist theory that the liberation of women followed the liberation of the proletariat”.⁴⁸ The woman still remained outside the bounds of big politics. Even at the level of village or the district councils of workers’ deputies or the district committees of the Bolshevik Party women generally did not occupy leadership positions. Instead, they were the object of labour mobilisation by the state to implement the Stalinist program of forced industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture.

In the historiography of the “gender problems” of the Soviet state, the end of the 1920s is defined as an upper limit of the first period that “in the history of the situation of women in the Soviet and post-Soviet period”⁴⁹ (which is also called “Leninist”⁵⁰, or “Bolshevik”),

⁴³ *Radianska Volyn* 29 VII 1925, no. 170.

⁴⁴ *Radianska Volyn* 15 XI 1925, no. 243.

⁴⁵ *Radianska Volyn* 12 I 1927, no. 5.

⁴⁶ *Radianska Volyn* 31 III 1925, no. 72.

⁴⁷ SAZHR, fund R.327, distr. 1, file 353, p. 5.

⁴⁸ K.B. Usha, “Political Empowerment of Women in Soviet Union and Russia”, p. 148.

⁴⁹ N. Korshunova, V. Plotnikova, *Transformation of state policy Soviet Union on the problem status of women*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ K.B. Usha, “Political Empowerment of Women in Soviet Union and Russia”, p. 148.

“during which the women’s issue was solved through the political mobilisation of women”.⁵¹ “The year of the Great Fracture”⁵² laid the conditional beginning of the second (Stalinist) period of the development of the Bolshevik Soviet state from “the end of the 1920s – the middle of the 1950s”⁵³ and a drastic change in the direction of its gender policy. Its characteristic feature was the elimination of the “Zhenotdely” as separate organisations, “thus the Bolshevik game in liberal ‘Soviet feminism’ was finished”.⁵⁴

GENDER FACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF SOVIETISATION OF THE WESTERN REGIONS OF UKRAINE

The incorporation into the USSR of the western regions of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic countries and Moldova on the eve of the Second World War and in the first post-war decade led to the necessity to enact the Sovietisation of these territories. The tasks the Bolsheviks faced were similar to those they had faced in the 1920s. So, their pre-acquired experience formed the base of the policy pursued by the state in these regions during 1939 and then into the 1940s. The same as in the first decade of its reign, the Bolshevik Party once again “raised on the shield” the topic of the situation of women in the Soviet state. The importance and significance of this issue was evidenced by the fact that on 5 April 1945, the Central Committee of the CP(b)U adopted a special resolution: “On the labour among women of the western regions of Ukraine”, which “obliged the regional, city and district committees of the CP(b)U to create the delegates meetings or so-called institutes of the female delegates in all villages, collective farms, enterprises and structures”.⁵⁵ Six months later, on 18 December, a similar decision was taken by the bureau of the Central Committee of the CP(b)B that called for the necessity to “establish departments of work amongst women in district, city and regional committees of the Party of Western Belorussia and the Central Committee of the CP(b)B”.⁵⁶ In both cases, the procedure for the establishment of these women’s organisations was clearly defined.

The main content of the work of women’s departments was: “[...] the conducting of mass political and political-educational work among women, eliminating illiteracy among them; engaging women in the active work of civil society organisations, mobilising them for the successful performance of future party and government objectives; involving the broad masses of women in an active struggle with the Ukrainian-German nationalists, etc.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ N. Pushkareva, “Hendernaia sistema Sovetskoi Rossii i sudby rossyianok”, p. 19.

⁵² M. Malia, *Radianska trahediia: istoriia sotsializmu v Rosii 1917–1991* (Kyiv, 2000), p. 227.

⁵³ N. Korshunova, V. Plotnikova, *Transformation of state policy Soviet Union on the problem status of women*, p. 57.

⁵⁴ M. Voronina, “«Nova radianska zhinka»”, p. 137.

⁵⁵ *Litopys UPA*, New series, vol. 3 (Kyiv–Toronto, 2002), pp. 151–153.

⁵⁶ I. Nikolaeva, “Dokumenty zhenotdela TsK KP(b)B kak istochnik po istoriy poslevoennoi zhenskoi povsednevnosti” [in:] *Aktualnye problemy istochnykovedeniia: materyaly IV Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno prakticheskoi konferentsyi k 420-letiu darovaniia horodu Vytebsku mahdeburhskoho prava, Vytebsk, 20–21 apreliia 2017 h.* (Vytebsk: VHU imeni P.M. Masherova, 2017), p. 293.

⁵⁷ *Litopys UPA*, vol. 3, p. 152.

So, the same as before, the “Zhenotdely” were not considered to be civic organisations designed to lobby for the interests of women in the state’s policy, but as an additional instrument used by the Bolshevik Party in the process of the Sovietisation of the newly affiliated territories. They were responsible for the lion’s share of the responsibility for providing the social sphere of the local rural society’s life. In the villages rural female activists founded “circles to eliminate low literacy and illiteracy, checked the health status of the villages, organised the lectures for peasants on medicine, raised funds and products for orphanages”.⁵⁸ Often, they initiated campaigns “to rebuild the local school and provide it with fuel, repair orphanages, harvest in collective farms”.⁵⁹ After all, these organisations did not have any right to make independent decisions. Their activities were subordinated to and supervised by the district committees of the CP(b)U and were clearly regulated by a set of relevant party instructions and orders.

It is worth noting that the content of the tasks that the Bolshevik Party set for the “Zhenotdely” was determined by the essence of the Sovietisation policy. In the post-war period it underwent some adjustments compared to the 1920s. Stalinist propaganda emphasised the opposition of Sovietisation to “otherness” that was conditionally outlined in three positions: *the past of a region* that was a priori retarded and therefore needed to be overcome; as well as *“fascism*, as the highest level of the stage of imperialism and capitalism and *ethnic nationalism* which must be completely destroyed”.⁶⁰

The metaphor of the bright future of a Soviet woman, “cruelly exploited during the time of the lordly Poland”, was actively installed into conceptual discourse. In different variations this thesis sounded from the tribune of women’s meetings both at the Soviet republic and local levels, and appeared in numerous documents on guidance and methods in work with women’s audiences. For example, the participants of the regional meeting of women in Rivne turned to J. Stalin with a team letter expressing their gratitude for “the opening of even more magnificent prospects for a happy cultural and rich life”;⁶¹ the head of the Zhenotdel of the village Varkovychi of the Dubno district of the Rivne region in 1946 during her speech emphasised that “I began my happy life only in a collective farm”.⁶² As a result, there was a significantly important aspect of the work of the “Zhenotdely” in the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus. It was the involvement of women “who have only recently freed themselves from full economic, moral and political injustice” to active social and political activities by “awakening a creative initiative and political activity in them, thus ensuring their actual equality with men in all spheres of their lives”. The purpose of such activity was to educate “the feeling of true Soviet patriotism, a sense of loyalty to our homeland and the party of Lenin-Stalin in women”.⁶³

⁵⁸ The State Archives of Rivne Oblast (hereinafter: SARR), fund P.400, Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, distr. 3, file 76, p. 154.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁶⁰ T. Cyril Amar, “Sovietization with a Woman’s Face”, p. 367.

⁶¹ SARR, fund P.400, distr. 3, file 76, p. 96.

⁶² *Ibidem*, file 185, p. 138.

⁶³ G. Starodubets, “Henderni stratehii bilshovytskoi vlady v umovakh radianizatsii zakhidnykh oblastei Ukrainy”, p. 272.

“Playing” with the dichotomy “capitalism” – “socialism” – “lordly oppression” – “happy life in a collective farm”, Bolshevik propagandists methodically (including the active involvement of female assets) imposed on the people of the western regions of Ukraine a new matrix of moral imperatives. The introduction of a new (Soviet) way of life took place on a background of denial of previous experience as totally negative and inhuman. Lenin’s doctrines that: “women must be made aware of the political connection between communism and their own suffering, needs, and aspirations”,⁶⁴ continued to be proclaimed by party functionaries in terms of the implementation of the main components of gender policy. In this context, women were fairly expressive objects of influence because they were a bright example to illustrate the achievements of Soviet power in solving the “women’s issue”.

Another aspect of Sovietisation concerned the suppressing of a sense of national identity at the level of the population’s social consciousness in the newly-affiliated regions of the USSR. In the western regions of Ukraine, first of all, de facto it was about the struggle against the Ukrainian national liberation movement: “The participation of women was considered as agent work and public anti-propaganda of Ukrainian nationalism”.⁶⁵ This aspect of the activities of “the Zhenotdely” was strongly supported, stimulated and was under the control of the district and city committees of the party. The Bolshevik agitators referred to examples of the female activists’ post-war life. It was a compulsory element of every public speech especially to the rural audience. The most successful cases were when women themselves delivered the speeches.

As a rule, they appealed to the countrymen to support the Soviet government in the fight against the “Ukrainian-German bourgeois nationalists”. The participation of women was considered by the authorities not so much on the military aspect, but more due to the moral and psychological impact on the local population; for example: “[...] by conducting talks with female peasants about the withdrawal of their husbands and the sons of the hiding places. Thus, the head of ‘the Zhenotdel’ in the village, Miklashiv of the Novo-Yarychiv district of the Lviv region and comrade Luchenok A.F. through her women assets disclosed from their hiding places 48 bandits and deserters from the Soviet Army; Comrade Inkalska G., a collective farmer of the collective farm named after Lenin in Kamianka-Buzky district found the bandits who set fire to the collective farm”.⁶⁶

Similar cases were widespread on other western regions of Ukraine, in particular, the Stanislav region. In one of the reports of the CP(b)U regional committee to the Central Committee of the Party the participation of women “in the struggle with the remains of Ukrainian-German nationalists” is illustrated by examples from: “[the] village Oliiev-Korolivka of the Gorodenkiv district where a member of the Zhenotdel, Danyiuk Vasylyna, discovered the OUN underground organisation and arrested 28 members.

⁶⁴ A. Shuster, “Women’s Role in the Soviet Union”, p. 261.

⁶⁵ E. Petrenko, “Zony protivostoiania. Zhyzn i smert «vostochnyts» v poslevoennoi Zapadnoi Ukrainie” [in:] *Sovetskye natsyi i natsionalnaia politika v 1920–1950-e hody: Materyaly VI mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsyi. Kyev, 10–12 oktiabria 2013h* (Rossijskaia Politicheskaia entsyklopedyia, 2014), p. 419.

⁶⁶ The State Archives of Lviv Oblast, fund P. 3, distr. 2, file 107, p. 60.

Women from the village of Syrotyntsi informed the NKVD⁶⁷ bodies about their hiding places with sick and wounded bandits”⁶⁸

Such actions of women activists were widely discussed in the press, during numerous meetings of district party Soviet officials with different categories of the local population. Particular attention was drawn to the high level of civic consciousness and patriotism of a “true Soviet woman”. Actually, the authorities did not conceal that the main goal of state policy in the “women’s issue” is not the creation of conditions for the expression of women in various spheres of life, but more their involvement in the process of restoring/establishing Soviet power in the region and reformatting them into a “Soviet women” who should have become a source of “the spread of Sovietness” herself.⁶⁹

The so-called leading agriculture female workers (*stakhanovkas*), the Komsomols and Communists, as public activists became a peculiar installation of the image of a “new Soviet woman”. The authorities actively promoted their experience with the help of different instruments in the process of Sovietisation. In this way, women were not only propaganda actors but also objects and tools used by the Stalinist regime to incorporate the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR into the Soviet political, economic, cultural, educational, (and so on) space.

CONCLUSIONS

So, the topic of gender equality was an important component of the Sovietisation policy of the Ukrainian territories. During the 1920s and 1940s, Bolshevik propaganda actively exploited the slogan of equality in the rights of women and men, while filling it with real meaning.

Soviet government initiated different activities to involve women in all spheres of life. It was caused, on the one hand, by the necessity of their labour mobilisation in a difficult demographic situation, the expansion of the social base of support for the Bolshevik Party and, on the other hand, it promoted the USSR’s role in the international arena.

In terms of the implementation of the policy of gender equality proclaimed by Bolsheviks the so-called “Zhenotdely” were created in Russia immediately after the October revolution. The experience of their activities was transferred to Ukraine in the 1920s and after more than a decade pause was implemented in the western regions of Ukraine.

Due to the lack of alternative civil society institutions (for example, church, different women’s organisations), which were eliminated in Western Ukraine after the establishment of Soviet power there, local “Zhenotdely” had partially taken over their functions and run a number of important social spheres. For example, they were involved in the process of organising the basic teaching of adult literacy (including for women), arranging the custody of

⁶⁷ The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs was the leading Soviet secret police organisation from 1934 to 1946.

⁶⁸ The State Archives of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, fund P.1, distr. 1, file 339, p. 216.

⁶⁹ T. Cyril Amar, “Sovietization with a Woman’s Face”, p. 386.

orphans, organising help for rural widows and the poor, and so on. The residents of Ukrainian villages of the former Russian Empire had almost no experience of such self-organisation. Nevertheless, on the whole territory of Ukraine, the initiative to create the “Zhenotdely” was not directed “from below” but “from above” and their activities were fully controlled by the relevant Committees of the CP(b)U; these organisations ipso facto did not reflect the interests of civil society. However, the authorities in all possible ways aimed to show that they did.

Owing to the efforts of the Soviet leaders of the women's movement of the 1920s, a number of legislative initiatives were implemented in the USSR to overcome gender discrimination in the field of political and civil rights. In order to involve women in active socio-political and economic activities, the authorities declared expanding the range of social support for working women and mothers by opening a network of kindergartens, nurseries, for instance. However, the residents of Ukrainian villages did not feel supported either in the 1920s, or in the 1940s. Peasant women continued to bear the double burden of workload. Instead, Bolshevik propaganda actively exploited the social role image it formed – the image of the new Soviet woman, the “activist” and the “the leading agriculture female worker”.

Generally, the implementation of state gender policy in the Ukrainian regions during the period we defined was carried out in terms of the so-called socialist transformations and was aimed at establishing and legitimising Soviet power there.

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Women's Experience of Participation in the Sovietisation Process in Ukrainian Villages in the 1920s and 1940s in Terms of Regional Peculiarities

The article is devoted to an analysis of gender aspects of the Bolshevik authorities' state policy during the Sovietisation process of the Ukrainian regions immediately after the October Revolution in the 1920s, and of the Western regions of Ukraine in the first post-war years. The main forms and content of public and political activities of female peasants were determined by the comparative method.

The Soviet government initiated different activities to involve women in all spheres of life. It was caused, on the one hand, by the necessity of their labor mobilisation in a difficult demographic situation, the expansion of the social base of support for the Bolshevik Party and, on the other hand, it promoted the USSR's role in the international arena.

In terms of the implementation of the policy of gender equality proclaimed by the Bolsheviks, the so-called "Zhenotdely" were created in Russia in 1919. The experience of their activities was transferred to Ukraine in the 1920s and, after more than a decade's pause, it was implemented in the western regions of Ukraine.

Due to the lack of alternative civil society institutions, local "Zhenotdely" partially took over their functions and ran a number of important social spheres. Since the initiative to create "Zhenotdely" was not directed "from below" but "from above" and their activities were fully controlled by the relevant Committees of the CP(b)U, these organisations *ipso facto* could not reflect the interests of civil society.

Generally, the implementation of state gender policy in the Ukrainian regions during the period we defined was carried out in terms of the so-called socialist transformations and was aimed at establishing and legitimising Soviet power there.

KEYWORDS

gender policy, Sovietisation, Soviet authorities, "Zhenotdely", Bolsheviks, women's issues

Kobiety a doświadczenie uczestnictwa w procesie sowyetyzacji na ukraińskiej wsi w latach dwudziestych i czterdziestych: różnice regionalne

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie aspektów polityki gender bolszewickich władz państwowych podczas procesu sowyetyzacji regionów ukraińskich zaraz po rewolucji październikowej w latach dwudziestych oraz zachodnich obszarów Ukrainy we wczesnych latach powojennych. Metoda komparatywna pozwoliła ustalić główne formy i treści działań publicznych i politycznych chłopek ukraińskich. Władze radzieckie podejmowały

szereg działań mających włączyć kobiety w każdy obszar życia. Brało się to z jednej strony z konieczności zmobilizowania kobiet jako siły roboczej w trudnej sytuacji demograficznej i rozwijania społecznego poparcia dla partii bolszewickiej, a z drugiej również promowania roli ZSRR na arenie międzynarodowej. Dla wdrażania polityki równości płci głoszonej przez bolszewików w 1919 roku stworzono w Rosji instytucję tzw. Żenotdiełów. W latach dwudziestych doświadczenia z ich działalności przeniesiono na Ukrainę, a po ponad dziesięcioletniej przerwie wdrożono je również w jej rejonach zachodnich. Brak alternatywnych społecznych instytucji życia obywatelskiego sprawiał, że lokalne Żenotdieły częściowo przejęły ich funkcje i odpowiadały za szereg istotnych sfer społecznych. Ponieważ inicjatywa tworzenia Żenotdiełów nie było oddolna, lecz odgórna, a ich działania pozostawały pod pełną kontrolą odpowiednich komitetów partii bolszewickiej, tym samym organizacje takie nie mogły odzwierciedlać interesów społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. Ogólnie rzecz biorąc, wdrażanie państwowej polityki dotyczącej płci w regionach ukraińskich w omawianym okresie odbywało się w drodze tzw. transformacji socjalistycznej i zmierzało do utrwalenia i legitymizacji władzy radzieckiej na ich terenach.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

polityka gender, płć kulturowa, sowietyzacja, władze radzieckie, Żenotdieły, bolszewicy, kwestia kobieca

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