

SOCIO-POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF CHOICE OF PROFESSION BY WOMEN OF SOVIET UKRAINE (1920s – 1980s)

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***Abstract.** Increasing public attention to the emancipation of the individual, a woman's self-awareness of her nature, opportunities, and self-worth of being make the study of socio-political processes that influence a woman's choice of her life path and profession relevant. This actualizes the need to study this problem in historical retrospect. For Ukraine, whose population inherited from the Soviet system elements of Soviet culture, mentality, consciousness, everyday practices and, of course, stereotypes, it is important to turn to the analysis of Soviet gender practices. Within the framework of this article, the research interest was focused directly on what place was assigned to women in the gender order created by the Soviet state, how and why the principles of women's involvement in certain spheres of socio-economic life changed at different stages of socialist construction, and how this state policy influenced their choice of profession. As a result of the work, it was concluded that the state management of gender relations was carried out by two types of mechanisms. On the one hand, the state carried out normative coercive regulation, implementing gender policy through legislative acts of various levels. On the other hand, it created an ideological coercive apparatus that controlled gender relations through dominant official discourses, setting the framework of representations. For specific people, institutional conditions appeared as a spectrum of objectively existing barriers and opportunities for their actions and realization of life projects. Under the conditions of rigid institutional control characteristic of Soviet society, options for life and discursive strategies for women were limited and reactive in nature.*

***Keywords:** gender relations, state regulation of gender processes, life strategy, career.*

European states at the end of the 20th century – at the beginning of the XXI century as one of the strategies of their development, they defined the formation of an unbiased attitude towards a person regardless of gender in society, and the achievement of gender equality. These principles have become an integral part of democratic transformations and sustainable development of these states, and to date, they have created all the conditions for the equality of potential opportunities of men and women and the legal provision of this equality in a post-industrial society. Their introduction is due to the strengthening of women's activity in various spheres of activity. Ukraine is no exception in this regard. Therefore, increasing public attention in our country to the

emancipation of the individual, a woman's self-awareness of her nature, opportunities, and self-worth of being make the study of socio-political processes that influence a woman's choice of her life path and profession relevant. At the same time, it should be taken into account that Ukrainian society inherited elements of Soviet culture, mentality, consciousness, everyday practices and, of course, stereotypes from the Soviet system. Gender prejudices, learned even in the previous era, are still part of our everyday life and often people reproduce these elements without realizing their origin. In view of the need for a thorough study and understanding of the Soviet practices of directing the women's initiative in the direction required by the Communist Party, the influence on their choice of the field of employment.

There is a considerable number of scientific publications and investigations that highlight the issues of women's history during the existence of the USSR and Ukrainian SSR. In Soviet times, certain aspects of the problem raised by us were studied by L. Vitruk [Vitruk. 1967], N. Hushynets [Hushynets. 1963, 1984], N. Kovalska [Kovalska. 1990], T. Pikalova [Pikalova. 1984] and others. Women's history takes on a new development with Ukraine's independence and the removal of ideological restrictions. One of the first attempts to objectively highlight the role and place of women in Soviet society was the work "Women's Studies in Ukraine: Women in History and Today" [Smoliar. 1999]. From the works of Ukrainian historians, we can obtain information about the participation of women in public and political life [Bohachevska. 1993; Nochovnyi. 2013], constitutional equality and de facto equality of women [Hlukhenka. 2020; Pahiria. 2012; Smolnitska. 2011; Ulianova. 2021; Cherniakhivska. 2016], involvement of women in social production [Zhitkova. 1992; Zemziulina. 2009], development of education among women [Voronina. 2019] and everyday practices of a Soviet woman [Yefimenko. 2010]. However, for the most part, the works highlight the general policy regarding Soviet women at separate stages of historical development, which does not provide an opportunity to draw up a complete picture. Therefore, the issue of social and political determinants that influenced a woman's choice of career building strategy in the Soviet period requires additional study.

Within the framework of this article, the research interest is focused directly on what place was assigned to women in the gender order created by the Soviet state, how and why the principles of women's involvement in certain spheres of socio-economic life changed at various stages of socialist construction, and how state policy in this sphere influenced on their choice of profession.

The proclamation of the power of the Bolsheviks in Ukraine brought here all their practices of solving the "women's issue". And in this sphere, from the very first steps, the same approach is observed as in all others – the implemented measures were aimed not at satisfying human needs, but at ensuring state plans. And the state at that time needed the development of production, which experienced a shortage of workers due to the loss of the male population during the First World War and the revolutionary events of 1917–1920. The solution to this issue was carried out by attracting women to work at large industrial enterprises. Since they did not have the appropriate qualifications, they were mainly engaged in auxiliary work.

The 10th congress of the RCP(b), held in March 1921, laid the foundations of a new economic policy within the framework of which commodity producers received a certain independence and the right to transfer the enterprise to household income. This affected the employment of women because it led to the active displacement of unskilled female labor force and replacement of their vacancies by men returning from the front and looking for work. Mass reductions of women took place in 1921–1922, as a result of which among those who stood at the end of 1922 on the register of labor exchanges in the USSR, 57% were representatives of this sex. The reduction was especially noticeable in industries with the traditional use of women's labor.

Thus, for every 100 unemployed women, there were 94 in the tobacco industry, 92 in the textile industry, 83 in the paper industry, and 76 in the garment industry. However, the unemployment rate among women was much higher, because the given statistics only show data on those officially registered on the labor exchange, and there were as well as those who, due to certain social characteristics, did not have the right to receive help from this institution in employment. The number of unemployed women continued to increase steadily, and at the beginning of 1923 there were 38,600 of them, and at the end of the year – 65,700. So, in the mid–1920s, female employment was quite low. Thus, in the heavy industry of Ukraine in 1925, women made up only 12.7% of the total number of workers. The participation of women in handicraft industry, whose activity intensified during the NEP period, was also low. By 1925, the number of bush workers and domestic workers reached only 20,000 [Smoliar. 1999: 131]. The given figures convincingly demonstrate that in the first years of Soviet power, the participation of women of the USSR in production was not of a mass nature. Despite the declaration at the state level of creating equal opportunities for women and men, the latter were given preference in hiring, women's wages were much lower. Thus, H. Yefimenko convincingly proves the existence of low wages in feminized professions using the example of the profession of a teacher of junior classes, in which 52.2% of positions were occupied by women in 1922 [Yefimenko. 2010: 22–23].

The situation begins to change with the announcement of the industrialization course. To achieve the main goal of the Soviet leadership, it was absolutely necessary to increase the number of workers in plants and factories. Therefore, since 1926, the state at an increased pace accepted all those who were looking for work, including peasants and peasant women, who replenished the ranks of unskilled workers. And already in the first quarter of 1926, 57.7% of the total number of workers employed in industry were from the countryside [Zemziulina. 2009: 111]. Similar measures were recognized on December 27, 1927 as a strategy for the further socialist development of the USSR at the XV Congress of the All–Union Communist Party of Ukraine (b). The awareness that the main condition for the effective use of these personnel is overcoming a low educational level contributed to the fact that the state begins to pay more attention to the organization of educational institutions for adults. Mass–created likneps, reading houses, political literacy groups, silbuds, and libraries are beginning to conduct purposeful work with women. The main contingent of their participants are peasant women, housewives, and unskilled workers. Thus, in the early 1930s, 70.8% of the listeners of Lyknep were women. Thanks to their efforts, women's literacy increased from 37.2% in 1921 to 57.5% in 1929 [Pikalova. 1984: 15]. And these indicators steadily increased in the future. Thus, according to the population census in 1939, the percentage of literate women aged 9 to 49 was already 82.9%, and in the city – 91.0%, in the countryside – 78.5% [Narodna osvita, 1964: 16]. The fact that school education was now aimed not only at imparting knowledge, but also at preparing graduates for employment contributed to the expansion of women's opportunities. Along with education at school, future workers and peasant women received certain knowledge they needed in production. However, all these actions can by no means be considered as increasing care for a woman and creating conditions for her self–development. The main goal of the state during this period was to direct it to those areas of socialist construction that received priority attention during the period of accelerated industrialization. In the years 1926–1929, women began to be considered as an important source of replenishment of the labor force, and their number at industrial enterprises increased significantly, reaching 82.6 thousand in 1929. They made up 13% of the total number of workers [Hushynets. 1963: 115]. Involvement of women in production required them to have certain qualifications. In addition to the polytechnicization of secondary education, a network of various accelerated qualification courses, factory

apprenticeship schools (FZU), where a 25% quota was established for women, is being developed. And as a result, in 1930, 30,000 women studied at them, while in 1925 there were only 2,000 [Hushynets. 1984: 65]. However, the number of established institutions did not meet existing needs, and only 9% of women involved in industrial production were able to acquire a relevant profession. 27% of female workers worked in semi-skilled jobs, and 64% in unskilled jobs: as manual workers, cleaners, couriers [Vitruk.1967: 54]. Therefore, the network of such educational institutions continued to grow.

Such significant efforts of the state, aimed at involving women in production, led to a significant increase in the number of women workers at large industrial enterprises in the late 1930s. In 1939, their number reached 5,876.5 thousand (including the service sector). This accounted for 38.4% of the total number of employees [Itogi Vsesoyuznoy perepisi. 1963: 151–152]. In the village, women are also changing traditional fields of employment in production processes and mastering new professions: tractor drivers and combine harvesters. So, by the end of the 1930s, the share of women in production doubled. This was achieved due to the implementation of a purposeful policy of the government, in the framework of which any other opportunities for them to realize their potential were blocked, and only that which contributed to their involvement in social production remained, in those branches of economy, the development of which was a priority for the state. Added to this was the creation of a certain image of a modern woman through mass media. In particular, the magazine "Communistka" painted the image of a strong, future-oriented working woman who is actively involved in social life and mastering "male" production. According to propaganda, only after gaining economic independence, women could achieve equality and "free themselves from kitchen slavery" [Voronina. 2019: 365]. And although in Art. 122 of the Constitution of the USSR of 1936 and similar in content to Art. 121 of the 1937 Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR, a woman in the USSR was granted equal rights with a man in all spheres of economic, state, cultural and socio-political life, which was ensured by "granting women equal rights with men to work, pay for work, rest, social insurance and education", in fact, women still earned less than men, were less educated, and access to a number of fields of activity was closed to them. In addition, at the end of the 1930s, the consequences are indicated mass repressions, famines, ethnic cleansing, which led to irreparable demographic losses in the Ukrainian SSR. In the public consciousness, the state begins to form an image of a woman who should not only be successful in her career, but also a devoted mother and wife. The cult of the mother had a banal pragmatic basis – to contribute to the increase of the population [Pahiria.2012]. At the same time, motherhood was not considered a personal choice, but a duty of every woman to the state. According to the Bolshevik model, a woman had to work full-time, raise children and at the same time take care of the household. This gave researchers the right to talk about the pragmatic, utilitarian approach of the party's policy towards women in the interwar period [Smoliar. 1999: 136].

The result of the Second World War was an uneven redistribution of the country's male and female population, especially those of working age. So, if before the war its population was 7.2 million, then as of January 1, 1945, it barely reached 3.5 million people. At the same time, 64% of the entire population of the republic were female. After the return of those who remained alive, from the army and from the evacuation, the number of able-bodied people increased to 5.6 million people, but did not reach the pre-war level. It did not lead to overcoming the gender imbalance [Panchenko. 1997: 108]. The party-state system had the experience of involving women to solve its important strategic tasks, so in the post-war period it returned to the tried-and-tested practice of the interwar period. In addition, at this stage, a lot of effort should have been

spent on this, since during the war women became a significant productive force, replacing men who went to the front in production. In heavy industry, they quickly mastered "men's" specialties: butchers, locksmiths, millers, electric welders [Koval. 1970: 175]. Thus, at the end of the war, women occupied about 50% of jobs in industry, and 80% in agriculture [Smolnitska. 2011: 165]. In particular, as of January 1, 1945, women made up 52.9% of all workers in mechanical engineering, in the coal industry – 45.6%, in ferrous metallurgy – 43.2%, and the overwhelming majority – in the chemical, textile, light and food industries [Zhitkova. 1992: 68]. After the end of the war, until the complete demobilization of the military from the ranks of the Soviet Army, women continued to play an important role in production and in the reconstruction of almost all branches of the national economy. This activity of women was also strengthened by ideological pressure. Once again, the mass media returns a narrative aimed at forming the image of a woman – an ideal worker, such as: "We need to take up work with new strength, we are capable and must prove that we can participate in public life on an equal basis with men and restore economy" [Cherneha. 2005: 93]. The state did not give up the image of a woman–mother who manages everything: she shows full dedication to work, runs a household, gives birth to and raises children.

Scientific and popular scientific publications were circulated, which cited data from official statistics that demonstrated high numbers of women in industry, agriculture, transport, science and art, about the number of women among deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and Ukrainian SSR, medal holders, Heroes of Socialist Labor, laureates Stalin awards, heroine mothers, and in the mass media about their contribution to the struggle for early implementation of five–year plans, leadership experience in government bodies, in the organization and activity of women's councils in both industry and agriculture. Their general subject matter and tonality well demonstrate the requests and plans of the state in the process of forming public opinion, and also show the socially acceptable role models offered to Soviet women, including when choosing a profession. Young girls, Komsomol members, without family responsibilities, were more open to social challenges coming from society. They were easily involved, on an equal footing with men, in the construction of heavy industry facilities and in public works related to the restoration of cities, roads, as well as objects of social importance. They agreed to be away from home for weeks, harvesting in the collective farm fields; willingly joined professional training, studied various specialties, were ready to travel far from home on assignment. However, it should be noted that this social activity can not necessarily be considered as a spontaneous willingness to help the state. Often this activity was determined by the need for survival, was perceived as a means of adaptation to conditions, or was determined by personal motives for choosing a life strategy. The lack of material resources, the desire to be recognized as an "ordinary Soviet citizen" and to prove one's integrity, the need to change one's place of residence to avoid system supervision – these and many other motives prompted one to accept any job, regardless of one's own preferences [Ulianova. 2021: 47].

Numerous regional meetings of industry leaders in various fields were designed to help convince women of the right choice of their life strategy. A constituent part of almost every performance of the meeting participants was the voicing of personal motivation, which stimulated them to achieve success. Moreover, in order to reach certain heights, it was necessary to become successful through hard work and participation in public life. Therefore, women were active in all production spheres, working on an equal footing with men. At the same time, researchers studying gender aspects admit that under the promoted equality, the gender pay gap still existed: women received on average less than men, held lower positions, could not master many professions and faced discrimination upon hiring. However, such oppression was interpreted as "care" of the state

for its citizens [Smolnitska. 2011: 162]. In particular, the spheres in which the involvement of women was limited included the higher bodies of state administration. Statistical data on the gender composition of those elected to the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR serve as a convincing proof of this. Thus, as a result of the 1947 elections, 112 women were elected to it, where they made up 27% of the total number of elected officials. In order not to give the impression of the groundlessness of statements about the full equality of women in all spheres, including political leadership at various levels, decisions were constantly made to increase the representation of women in state bodies. However, the reports repeatedly indicated a noticeable inequality in the numerical composition of men and women in the field of managerial activity. According to the results of the 1951 elections, 132 women were elected to the legislative body of the Ukrainian SSR, where they accounted for 31% of the entire body of deputies [Nochovnyi. 2013: 160].

In the future, the tendency to replace personal interests with national interests in the minds of women persisted. For this, all the mechanisms developed during the years of Soviet power were used, in which, as before, the media played a leading role. In the columns of newspapers and magazines, materials were placed that were supposed to form a stable image of "prestigious" professions. Therefore, a prominent place in them was given to materials related to work in the workshop and on construction, the number of publications on the development of virgin lands is increasing. "Women engineers actively participate in the design office...", "Probably, work is not the right word, it's just that my home is there...", "The production of washing accessories was delayed, so Lidia Vasyliievna spent whole days in mechanical workshops..." – the pages of the women's magazine "Роботниця", popular in the late 1950s and 1960s, are full of such sayings [Hlukhenka. 2020: 208]. Encouraging the choice of certain professions, the state introduced separate restrictions on the acceptance of women into other professions. Legal norms provided for the prohibition of the use of women's labor in jobs with harmful working conditions, in underground works, limitations of loads during manual labor [Kodeks zakoniv pro pratsiu. 1971]. For example, in 1974, a list of professions prohibited for them was approved. Along with the active involvement of women in production, domestic work and raising children also remained her unspoken duties, as before. Society cultivated the opinion that she the necessary social and domestic conditions are provided to combine happy motherhood with increasingly active and creative participation in industrial and socio-political life, which was later recorded in with property legislation of the USSR in 1968. However, the woman was prompted to make a choice in favor of maximum involvement in production and to abandon the role of a housewife not only by the loud slogans of the ideological machine, but also by the banal impossibility of a Soviet family to survive on one salary [Pahiria. 2012]. At the same time, women were often considered "second-class" workers, so mass media had to break this stereotype about the secondary status of women in production and in public life. Women were depicted as the best factory workers, record-breaking milkmaids, education seekers, deputies, etc.

At the end of the Soviet period, women were quite actively involved in the socio-political and cultural life of the country. They made up 51% of the entire workforce. Nine-tenths of women of working age were working or studying. In the social spheres of the economy, they made up the majority of workers: in the textile industry they were 70% of all workers, in the sewing industry – 89%, in the fur and shoe industry – 69%, in the bakery industry – 71%, in the confectionery industry – 72%. Among the working population, women predominated in non-productive sectors of the economy: in trade and household services – 82%, in the field of health care – 81%, education – 75% [Prybytkova. 1989: 26]. However, the principle of prioritization of heavy industry, the "residual" approach of allocating resources for the development of light industry led to the

existence of worse working conditions and lower wages in industries where mostly women worked. If the share of manual labor in industry, as a whole, in 1980 was 35%, then in trade – 90%, household services – 78% [Kovalska, Oleksandrova. 1990: 8]. In those areas of professional activity where the majority were women, work was less mechanized, and most production operations were performed manually. A large share of manual labor was also used in agriculture, especially in such women's industries as horticulture and horticulture. Episodic measures to improve the working conditions of women under conditions of extensive farming were not successful.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the educational level of women steadily increased. According to their educational level, Soviet women have practically equaled men. However, despite a sufficient educational level, women were excluded from public decision-making, experienced difficulties in professional growth and career. Thanks to the state policy on the proportional representation of women in power structures, the percentage of women deputies in local authorities in the late 1980s was 50%, and in the Verkhovna Rada – more than a third [Bohachevska. 1993: 40]. And although in Soviet times, for example, V. Shevchenko was the Chairman of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for more than one year, M. Orlyk, D. Protsenko, L. Khorolets, other women worked in the government, in the positions of ministers, heads of regional executive committees and their deputies, their share was small compared to men. The Adyan party nomenclature had a pronounced patriarchal essence. At the end of the 1980s, every second man with a higher education held some administrative position, while only 7% of women held such positions because "women, unfortunately, still lag behind men in terms of qualifications, and this prevents them from mastering modern professions" [Ulianova. 2021: 47]. For the most part they held "decorative" leadership positions: they headed peripheral councils, trade unions, Komsomol organizations, etc [Cherniakhivska. 2016]. There remained activities that were recognized as exclusively female: education, trade, medicine. In reality, only horizontal professional movements existed for women, while vertical ones were the prerogative of men. There were many obstacles in the career development of women in science. Discrimination against women in the field of science is multifaceted and manifests itself at various stages of a woman's scientific career: when entering a job at a research institute, graduate school, when evaluating her creative contribution to science. Women teachers at the university and at the department are mostly engaged in routine methodical work, while men are engaged in creative scientific work. And the professional qualities of a male teacher are rated higher compared to the professionalism of a female teacher. These indicators indicate non-compliance with the principle of gender equality and equality in public administration. Despite the nominal gender equality, it was much more difficult for a woman to achieve career growth than a man. As Soviet propaganda did not try to cover these negative trends under the beautiful slogans of achieving gender equality, women knew about them and took this into account when building a strategy for their professional growth.

Thus, state management of gender relations was carried out by two types of mechanisms. On the one hand, the state carried out normative coercive regulation, implementing gender policy through legislative acts of various levels. On the other hand, it created an ideological coercive apparatus that controlled gender relations through dominant official discourses, setting the framework of representations. For specific people – men and women – institutional conditions appeared as a spectrum of objectively existing barriers and opportunities for their actions and realization of life projects. Under the conditions of rigid institutional control characteristic of Soviet society, options for life and discursive strategies for women were limited and reactive in nature.

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