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## **IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIET AUTHORITY ON WOMEN IN THE WESTERN REGIONS OF THE USSR (MID-1940s - FIRST HALF OF 1950s)**

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### **Abstract**

The article highlights the features of ideological influence on women in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in the first postwar years. It was established that ideological work among women had its own structure, a number of activities and employees of the «ideological front». The quantitative and qualitative composition of agitators was found out, which was often characterized by low level of education, lack of professional experience, elementary culture of behavior. Political distrust of the locals prompted the authorities to enlist the support of immigrant women, mostly from the eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR.

The main forms and methods of ideological work are characterized, among which it is necessary to single out verbal means of influence – conversations, seminars, lectures. In addition, women were involved in meetings and gatherings of various levels, were participants in clubs and conferences. Means of visual propaganda became widespread.

It is investigated that women's worldview was formed under the influence of generally accepted social roles, ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. This practice was to form a

myth about the advantages of the Soviet way of life, to impose the image of a «new Soviet woman».

**Key words: women's councils; agitation and propaganda events; agitators; women delegates; first post-war years.**

**ІДЕОЛОГІЧНИЙ ВПЛИВ РАДЯНСЬКОЇ ВЛАДИ НА ЖІНОК ЗАХІДНИХ  
ОБЛАСТЕЙ УРСР  
(СЕРЕДИНА 1940-Х – ПЕРША ПОЛОВИНА 1950-Х РР.)**

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**Анотація**

У статті висвітлено особливості ідеологічного впливу на жіноцтво західних областей УРСР перших повоєнних років. Встановлено, що ідеологічна робота серед жінок мала свою структуру, низку заходів та працівників «ідеологічного фронту». З'ясовано кількісний та якісний склад агітаторів, що часто вирізнявся низьким рівнем освіченості, відсутністю професійного досвіду, елементарної культури поведінки. Політична недовіра до місцевих спонукала владу заручатися підтримкою прибулих жінок, переважно із східних регіонів УРСР та СРСР.

Охарактеризовано основні форми та методи ідеологічної роботи, серед яких варто виокремити вербальні засоби впливу – бесіди, семінари, лекції. Крім того, жінки залучалися до участі у нарадах та зібраннях різних рівнів, були учасницями гуртків та конференцій. Значного розповсюдження набули засоби візуальної пропаганди.

Досліджено, що світоглядні переконання жінок формувалися під впливом загальноприйнятих соціальних ролей, способів мислення та моделей поведінки. Така практика роботи мала сформувати міф про переваги радянського способу життя, нав'язати образ «нової радянської жінки».

**Ключові слова: жіночі ради; агітаційно-пропагандистські заходи; агітатори; делегатки; перші повоєнні роки.**

**Formulation of the problem.** At the present stage of development of Ukrainian historical science, the ideological component of the policy of the Soviet system towards women in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in the first postwar years remains poorly studied. Until now, there has been no comprehensive work on the tasks of Soviet ideology in relation to work with women, as well as areas, forms, methods of ideological treatment of women.

The establishment of Soviet power in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, covered by the insurgent movement, required strong social support, which was seen in cooperation with women. The tradition of gender roles in the western Ukrainian region differed significantly from the Soviet model, so the introduction of «women's policy» there was perceived by the local population ambiguously. For these reasons, the study of the peculiarities of the ideological work of the Soviet system in relation to women in the western Ukrainian regions will help to fully reproduce the complex and contradictory processes of the period under study.

**Research analysis.** A lot of scientific works are devoted to the problem of the participation of Soviet women in various spheres of social and political, economic and cultural and educational life of the Ukrainian SSR during the Stalinist era. The gender policy of the Soviet government, as well as the formation of the image of the «new Soviet woman» is the subject of study by researcher K. Kobchenko [1]. The difference between the real and the female image propagated by the official ideology is covered by M. Smolnitska [2]. Certain aspects of the policy of the Soviet system towards women in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in the postwar years are revealed by historians H. Starodubets [3] and R. Popp [4].

The stated problem in historical science has been studied only in fragments, so the ideological and propaganda component of the «women's direction» of the Soviet government needs a holistic and objective analysis.

**The purpose of the study** is a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the propaganda activities of the Soviet government against women in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in the mid-1940s – first half of the 1950s.

**Presenting main material.** The basis of the process of Sovietization of the western regions of the republic in the postwar years was the ideologization of all spheres of public life. In this regard, the Soviet government viewed women as objects of ideological influence and as possible repeaters of the basic principles of public policy.

This campaign involved ideologically savvy women who acted as agitators, propagandists, and lecturers. The mainstay of the regime in the region was local activists who sympathized with the Soviet system. Particular attention was paid to women's assets, the formation of which was carried out through the media, women's meetings, gatherings, conversations. It consisted of members of women's councils, section heads, newspaper correspondents, and others.

Local women were not only excellent ideological cogs of the Soviet system, but also knew the specifics of working in the region. The inclination of local activists to their side «created the illusion of active participation of the local population in the process of Sovietization» [3, p. 272].

The quality of the agitators was often marked by a low level of education, lack of professional experience and even an elementary culture of behavior. In particular, agitators Dub and Zakharchuk worked in the Zolochiv mine management «who, due to their illiteracy, could not connect words with work» [5, sheet 42].

Given the specifics of the western regions, some women refused to spread Soviet propaganda. Political distrust of the locals prompted the authorities to enlist the support of the incoming «ideological agency» from various regions of the USSR. These were mainly party-Soviet, economic, educational and medical workers [6, sheet 91].

Particular attention was paid to seconded teachers, who were considered a full-fledged Soviet asset. The tasks set before the newly arrived teachers were to find out the mood of the local population, recruit to Soviet structures, organize and join collective farms [7].

Newly arrived teachers were representatives of the state ideology, embodied the standard devotion to the Soviet government, were involved in the fight against the Ukrainian insurgents. Thus, in the village Korolivka, Horodenka district, Stanislav region, the chairman of the women's council, teacher V. Danyliuk, handed over 28 OUN members to the NKVD [8, sheet 7]. Educators served not only as agitators but also as informants for the Soviet government, tracking down members of the nationalist underground.

There were separate cases when arriving teachers collaborated with insurgents who used the plight of educators as a means of «dragging» to their side. OUN members helped them with food, clothing, and housing. The local underground members helped such teacher Kovalenko, who worked in one of the schools of Lanivtsi district, Ternopil region, with provisions [9, pp. 246–247].

The political sentiments and ideological convictions of local teachers were closely monitored by the KGB. Members of the reconnaissance groups were instructed to work with

local teachers: «Go to teachers, but only local ones, and infrequently so that they do not fall under the influence of Bandera» [10].

In addition to educators, agitation groups included women of various professions and social status: peasants, burghers, heads of women's and village councils, doctors, agronomists, collective farmers, workers, and so on. Each of them had specific tasks. The peasants urged the women to repay the state loan; collective farmers agitated to join collective farms; the workers emphasized the observance of production norms; doctors – about improving the demographic situation as a state duty of women [11, sheet 59].

Having found themselves «between two fires» (under the threat of reprisals on the one hand by the Soviet authorities and on the other by OUN-UPA units), part of the local agitation staff remained true to their own ideological convictions. In particular, in the village Mushkativka, Borshchiv district, Ternopil region, a local teacher Pedych repeatedly gave nationalist lectures, for which she was dismissed as «not enjoying authority among students» [11, sheet 46].

The most common methods of ideological treatment of women was considered verbal communication: lectures, reports, conversations, seminars. The topics of the events were specially developed and filled with ideological stamps. They served as a basis for the formation of public opinion in the region.

Numerous informational notes of women's structures focused on the effectiveness of lecture propaganda. Lectures were held separately for delegates, chairmen of women's councils, employees, deputies, mothers, collective farmers, peasant women, and workers [12, sheet 62].

The topics of the events can be divided into the following areas: the first concerned the political and ideological orientation, the second – the participation of women in postwar reconstruction, economic development, the third – state policy towards women. The topics of the lectures were as follows:

1) «On the international position of the USSR», «The Constitution of the USSR – the most democratic constitution in the world», «Ukrainian and German nationalists – enemies of the Ukrainian people» [13, sheet 106];

2) «The role of women collective farmers in the struggle for organizational and economic strengthening of collective farms», «Women – the leaders of agriculture in Ukraine», «The role of women in the implementation of the Fourth Stalin Five-Year Plan» [14, sheet 9];

3) «Concern of the Soviet state for motherhood and childhood», «On the equal status of women in the Soviet Union», «What has the Soviet government given to women in Western Ukraine» [15, sheet 64].

From the list of these topics follow the main tasks, key roles and place of women in the Soviet society. The lecturers emphasized the role of women in the implementation of the Stalin Five-Year Plan, the organization of collective farms, emphasized participation in the staffing of party-Soviet structures, and so on.

Lectures on historical and political, philosophical, economic, scientific and natural subjects were given to women. Thus, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation in the third quarter of 1946 gave 258 lectures to women in Drohobych, including: 70 historical and political, 15 philosophical, 37 economic, 136 scientific [16, sheet 5].

Marxist-Leninist doctrine was taken as the basis of any lecture, report or conversation, attention was focused on the cult of the «great leader and teacher of the Soviet Union J. Stalin» [17, sheet 9], as well as the Bolshevik Party, as a «majestic source of strength of the Soviet state» [18, sheet 13]. The implementation of ideologues was to form in the local population an illusory idea of the help of a political leader and party.

During public speeches, lecturers used the phrases «Soviet patriotism», «Soviet woman», «Soviet people». Using language clichés, the generally accepted attitude to reality in Soviet society was implanted. The students were told about the «power of the USSR», «the greatness of the Soviet people», «the education of a new Soviet human» [5, sheet 82].

We learn about the number of agitators and the number of lectures from the reports of women's departments. In April 1947 in Ternopil region 8746 women worked as agitators, and in December – 10646 (8300 locals) [19, sheets 41, 121]. During the first quarter of 1949 in Lviv region there were 3056 lecturers, and 70.2% of them were teachers [5, sheet 78].

Regional women's departments constantly reported on the number of events. During 1945–1947, 22,677 lectures on political and scientific and educational topics were given to women in Drohobych district, including 17892 in villages and 4785 in towns [20, sheet 2]. In Ternopil region in 1947, women listened to 11,470 conversations on political, agricultural and technical and sanitary and educational topics [19, sheet 41].

Gatherings, rallies and meetings should be considered another type of ideological offensive. They took place both within the meetings of small groups and large-scale events, mainly during the largest religious holidays.

Each meeting was thematic and mostly devoted to the tasks of women in rebuilding the national economy (Meeting of Women of Drohobych «On the tasks of women in

rebuilding the economy» (July 5–7, 1945) [21]; organization of elections to the Councils (Regional Meeting of Women of Drohobych) – January 11, 1946) [22]; promotion of the collective farm system (Regional Meeting of Women of Stanislav region (February 24, 1948) [23].

Each woman who took part in the meeting was described in characteristics on the following points: nationality, education, social status, party, activity. It was emphasized whether the woman enjoyed authority among the population or was not associated with the insurgents, and her place in the Soviet bureaucratic system. In the description of the head of the women's council Y. Budulych, Nedilne village, Strilkivskiyi district, Drohobych region, it was noted: «One of the best heads of women's councils in the district has achieved early implementation of the bread delivery plan. Provides practical assistance in repairing the school, village club, assistance to orphans» [24, sheet 17].

The meetings were held according to a pre-designed scenario. At the meetings, women shared the results of their achievements, talked about their own lives, the difficult situation before the arrival of Soviet power.

After the meetings, the women took part in excursions, concerts, trips to the movies and theaters. Thus, the delegates of the republican meeting of women's activists of the western, Izmail and Transcarpathian regions of the Ukrainian SSR (January 1947) visited Kharkiv and visited the tractor plant, schools, museums and theaters of the city [25].

Such events took place at a high organizational level and took place «in an atmosphere of exceptional prosperity». Soviet propaganda skillfully manipulated the equality of women, which was constantly emphasized.

Evidence of this is the holding of numerous thematic meetings and gatherings. In Drohobych region in 1947 about 860 thousand women became participants in 6517 meetings [26, sheet 2]. Republican meetings of women from January 1946 to July 1947 were attended by 63 women delegates [27, sheet 7]. In the second quarter of 1950, 1,790 meetings were held for women in Stanislav region, which were attended by more than 214,000 people [28, sheet 26].

Another means of ideological influence on women was the press, which covered the activities of women's organizations, women's participation in state-building, posted reports of industrial competition and other aspects of the gender policy of the Soviet government.

Coverage in the columns of newspapers of the republican significance of women's work in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR created the illusion of support for Soviet power by local women. During the period from 1945 to 1953, the newspaper «Soviet

Ukraine» published 28 photos of the leaders of the national economy, public and political figures of Drohobych, Lviv, Stanislav and Ternopil regions, as well as photos from meetings, gatherings, excursions. 48 articles were devoted to women of the specified areas.

The creation of a positive image of women's structures was influenced by the manipulation of women's aspirations to overcome the postwar devastation as soon as possible. The press tended to note: «Women's councils repeatedly participate in the ordering of cities and villages» [29], or «At the initiative of women's councils, a fund was created to help the families of those killed in the war» [30].

Almost every article emphasized «giving women equal political rights with men, involving them in state and cultural construction, transformation into active builders of a new communist society» [31].

Women's magazines were designed for different target categories of readers. The materials of the magazines *Selyanka* and *Robitnytsia* concerned mainly general aspects of gender policy in the USSR. Attention was focused on the «happy Soviet childhood», the authorities' care for mothers [32], the experience of women innovators [33].

The pages of the magazine «Soviet Woman» (published in the Ukrainian SSR since 1946) contain biographies of women in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, whose lives «changed only due to Soviet rule». This publication was intended for a wide female audience: workers, peasants, collective farmers, housewives, educators, party-Soviet figures.

Subscription to the press was under the control of women's structures. This was discussed in the address of the editor of the magazine «Soviet Woman» M. Luhovykova to the heads of women's departments of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR: «The circulation of the magazine for 1951 increased, and the price was halved – from 36 rubles up to 18 rubles for a year. We ask you to inform the women's asset about this and to promote the subscription to the magazine by each women's council» [34, sheet 105].

Ideological influence was exercised through fiction. Once a week, women's councils organized public readings of works of art, including V. Vasylevska's «When the Light Comes On» [35], O. Honchar's «The Earth is Buzzing» [36], and others. Their authors covered «the patriotism and courage of Soviet citizens, the indomitable desire to take part in building Soviet society» (inspired by the atmosphere).

Works that went beyond the official ideology, covered national issues, the real situation of the Ukrainian people in the postwar period were banned and considered anti-Soviet.



Ideological and political work was carried out by libraries and reading rooms. In particular, in 1945 in Lviv region there were 83 libraries with a total book fund of 484,192 books and 114 reading rooms [6, sheet 49]. Of the 78 thousand readers of libraries in Lviv in 1949, 58 thousand were women [37, sheet 15].

Women got acquainted with the works of ideological classics, studied Soviet history, philosophy, economics. For both housewives and party activists, the «Short Course in the History of the CPSU(b)» was obligatory for study [37, sheet 74], the study of which took place through circles, seminars, conferences, as well as through self-study.

Another ideological component of the process of Sovietization of the western regions was the screening of Soviet films. Many thematic films were presented to women, in particular: «Rainbow», «She defends the homeland» and others. [6, sheet 47].

The actresses played the roles of strong and brave women with masculine character traits. They got along well in the team, did the hardest work and even dressed in a masculine style. Equality in society, family and social upbringing, happiness to be a mother and other components of gender policy were part of all the stories.

Ideological work also took place through radio broadcasting. Radio stations were installed in almost all settlements. In 1945, there were 31 radio stations and 3414 radio loudspeakers in Lviv region, of which 2,997 were in villages. During the second quarter, the number of radio loudspeakers increased by 15% [6, sheet 47].

In 1947, Lviv Radio Broadcasting broadcast a number of thematic articles and reports for women, including an article by Kravtsova, forewoman of the Lviv Electric Battery Plant, entitled «The Annual Plan Has Been Fulfilled», which covered the experience of the Stakhanovs; «Mother of the heroine – Maria Zaykevych» – about the benefits of «happy» motherhood under Soviet rule [38, sheets 70; 120].

Another means of ideological influence on women was the introduction of Soviet holidays, which were to impose the necessary ideological patterns in the western Ukrainian region, popularize the Soviet system, and form new values and beliefs.

The definite range of official holidays should include: Remembrance Day on January 9, 1905 and in memory of V. Lenin (January 22), International Day (May 1–2), Victory Day of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, (May 9), the USSR Constitution Day (December 5), etc. [39]. Each holiday was accompanied by production competitions of women's teams, which were frequently set almost unrealistic commitments.

The destruction of established traditions in Western Ukraine took place with the introduction of International Women's Day – March 8. Solemn gatherings and concerts, eloquent speeches of the leadership falsely glorified women, ignoring their real needs and difficulties. Every time the press published articles dedicated to Women's Day, which promoted the idea of «endowment» of women with equal rights, the opportunity to realize themselves in any field.

The ideological campaign did not do without visual agitation. Posters, slogans, portraits of leaders were an essential attribute of any holiday. The posters depicted characters who were examples of the «new Soviet human»: workers, collective farmers, public figures. The slogans that most often sounded: «Let's harvest quickly and without loss» [40], «Stalin's Constitution gave me the right to vote and be elected» [41], «Long live March 8» [42].

Women visited theaters and museums, which were almost completely destroyed after the war. In particular, in 1945 there were 5 theaters and 6 museums in Lviv region. Only during May 1945 in the Lviv Opera and Ballet Theater there was a screening of the operas «The Mercenary», «The Tsar's Bride», «Zaporozhets over the Danube» [6, sheets 47–48].

As a rule, after the women's meetings, the participants organized various concerts, plays and performances. Thus, the meeting of women of Nemyriv district, Lviv region in April 1949 ended with the plays «Ordinary Girl», and in May – «Nastya's Sanatorium» [43, sheet 31]. Scenarios of events and the repertoire itself were regulated by women's organizations.

## **Conclusions**

The basis of the process of Sovietization of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in the first postwar years was the ideologization of all spheres of public life. In this regard, the Soviet government viewed women as objects of ideological influence and possible repeaters of the basic principles of public policy.

Ideological work among women had its own structure, distinguished by a number of social and political events and «fighters of the ideological front». The latter, participants in all thematic actions, monitored the behavior of local women residents and political sentiment in the region.

The most common forms of ideological «treatment» of women were lectures, talks, seminars. They took place according to a pre-designed scenario, each time recorded and under the control of the authorities.

Women were involved in meetings and gatherings, were participants in clubs, conferences, demonstrations. Means of visual propaganda, including periodicals, fiction, posters, portraits, film screenings, trips to theaters and museums, etc., became widespread.

Soviet propaganda tried to enshrine in the minds of women common patterns of behavior and teach them to perceive reality in images that are beneficial to the system. Under the influence of stereotyped propaganda measures, it was planned to destroy Ukrainian national ideas and traditions, to deprive the national liberation movement of support from women.

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