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## **THE PRINCIPLE OF RUINING THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GENERATIONS IN THE SOVIET UKRAINE DURING THE 1920'S**

The author analyzes the Bolsheviks' policy in 1920's Soviet Ukraine in what concerns the most appropriate ways of raising the new generation of children according to the Marxist-Leninist principles. One of the best modalities was to destroy the family institution, as it was considered a conservative medium, in which "unhealthy" values such as religion were able to resist. Thus, the Soviet authorities undertook measures which were intended to turn the young generation into an instrument, dependent not on the family, but on the state.

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The family institution (which came up a few thousand years ago in its monogamy form with functions of birth and children up-bringing) is, in nowadays Ukraine, in a situation of crisis<sup>1</sup>. In spite of the fact that the events of the Pomorange Revolution 2004 have had a great influence upon the Ukrainian family policy, the negative tendency on family development is still vital and it exists.

As the author believes, the reason must not be searched in the recent years or in the market economy, as some scientists claim, but in the 1920's. During that time, radical changes concerning the creation of new families were accompanied by a new house-life, the struggle against the old family traditions, and by ruining the principle of understanding between generations etc. The Soviet Government oriented its actions towards the separate individual, suggesting the individual values instead of the family. The individual could reach a complete social status from the point of the official ideology only when unfolding out-of-family activities<sup>2</sup>.

In spite of the fact that the government regulation legibly expressed radical positions about family during the 1920's, the ideology existed, in a certain meaning, until the 1990's. It had a great influence upon the people's

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<sup>1</sup> Antonov A.I., Semija, rynochnaya economica, gosudarstvo: krizis sotsialnoy politiki // Vesnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18. Sotsiologiya i politologiya, 1999, № 3, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Dorohina O.V., Partijno-gosudarstvennaya ideologiya sotsialisticheskikh preobrazovanij semji v poslerevoljucionnoy Rossii // Vesnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18. Sotsiologiya i politologiya, 1996, № 2, p. 81.

conscience. As a result, today, the family institution is not protected as a state institution. An ordinary modern Ukrainian family, considering the low salary and poor livelihood, can not improve or maintain its status, as it was reached in a previous era<sup>3</sup>. It leads to the fact that marriages become unpopular, increases selfishness, diminishes birth-rate and so-on.

It is very surprising that the historical-theoretical and general works are almost absent among the great number of books published. Sociologists and psychologists study this topic regularly and profoundly. Speaking from a historical point of view, scientists capitalized on a small part of opportunities for researching the development concerning the general family changes in Ukraine during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Unfortunately, no monograph was written on this topic in Ukraine, but there are many articles in periodicals, comprising the works of such researchers as Antonov A.I.<sup>4</sup>, Zatsepin V.I.<sup>5</sup>, Dorohina O.V.<sup>6</sup>, Medkov V.<sup>7</sup> and others. Antonov A.I. established the negative influence of the country upon the family institutions since 1917, this being the reason of the low social values in married-family relations up to nowadays. Zatsepin V.I. describes family function in the modern society. Dorohina O.V. deals with the formation and the development of the Soviet system in the period after the Revolution, with its peculiarities concerning the ideological doctrine of the state and its authority, and examines the ideological factor of influence on the development of the family institutions and its strong character. Medkov V. conducts a scientific research on a small number of children from certain families, and concludes that marriages are not popular in present time.

The other works about this topic take into consideration the descriptive side of the problem. Therefore, little attention is paid to the reasons and the results of this phenomenon. A great number of them was written long time ago. Consequently, our aims will be (except describing the historical context) the attempt to characterize the state ideology during the 1920's concerning the family, relying on archives and periodicals, to determine the means of control in youth upbringing and to show the way the understanding between generations was destroyed.

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<sup>3</sup> Kartseva L.V., *Semja v transformirujuschemsja obschestve* // *Vesnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18. Sotsiologiya i politologiya*, 2004, № 1, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Antonov A.I., *op. cit.*, pp. 87-103.

<sup>5</sup> Zatsepin V.I., *Semja. Sotsialno-psihicheskie i eticheskie problemy: Spravochnik* / Buchinskaya L.M., Gavrilenko I.I. dr., K.: Politizdat Ukrainy, 1989, 255 p.

<sup>6</sup> Dorohina O.V., *op. cit.*, pp. 78-87.

<sup>7</sup> Medkov V., *Sotsyologicheskie problemy demograficheskogo prognozirovaniya: rossijskaja semja na rubezhe stoletij* // *Vesnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18. Sotsiologiya i politologiya*, 2002, № 1, pp. 57-74.

First of all, we need to underline the fact that the totalitarian country, led through a proletariat dictatorship, was interested in subjecting the citizens to the ideas of the revolution and the socialist creation of the society. To reach the aim of forming the socialist society, it demanded total devotion, dismissal of all personal goals and readiness for self-sacrifice. “The greatest wisdom of the proletarian struggle, wrote Preobrazhensky I.A., is when everyone could [...] not demanding anything personal for themselves [...] reach the aim [...] dying on the way”<sup>8</sup>.

To bring up such a personality, it was necessary to release a person from his/her social background, family conditions, understanding between generations– everything that traditionally connected life with family activity. That is why the state ideology and propaganda were directed on the forming of a system with new relations and valuable personal orientation, on changing its attitude from the traditional stereotypes to the standards of personal behavior and on changing family principles.

To find out the main point of the above mentioned question, let’s see, first of all, the process of spreading the state control on the upbringing of youth and transferring the family education to the state, as the children became the main object of the Bolsheviks’ attention.

The care about children shown by the Communist Party and the Soviet authorities was very important from the first years after the Revolution of October 1917. According to the Decree of the National Soviet Commissar, May 17, 1919 “About free of charge child nourishing”<sup>9</sup>, refectories, places for children nourishing, and moving cookeries were built very quickly. Since 1921, according to the decree of the National Soviet Commissar, all products for children younger than 14 were free, the state paying for them. The children from the northern parts of the country were particularly well taken care of. There were a lot of places for children nourishing, and, as Lenin V.I. had ordered, all children were taken to the Southern children colonies for the summer vacation<sup>10</sup>.

The beginning of child care in Ukraine can be considered the decision of the National Soviet Commissar from November 25, 1920 about the Week of Child Protection from the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 7<sup>th</sup> of December<sup>11</sup>. This decision was spread among all province executive committees with the obligation to: make the appropriate commission; release all possible child establishments from military sections; repair schools, children establishments and others; provide

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<sup>8</sup> Dorohina O.V., op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Dekrety Sovetskoj vlasti, T. 5, 1 aprelya – 31 ijulya 1919, M.: Politizdat, 1957, № 150, pp. 277-278.

<sup>10</sup> Dekrety Sovetskoj vlasti, T. 5, № 55, pp. 483-484.

<sup>11</sup> Derzhavnyi arhiv Chernigivskoi oblasti (DACHO), f. R-15, op.1, spr. 55, ark. 60, p. 27.

the work at the factories and plants which could provide the children centers with the essential things; improve the nourishing; carry out the medical examination of children in children's homes; organize parties for children (using theaters, cinemas); increase the financial support of educational and medical departments and so on<sup>12</sup>.

To leave no one apart, the province executive committees forced the local papers to call for the support of the young generation. In the Ukrainian papers it was almost the same. The names of towns, villages, organizations and children's houses were substituted. The new slogans were like that: 1). "Instead of a tired father and mother [...] here comes the new master of the world – a child!"<sup>13</sup>; "at the women's meeting in Stockholm was decreed to gather clothes for Russian children"<sup>14</sup>; "The bakery workers sacrificed their 7-days-earnings for children!"<sup>15</sup>; "To prevent children illnesses [...] bath-houses should be opened."<sup>16</sup>; "The Week of Child Protection will be over with the day of Child fest all over Ukraine [...] all artistic and teachers' strengths are given to children"<sup>17</sup>. Besides, such things as Sabbatarian, Samaritan and state money lottery were spread<sup>18</sup>.

After the "Week of Child Protection" the children question was still vital. The Soviet state had as main tasks to overcome child homelessness, to improve living conditions, to struggle against poverty aiming at families with many children etc. And every year these tasks extended and deepened. In 1920, the National Soviet Commissar published the decision about a series of measures concerning the struggle to prevent child homelessness<sup>19</sup>. According to it, a homeless child was considered such a child who was not supported by parents; underwent cruel treatment, had no elementary education, had negative influence at home, was a street beggar and so on<sup>20</sup>.

When the special committee took the decision that the child was homeless, he/she was taken to the section of child protection. Besides, when there was a very difficult situation concerning the parents or tutors, they were encouraged to apply to the section of National Education with the request of keeping their children. If parents or tutors abused the difficult state of the

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Gaz. "Ukrosta", 1920, № 103, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Gaz. "Ukrosta", 1920, № 105, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gaz. "Bil'shovyk", 1920, № 16 (143), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Gaz. "Ukrosta", 1920, № 104, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> DACHO, f. R.-71, op. 1, spr. 130, ark. 219, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporyazhenij raboche-krestyanskogo pravitel'stva Ukrainy, № 11, 8-21 ijunya, 1921, p. 343.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

child, for example street begging, their actions were considered criminal and they were sent to the People's Court<sup>21</sup>.

In each child's house there was a registry-card system, which included personal information about a child such as: surname, name, patronymic, year of birth, mother tongue, health, physical defects, social state of parents, their jobs, address and so on<sup>22</sup>. Since 1924, registry-cards were filled in 3 copies: the first was handed over to the local executive committee and two were sent to the inspector of national education.

But, as the new economy policy led to social problems and it was the reason of property differences, unemployment and homelessness, almost each second child could be considered homeless. So, very rapidly the number of such children did not correspond to the number of places in children's houses. Consequently, children with poor parents (who earned their living) were returned. It led to a great number of applications from citizens to the province committee to help Communists and their families. An example can be the application of one Communist's wife. The Communist died on the front. She asked for money and food: "I have 5 children now ... I can not feed them from my allowance ... All the children from the children's house were sent to me, they say, because I am a working mother and must support them"<sup>23</sup>.

To control the situation, in 1923, the province committees organized Commissions for children's support. They had 3 members and had the name of "Troika for children's support"<sup>24</sup>. Their task was to carry out all decisions, orders and instructions about the young generation, improving their life conditions and so on.

Among the main tasks of these troikas was the control on the building series of children's houses on the territory of Ukraine, which started to work in a large number since 1921 (see Table 1)<sup>25</sup>.

The first consultation, not only in Ukraine but on the territory of the former Russian Empire, was opened in Odessa in 1901. During the next 20 years, four consultations were built. And during two years of the Soviet government activity only on the territory of Ukraine 123 consultations, 51 Diary cookeries and 101 Crèches were opened<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> DACHO, spr. 254, ark. 116, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arhiv gromads'kyh ob'yednan' (TSDAGO) Ukrainy, f.1, op.2, spr.1607, ark. 371, p. 288.

<sup>24</sup> Dorohina O.V., op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> TSDAGO Ukrainy, spr. 2714, ark. 35, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

**Table 1. Facts of building the children's net on the territory of Ukraine during 1921-1927**

<b>Name of the center</b>	<b>Till 1917</b>	<b>1921</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>1923</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>1925</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1927</b>
Consultations	5	123	66	132	201	398	466	507
Dairy Cookery	5	51	25	39	47	94	121	141
Crèche	-	101	53	88	105	161	197	193
Night Crèche	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	73
Season Crèche	-	-	46	266	426	740	952	1127
Children's Houses	-	208	248	140	125	105	91	76

1922 was a difficult year as the whole net doubled the reduction and the children's houses net increased by 20%. The explanation is that all 4-year-old children who were on the street because of the war and the hunger had to be picked up. Later on, the number of homeless children of a certain age started to diminish and the children's houses were gradually closed whereas women's consultations, crèches, and dairy cookeries, on the contrary, were opened<sup>27</sup>.

As we can see, the attention of the Soviet government for the young generation was expressed in the building of children's establishments. Besides, there were huge social programs destined to improving the life conditions of the young generations. But there is a question: why did the Bolshevik government make so many efforts and spent so much money to build the children's net or what was special about such a government approach?

The basis of such an approach was the Communist's ideology which was directed on radical and multifunctional changes of the family institution. The special attention of Party leaders was paid to the transferring of all housekeeping and educational functions to the state. They tried to speed up this process as much as possible. Therefore, great attention was paid to the young generation by the Soviet government— it was only spreading the state control over youth education and transferring the educational functions of the family to the state and its authorities. In 1919 Armand I. wrote: "We must and we have already started to bring social education to children and destroy the parents' power upon the children"<sup>28</sup>.

Favoring the social forms of education, the ideology of the Party denied the traditions of spiritual generation inheritance and criticized methods and essence of family education. Kollontay A. writes about this: "A new child can

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Dorohina O.V., op. cit., p. 80.

be taught only far from parents, in those educational establishments: children playgrounds, crèches, children's houses, where a child will spend an important part of a day and where clever teachers will turn him into a responsible communist...<sup>29</sup>.

According to this, the family was treated by the leaders of the Revolution as a rival; the personality was seen as an obstacle to the spreading of revolutionary ideas and values. In general, it intensified the general ideological direction on its destruction. In social education, the Bolsheviks' children saw the most effective method of creating a new person. A certain child's uncertainty is a good field for a new consciousness, new habits and traditions. The expressive words of Krupskaya N. are good example of it. She spoke in front of hundreds about the newly appeared pioneers: "Children's movement has a huge meaning: it embraces children in the age when personality forms and develops public instincts in a child, helps creating public habits, public consciousness<sup>30</sup>.

To embody their communist's program, during the 1920's, the Bolsheviks started to build the party educational net, which was directed on supplementary youth education and re-education of their parents. Party education Poltava District Committee UCP(b) comprised: a unique school of art education, evening Soviet Party school of the first degree, evening Soviet Party school of the second degree, Marx-Lenin circles, correspondence school for the members of the Party and the Komsomol, correspondence course for studying Marx-Lenin subjects, general knowledge courses for workers, correspondence course office and so on<sup>31</sup>.

Among the topics to be studied in any Party school, circle or office, there were compulsory topics, such as: main Party tasks from 1917; USSR and perspectives of world revolution; the Party program of education, the Communist consciousness of people etc<sup>32</sup>. But the main conveyer in forming of new consciousness of social society in the 1920's was the school, where the principles of person's forming were laid and Bolsheviks paid special attention to the class struggle and propaganda of antireligious education.

Due to the liquidation of Kulaks (appellation of well-to-do peasants who were opposed to the Soviet system and particularly to the collectivization of agriculture) as a class, as far as the field concerning

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<sup>29</sup> Kollontay A.M., *Semja i komunisticheskoe gosudarstvo*. - Izd.: Ukrainskogo Tsentral'nogo Agenstva, 1919. pp. 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> Garbuzov S., *Komunistichne vyhovannya molodogo pokolinnya: Kerivnyky partii pro komunistichne vyhovannya ta komunistychni dytyachyi ruch / Uporyad. Garbuzov S. ta Popov K. – H., O.: Molodyi bil'shovyk*, 1932, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> Derzhavnyi arhiv Poltavskoi oblasti (DAPO), f.4, op. 1, spr. 70, ark. 34, pp. 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

“working” was concerned the Party papers decided this: ”The class struggle has become very keen [...] and influences the children. The enemy of the Proletariat tries to prevent the apparition of the socialism, struggles to steal the young generations, and transfers its bad work to the children’s circles.”<sup>33</sup>.

So, the Central Committee of Ukraine Communist Youth Union called all members of the Young Communist League and pioneers to support the liquidation of Kulaks: ”and on this basis raised class consciousness of children”<sup>34</sup>. Teachers had tasks, such as the following:

- a) to present wide explanations to children in pioneers organizations and schools about liquidation of “Kulaks” as a class (use literature, children newspapers etc);
- b) to explain to children that taking away Kulak’s property and giving it to the Kolkhoz fund is one of the main ways of destroying economic basis of “Kulak’s spot”. “Pioneers must keep an eye so that Kulaks would not be able to sell, give or spoil personal property. They must inform about such actions the Komsomol center”;
- c) to pay special attention on increasing the number of pioneers from the children of workers;
- d) not to accept Kulak-children to the Pioneer organization and to “clean” pioneers from Kulaks and their purposes<sup>35</sup>.

As the result of accomplishing the Bolsheviks tasks, the new authority started to get such ideologically new personalities as P. Morozov. His act (treason to his parents who were Kulaks) was put by the state as an example to All-Union standard.

Antireligious propaganda in schools was of no less importance. The young generation found out at each lesson that the religious traditions of parents, relatives, folks were bad, and that the new antireligious society was good. This material was given in some sort of opposition<sup>36</sup>. To reach good results in antireligious work, the methods of propaganda were gradually extended and deepened. For example, during religious fests children were not allowed to stay at home with their parents (not to have the parents’ influence), schools continuing their schedule and all schoolchildren had to be present.

Besides, in schools, special antireligious circles were created and they worked after classes. For these circles, a special literature was published, discussions, newspapers were read and so on. The members were children older than 10. The main task of the Party was to turn them into examples of

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> Antyreligijna robota v shkoli / Naukovo-metodychnyj komitet po sektsii sotsial’ного vyhovannya. – H.: Vyd gaz. “Narodnyi uchytel”, Metodychnyi lyst № 4, 1929, p. 10.



behavior: to find and criticize the religious acts of other children, to carry out these facts to general discussion, to reject religious customs at home etc<sup>37</sup>.

There was also held the work with parents: "The problem of antireligious education can not be solved without holding antireligious work with parents [...] this is one of the most complicated and important tasks ... one must be careful not to irritate the parents"<sup>38</sup>. Parents were asked to come to school for individual talks, for talks at the parents and school meetings.

Such kind of work led to serious conflicts among children and parents. From the report of Poltava Province Committee, it was known that in the province some parents were not satisfied with the actions of their children and were trying to turn them to "the right way". There were the examples of burning communist books, children were beaten and banished from the home<sup>39</sup>.

Children were often banished from their homes. There were numerous reports on misunderstandings within families coming from the young generation. In the same report of the Poltava Province Committee, we find the information of Komsomol active members about strong antireligious propaganda among children in spite of their parents reaction, through children's conferences with public, discussing family relations and about the only way out – "it is going to children's house [...] the task is to form children clubs *Spartak* in the province"<sup>40</sup>.

But the process of ruining the understanding between generations, according to the Party ideology, could not concern only the young generation. In this struggle for social position, the state was interested in each personality; it is not surprising that the Soviet government held the work among grown-ups. The process of antireligious "re-education" had the greatest popularity in the 1920's. Baptizing, confessing to a priest, the nuptial benediction, the funerals etc were publicly considered to be "unmoral acts". Although, the decree of the National Soviet Commissar (January 23, 1918) "About the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church" stated the freedom of confession and faith for each person, in reality it was not so<sup>41</sup>. Studying the protocols of Troika's meetings, we find a lot of cases with religious character: "1) Theme: about religious customs (children's christening -baptizing-); Declaration: To strike off the Party for religious customs"<sup>42</sup>; 2) "Theme: about religious customs (funerals with a priest);

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> DAPO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 104, ark. 288, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 103.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, pp. 90-91.

<sup>41</sup> Dekrety Sovetskoi vlasti, T. 1, 25 oktyabrya 1917- 16 marta 1918, № 238, pp. 371-372.

<sup>42</sup> DACHO, f. R-7, op. 1, spr. 163, ark. 316, p. 33.

Declaration: to write down serious reprimand for religious customs”<sup>43</sup>; 3) “Theme: about icons in the house - to write down serious reprimand”<sup>44</sup>. The top of this process was in the 1920’s. The newspapers “Izvestiya”, “Comsomolskaya Pravda”, “Rabochaya Moskva” and others discussed about the meaning of church customs in the formation of the Communist ideology, about its place in the Soviet society. For example, in one of the papers, “Radyanske Selo”, in 1927, we read that the head of the Village Committee buried his drowned daughter according to religious customs. Family was the reason why he did it, because they had refused a social funeral, and he could not protest. This article, as many others, was published to “draw the attention of Party organization upon this fact and to draw some conclusions out of it”<sup>45</sup>.

The discussion about the meaning of religious customs was extremely important in the country, as it had the power of the old custom. In general, reports of Control Province Committee mentioned the reasons of popularity of religious customs in the country: ”The village communist [...] is not religious [...] but his wife, grandparents, his father and mother are religious. The communist can not prove his family that religion is dizziness [...] can not take away icons from the house or leave his child unbaptized. He must struggle against family. The question should be either the absence of icons and unchristian child or break up with family”<sup>46</sup>.

As we can see, the things that were considered personal before currently were treated as social according to the new moral revolution. “The Party has the right to enter each family and to have there its own line” was one of the traditional thesis in journalism in 1920’s. Therefore, ruining the understanding between generations was the ideological principle. The aim of such ideology was in the attempt to change the mechanism of social values. Families kept traditions by means of information transmitted from generation to generation. Bolsheviks understood that old generation kept traditions, customs and habits in the family. And they tried to spread state control over the education of the young generation, so they ruined the principle of understanding between generations. They rejected traditional respect to the parents, instigating them to leave the family due to religious customs. The official ideology was not against conflicts between generations.

The new authority supported the breaking off with the family. “Proletariat recommends to respect only such father” – claimed the official position O.B. Zalkind in 1927,”as the one who has a revolutionary –

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<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, spr. 91, ark. 262, pp. 4-10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, spr. 47, ark. 31, pp. 24-25.

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proletarian point of view, who protects the interests of the proletariat class, who brings up his children according to the proletariat struggle ... If fathers do not support revolution education - ... there is no place for children with such parents: [...] children have the right to leave their parents”<sup>47</sup>.

The propaganda of the principle of ruining the understanding between generations and family connections was achieved by the Soviet government because it wanted to erase the influence of the family upon personality. That was the reason of its special development in the 1920’s, and had influenced the family changes.

**Poltava**

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<sup>47</sup> Dorohina O.V., op. cit., pp. 86-87.