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**Gender Equality Problems in Soviet Reality**

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**Abstract**

The Soviet Union was a totalitarian and strictly centralized state, which from the day of its foundation was intended to create a new human. The idea of formal equality written in its constitution and legislation was not a guarantee of real equality in the Soviet Union. The Communist Party deeply believed in the rise of its own tolerant policies, although the existing facts became a barometer of its failure. Despite the established way of life (education, work, etc.), women were neither represented in the ruling circle nor fully participated in the development and implementation of state policy. Thus, the Soviet Union with its paternalistic politics sought both to weaken the influence of men on women by improving the condition of women and to saturate deeply women's lives with Soviet pathos and communist beliefs.

**Keywords:** The Soviet Union, gender, problem, equality, women, paternalistic politics.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The goal of the October Revolution in 1917 was quite ambitious and bitty, which did not aim to be limited just superficial modernization. The goal of the revolution became not only to establish a new lifestyle but also to create a new state and people. Parallel, the main essence of the Soviet Union idea was to be influenced by its membership republics under its own ideology (Goldman , 1993, p. 12); (Lomia , 2017b).

According to the Constitution of the Soviet Union, representatives of both sexes were equal. From the feminists' point of view, the constitutional guarantee and the existing reality created a

different contrast. In the Soviet Union, however, there were illusory notions that the process of women's emancipation was going successfully and that appropriate measures had been taken for their life self-realization. Therefore, every attempt of feminists was perceived by them as an incomprehensible action.

Although the Soviet woman had several different images and pursued a certain tolerant policy to help them, gender equality was only maintained externally and, despite some efforts, still needed to move in a proper constructive direction.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present research aims to study the condition of women in the Soviet reality, and the task of the study is to analyze the attitude of the Soviet Union towards the idea of social justice and equality and to establish the rights granted to women to establish equality policy. We will also study the different image of the Soviet woman, which was changing in compliance with the change of government and the reality beyond the totalitarian regime. While studying the current issue, we considered it expedient to use a qualitative research methodology, namely, document analysis. Within the scopes of document analysis, we acquainted with the existed papers, documents, and archival materials about the policy of the Soviet Union. The method of historical-comparative research has helped me to analyze and compare the situation of women experienced in the hands of different rulers. We have also studied the relevant scientific literature on gender equality.

### **2.1. Peculiarities of gender problems in the Soviet Union**

The Soviet Union was focused on establishing a new type of state, as well as creating new people. Although the Soviet Union was externally striving for the recognition of the legal equality of women and men in all spheres of social life, the facts beyond reality created a certain dissonance. It should be noted that the variety of gender equality problems in the Soviet Union was due to the diversity of the image of women. For a better perception of the portrait of a Soviet woman, it is better to divide this period into three parts: the emancipatory politics of the early Bolshevik era, the Stalinist era, and the Cold War period (Lomia , 2020, p. 113).

At first, women were particularly promoted in the Soviet Union, what was conditioned by the reforms introduced by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution, which continued until the

rise of the Stalin era (Lenin, 2010, p. 66). They enjoyed unprecedented rights, which was conditioned by the Bolsheviks' desire to transform the Soviet Union into a socialist country (Belel, 2009, p. 227). The existing idea required a colossal resource or involvement of many people in the process, which conditioned the advancement of the status of women in order to include them in public life. Thus, the Bolshevik Party was focused on transforming women into active members, as they exceeded more than half of the population, and consequently, their contribution to the work of the party was significant (Manvelishvili, 2019, p. 22).

The Soviet man should have been a devoted person for the Soviet regime and his moral compass should also have been aimed at building communism. Men adjusted freely to normative masculinity, while women needed a new definition of femininity. Therefore, the Bolsheviks aimed at the emancipation of women and their displacement from the private to the public sphere.

It should be noted that the goal of the Bolsheviks was to equalize the rights of women and men, which conditioned the women's demand for equal pay with men's salary in equal labor. Soviet women were in profitable positions because from 1918 (still before the Sovietization) religious marriages were replaced by civil marriages and they also enjoyed the right to divorce. Under a law introduced in 1926, after divorce, spouses had equal rights to property accumulated during cohabitation (Attwood, 1999, p. 46). If the woman was a housewife, the man was obliged by law to dedicate a certain part of the property. Marriage and family law also defined the father's duties and alimony obligations in case of divorce (Friedrich, 2010, p. 85).

From 1920 to the Stalin era, abortion was legalized and also illegitimate children were no longer counted as all children were granted status (Heitlinger, 1979, 83. 123). Moreover, in 1919, under the leadership of Inessa Armand, the "Zhenotdel" was founded, (Hutton, 2019, 83. 36) which also operated during the Soviet women's time and promoted to raise awareness of non-partisan women as well as to introduce their own rights (Heitlinger, 1979, 83. 58). The Bolshevik Party wanted to articulate the idea of gender equality and reinforce the existing view from an ideological point of view, meaning that the government was focused on promoting the maximum involvement of women in the industrialization process. During this period, women had the right to both education and employment outside the family.

Thus, from the perspective of Bolsheviks, the only way to make women contribute to the transformation of the Soviet Union into a socialist state was perceived the growth of strong and

independent women involved in the industry (Trotsky, 1970, p. 54). Eventually, an attempt to equate woman with man-caused not the deconstruction of woman femininity, but her masculinization. At the same time, the Soviet system sought to eliminate cultural differences between its member states. Since the fundamental principles of human relationships are based on mutual understanding and common consent, if a group of people has different ideas and beliefs regarding specific social values, such as religion, language, racism, ethnicity, etc. unquestionably, it will almost be impossible for them to get along. In such a case, the root of the problem is grounded in cultural diversity (Lomia , 2017a, p. 22).

In the 1930s, Stalin came to the head of the Soviet Union, which, as a result of revaluating the past, changed the direction of the country's politics. He minimizes old priorities that have been followed by moving demographic issues to the forefront (Attwood, 1999, p. 3). Edward Kari even called the slogan put forward by Stalin "Socialism in one country" as a way to save the state (Attwood, 1999, p. 79). During this period a woman was doubly burdened, she had to be an equally good mother, wife, and worker. According to Stalin, "Zhenotdels" were no longer needed to solve women's problems. At that time, the language of the press was also distinguished and was characterized by a propagandistic character. Also in 1936, some changes took place. In particular, the prevention of abortion and the criminalization of homosexuals. In the Stalinist era, there was a special rise of the cult of the mother and the appreciation of the woman with many children. Mothers with many children were rewarded with the Order of the Hero Mother and cash donations. Particular, attention was paid to pregnant women and the high-paying and long maternity leave designed for them. The network of hospitals and maternity homes was also expanding rapidly. In the Stalinist era, despite the growth of employed women, they were not appointed to leading positions. It is noteworthy that on the one hand, the woman was considered a mother during the time of Stalin and her reproductive organs were taken care of, in particular the heavy things were not lifted by them. However, on the other hand, during World War II, when the jobs of men who went to war required labor, women were employed in heavy industry (Shulman, 2008, p. 38). The current circumstances point us that the Stalinist era was manipulated by women. This means that usually a woman was considered a potential mother for whom all kinds of hard work were avoided, but when necessary and as soon as the labor shortage was created, they forgot their old status and continued to live under a double standard. In the Stalinist era, the performance of a man's duties by a woman considered not only her labor equalization

with the Soviet man, but also she gradually looked like him with dressing style, as the ideology denied women's sexuality and physical beauty (Lee, 1999, p. 20). The change was reflected in a woman's visuals and attire, i.e. a woman's bold attire was completely unacceptable to the Soviet Union. The change was reflected in a woman's visuals and dressing, i.e. a woman's bold dressing was completely unacceptable to the Soviet Union. In Bulgakov's "Master and Margarita", there is one episode where a Soviet woman exchanges her modest clothes for European clothes. This can be perceived as a protest by women for their rights.

In the 70s and 80s, or during the Cold War, women were skilled in the profession, with proper education and qualifications. They were employed in prestigious fields: medical, educational, creative, etc. (Lapidus, 1978, p. 73). Although the contribution of women in the development of the listed areas was significantly reflected, in the conditions of a totalitarian state their participation in governance and political structures was still sharply limited. Women were represented only in the middle management, while men were appointed to the highest positions (Wood, 1997, p. 12). Thus, for women, there was only a horizontal professional cycle. The current situation has been caused by the conservative-patriarchal signs of a traditional society. According to the researches, it was women who had a great deal of responsibility, who were characterized by great diligence toward work, conscientiousness, high professionalism and the ability to work in a team, but they were still excluded from the decision-making process. Thus, women had to overcome much more obstacles in their career way than men.

At the end of the 1980s, women's wages fell. The difference between the salaries of women and men employed in the same job position has become apparent. Unequal pay and the patriarchal foundations of traditional society have conditioned women's passivity in state policy. However, the policy aimed at helping women has deliberately sought to help them with various benefits.

Strictly established gender stereotypes badly affected the structure of the Soviet family and significantly strengthened the traditional patriarchal model of men. Moreover, raising a man's self-esteem was due to the fact that it was difficult for him to perceive a woman and imagined her as meaningless and unrealized. Exactly this situation contributed to the dictatorship and domineering tone in the family of Soviet kind man. Thus, for men, the family environment was a space where they had the freedom to form an opinion and the opportunity to live according to their own rules.

It was considered as an inadmissible tone for most Soviet men to accept a masculinized woman, and therefore they could not be properly appreciated. A partial escape from this situation occurred in the post-Soviet era. The woman has been able to revert to femininity to some extent, while the man is still in the grip of Soviet ideologies (Kiknadze, 2003, p. 39).

### 3. Conclusion

The Soviet Union represented a socialist-centralized managed multinational state, analysis of the values that existed in its bosom is a long process. All the countries united under the auspices of the Soviet Union operated according to the socio-economic and political ideology of the USSR, and any current events were reflected in these countries. Despite sharing the idea of equality of the Soviet Union, their ideological beliefs were still shrouded in mystery. The Communist Party recognized legal equality, although the gender imbalance was still clearly outlined.

Despite paternalistic attitudes followed from their interests implemented by the Soviet Union, which conditioned to the equality of women with men only in certain areas (e.g. education, etc.), there still was no real equality between men and women during any of the rules of Soviet Union. The goal of the totalitarian regime was not to marginalize humans, it focused on involving women in political life and being influenced by them. Thus, the paternalistic-declarative policy of the Soviet regime conditioned the replacement of patriarchal power by the influence of a totalitarian state, which prevented the achievement of real equality.

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