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**“AND THE IDEA IS: A WOMAN IS A WOMAN ONLY” (review of the monograph:  
Natalia Zalietok. Women in the Military Service in Great Britain and the USSR  
during World War II. Kyiv: PF “PP “Foliant”, 2022. 432 p.)**

**“А ПО ІДЕЇ: ЖІНКА Ж – ТІЛЬКИ ЖІНКА” (рецензія на монографію:  
Залєток Наталія. Жінки на військовій службі у Великій Британії та СРСР  
у роки Другої світової війни. Київ : ПФ “ПП “Фоліант”, 2022. 432 с.)**

Natalia Zalietok’s monograph “Women in the Military Service in Great Britain and the USSR during the World War II”, which was published during the acute phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2022, is, without exaggeration, of iconic nature. And this iconic nature is determined, on the one hand, by a thorough analysis of the gender policy of two systems – the democratic British and totalitarian Soviet during World War II, emphasizing both differences and coincidences between them, and on the other hand, by the topicality of the research, dictated by the entire set of the military service organization issues of women in our country against the background of the current war.

The selected research methods and methodology contributed to the achievement of the goal and objectives – “to carry out a historical comparative analysis of the policy of Great Britain and the USSR in the field of attracting women to serve in the armed forces during World War II” (p. 8). The author used both general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, analogy, comparison, and generalization), as well as special historical ones (the method of critical analysis of sources and discourse, typological, retrospective, historical comparative, analytical psychological, statistical). The concept of comparative history as a macro-causal analysis singled out by the researchers T. Skocpol and M. Somers was primarily the methodological basis of the reviewed work, as well as the gender approach and the concept of “double helix” by M. R. Higonnet and P. L. R. Higonnet.

The source base of the research is based on a thorough analysis of scientific research works on the topic, deliberate ignoring of those modern research works in which there are “stamps of the Soviet historiography”, because they “do not contribute to the objective coverage of the issue” (p. 32), even “the author’s principled position regarding the usage of feminists words” (p. 49) testify that the peer-reviewed publication claims to become a unique phenomenon in Ukrainian historical science of the present-day. In our opinion, it is crucial to highlight two points in the above-mentioned context. The first point is the spectrum variety of factual material sources: legislative and regulatory acts, executive documents of Great Britain and the USSR, transcripts of meetings of the legislative bodies of these states; memoirs, diaries, interviews, speeches of veterans and officials; award submissions, personal file materials, reference cards; contemporary periodicals and non-periodical publications of Great Britain and the Soviet Union; audio recordings of interviews with the British servicewomen and photographs illustrating the characteristics of women’s life and service in both countries during the war; statistical materials. The second point concerns the theoretical background of intelligence, a significant percentage of which is formed by the English language works.

Chapter II of the reviewed monograph (pp. 51–86), which is to some extent introductory, begins with the representation of factual material selected by N. Zalietok, the methods of theoretical understanding and generalization. Consequently, Chapter II deals with the life of women in the British and Soviet societies during the period of the 1910s – 1930s and about their participation in paramilitary organizations. The researcher analyzes the history and development specifics of feminist movements in both states (the struggle for political equality in Great Britain and for the education of women and their social employment in tsarist Russia), reveals the peculiarities of suffragism – “the movement for the right to vote for women” (p. 51) in Great Britain and Russia, later the USSR, notes similar features and focuses on discrepancies, establishes the sources of the latter. While making update on the general situation in the field of gender relations and ensuring women’s rights in the democratic British society and the totalitarian Soviet one during the interwar period, the author made a conclusion that the expansion of women’s rights in Great Britain on the eve of the war is the result of a rather long and persistent struggle of feminists, while in the Soviet Union – it was just a formal part of the equality “principle of all citizens declared by the communist regime” (p. 69), since the leadership of the Soviet Union managed to turn the women’s movement into a tool for the promotion of initiatives beneficial for the state from the first days of the Soviet power (p. 61).

We consider N. Zalietok’s analysis of women’s involvement in paramilitary, i.e. formed by the governments of each country on a military model (p. 70), organizations of the interwar period to be extremely important for further development of the comparative discourse on

the participation of the British and the Soviet women in World War II. The author proved that the political systems of these states were different, as were the prospects of each of them being in the zone of active hostilities, and hence, the taken measures to create a female reserve for their armed forces were also different. Thus, in the 1930s, the British government, pursuing the policy of appeasement of the aggressor (Hitler's Germany), actually did not care about the development of its own military potential, which had a negative impact on the creation and support of women's services (p. 73). But under the pressure of forces that were aware of the future clashes inevitability, the authorities were forced to step up measures in order to prepare for repulsing the enemy. The authorities agreed to the idea to establish the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the successor of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in force in 1917 – 1921 (September of 1938), to revive the Women's Royal Naval Service (April of 1939), to create the Women's Royal Air Force (June of 1939), but on a civil basis. Instead, the researcher insists, the Bolshevik government, from the very moment of its establishment, never neglected the opportunity to use women “to maintain and strengthen their positions by forceful methods” (p. 78). The Bolshevik government did not establish special women's organizations for training a combat reserve, but used organizations and movements that had been established (Komsomol, pioneer organization, TSOAVIAKHIM, GPO, PPHO schools, etc.), in every way promoting, unlike the British, “equality of men and women”, the relevance of women's inclusion to previously inaccessible spheres (p. 85).

Chapter III of the monograph “Policy on Attracting Women to Serve in the Armed Forces in Great Britain and the USSR (1939 – 1945)” begins with the following statement: “Great Britain became the first country to announce the conscription of women in 1941, and the Soviet Union was the first to make them soldiers in the regular army” (p. 87). N. Zaliotok emphasizes that the hostilities nature in each of these states left an impression on the conscription specifics of women into the army and their use in the war. In Great Britain, there was not such an acute shortage of personnel in combat positions in the army and navy as it was in the USSR, hence, conscription in Great Britain (was carried out under special conditions as the researcher found out) was aimed at attracting women to the performance of duties in the armed forces for the most part without participating in battles, with the exception of some air defense units and the Directorate of Special Operations. In the Soviet Union, as a result of catastrophic losses at the front during the first years of the war, the need for personnel for both non-combat and combat positions could be felt extremely. According to the author, women were conscripted into various branches of the army and sent to the front lines without precaution (p. 100). According to the author's calculations, in the light of events the most difficult year was 1942, during which as many as four waves of mobilization were carried out (p. 97). In addition, N. Zaliotok highlights common features in the governments policies of that time of both states: a gradual increase in the number of women serving in the army and the replacement of men by women in non-combat positions in order to make men available for the front (p. 100).

Regarding the conditions of service and everyday life of women of both societies during the war, the author demonstrates that although they were difficult in both cases, their complexity was different. The results of the comparison (see pp. 100–167) are not in favour of the Soviet ones. It should be noted that in this unit (3.2) the activities of the British and the Soviet women in the ground forces and air defense are also analyzed meticulously; in the Air Force and Navy; intelligence. It should be also emphasized that demobilization and respect for the British and the Soviet female veterans were carried out and expressed differently,

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however, as the researcher believes, in both countries – without due and deserved attention to female military personnel.

In Chapter IV of the monograph – “Service of Women in Military Formations in the Public Discourse of Great Britain and the USSR (1939 – 1945)” – there are covered the main ideas of the discourse of the political elite regarding women in the army. According to the author, point of views on this issue of the British establishment evolved clearly: from the patriarchal positions and even double standards that dominated, let’s say, W. Churchill’s attitude to the radical wing of suffragism, from “disgust” “of the idea of admitting women to the front line and giving them the opportunity to participate in combat” (p. 178) on the eve of World War II to the direct conscription of women into the armed forces already during the war. In the totalitarian Soviet Union, the issue of women’s service in military formations was not disclosed, such information was classified. And if before the outbreak of the war there was still some mentioning about the women’s presence in the ranks of the armed forces and even about their conscription for military service, then with the beginning of hostilities on the territory of the USSR the discourse changed radically: there was practically no mention of women serving in regular troops (p. 200).

The subsections on the coverage of issues of women’s service in the armed forces of both states in the British and the Soviet non-periodical and periodicals should be recognized as deeply analytical in the reviewed work. “Even long before the war, the Soviet authorities tried to accumulate in their hands control over the publication of all printed publications, both periodical and non-periodical, and to have a direct influence on their content” (p. 213), so everything that was published during and after World War II, was usually ideological, and among the main messages that the government tried to get across to the audience, there was only a mention of women’s participation in military competitions exclusively for the preservation of the current political regime (p. 230). Large-scale propaganda campaign launched by the publishing houses of Great Britain in order to attract women to the army (p. 230) often came down to the call to “save democracy”. There were significant discrepancies in the nature and content of publications in the media of the USSR and Great Britain, but there was also a number of similarities (p. 294): the print media of both states called the war “people’s”; they emphasized that women were involved in the ranks of the armed forces in order to bring about victory in the war; promoted the participation of women with weapons in their hands in military conflicts of previous historical periods (p. 295), etc.

N. Zalietok’s research concludes with the chapter on the peculiarities of the sociocultural interpretation of the experience of the women’s service of Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the armed forces of their countries during the years of 1939–1945. In the Chapter there are highlighted the views of military femininity of male servicemen and the vision of war and their own participation in it. The researcher puts emphasis on the following: despite the fact that both the British and the Soviet female soldiers very often demonstrated strength, endurance, courage and heroism during hostilities, there remained a lot of factors “that contributed to the formation of their negative image” (p. 299). Taking into account the prejudice against women in the army, declared, but psychologically not aware gender equality, underestimation, often even levelling of women’s participation in the war gives reason to assert that the position of women “remained subordinate to men” (p. 325). The governments of both countries tried in every way to emphasize the inferiority of women’s forces in the war.

Hence, despite the complete opposite of the democratic regime of Great Britain and the totalitarian system of the USSR, Natalia Zalietok managed to find numerous similarities in

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the policies of these countries regarding women in the ranks of their armies in 1939 – 1945 and came to the following conclusion: “when it comes to changes in the gender system, the differences between political regimes recede into the background, giving way to their patriarchal essence” (p. 366), which enables a two-fold reading of the quote by brilliant Lina Kostenko, presented in the title of our review.

The peer-reviewed work will undoubtedly find its admirers not only among historians, but also among all those who care about the future fate of Ukraine and the role of women in its development and prosperity.

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