

UDC 304(477-22)“1940/1950”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.27.281525

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EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE POST-WAR UKRAINIAN VILLAGE

**(peer-review of the monograph: Marchenko V. A., Nikiliev O. F. Everyday Life of a Post-War Ukrainian Village (the mid-1940 s – the first half of the 1950 s).
Dnipro: Lira, 2022. 180 p.)**

ПОВСЯКДЕННЕ ЖИТТЯ ПОВОЄННОГО УКРАЇНСЬКОГО СЕЛА

**(рецензія на монографію: Марченко В. А., Нікілев О. Ф. Повсякденне життя повоєнного українського села (середина 1940-х – перша половина 1950-х рр.).
Дніпро: Ліра, 2022. 180 с.)**

Radical multi-level changes took place in the Ukrainian historical science during the 1990s – at the beginning of the 21st century. The above-mentioned changes deal with, first of all, revival of the Ukrainian scientific historical tradition and formation of the latest academic approaches and concepts in understanding and comprehending the agrarian history of Ukraine; second of all, accumulation of a wide array of the latest thorough knowledge of the history of agrarian Ukraine. Modern academic historical knowledge of the agrarian history of Ukraine, along with other factors, influence the formation of consciousness, worldview of the citizens of Ukraine, the Ukrainian political nation, determine its ideological, mental integrity and unity.

In such context, researches related to the history of everyday Ukrainian peasantry in general, the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s in particular, are promising. Their relevance is due to the following reasons: 1) the basic archetype of the Ukrainian ideological, mental community/integrity is agricultural/peasant culture in a broad sense. In this context, it is difficult not to agree with V. Smoliiy's thesis that the agrarian history of Ukraine is truly "the history of the peasantry – the foundations of the nation", it is the history of the "presence of the peasantry in the national history"; 2) according to T. Lytvynova's and O. Malysko's observations, "everyday life", still remains a big secret, that there are as many "everydays" in literature as there are authors, that a complete theory of an everyday history has not been created yet. At the same time, it is recognized that everyday life is a special sphere of a human experience, that it has transformed convincingly from something not too serious in a scholar's reception into an independent scientific research field, a new method of scientific research; 3) the everyday history of the Ukrainian village of the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s has not become the subject of a systematic scientific study yet, despite the historiographical tradition, which reflects its individual aspects; 4) V. Marchenko's and O. Nikiliev's appeal to the study of the history of an everyday Ukrainian village of the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s has practical significance. The acquired knowledge will be useful during the modern post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, after Ukraine's victory.

According to the reviewers, taking into consideration the above-mentioned, the monograph written by Dnipro historians, which was called "Everyday Life of a Post-War Ukrainian Village (the mid-1940s – the first half of 1950s)" was a significant scientific event in the agrarian history of Ukraine. Their research had scientific, socio-political and practical significance. The above mentioned determines its relevance.

The everyday model formulated by the authors, reproduced in the monograph professionally, consisted of the following structural components: the living environment of the peasants, their production and everyday life, educational and bringing up, health and leisure and recreation spheres, as well as the degree of manifestation and fullness of all these aspects of human life in reception of contemporaries the events of that time. The approach is multifaceted, its application allowed historians to reveal the declared topic comprehensively. In particular, as a result of such a successful author's approach, in our opinion, V. Marchenko and O. Nikiliev studied not only the material and subject space of the peasants professionally, but also their actions, norms of behaviour, conditions for the formation of life positions, moral and psychological features, relationships in society, the reasons for the selection by different categories of village people of certain strategies of existence during that difficult and contradictory period of history. The scholars revealed not only the existence of a peasant everyday life but, first of all, its degree and conditions of manifestation in the peasant environment at the level of a certain social or industrial environment in 24x7x365 parameters. A characteristic feature of the reviewed work is to show not only everyday life, but a person against the background of an everyday life and the search and application of strategies aimed at solving urgent life problems under those conditions.

Reproduction of infrastructure and gender situation in the Ukrainian village of the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s, the villagers' housing and household issues, arrangement of their settlements, system of ensuring vital needs, lifestyle and leisure of the rural population, their production and an everyday life, educational, health and leisure spheres in the research was carried out academically and convincingly. It was facilitated by the authors' involvement in the monograph of a wide and diverse, reliable and

representative source base. Its basis was a complex of the archival documents and materials from both domestic and foreign archival repositories. The documents and materials of the highest authorities of the Soviet state and the ruling party at that time were gathered in the domestic and foreign archival repositories, which contain a significant amount of information related to Ukraine, as the scholars did not have or had limited access to which previously. The materials of the regional press developed by the authors are of special informational value for the coverage of the issue, as messages were printed on its pages that reflected the real conditions of life in the village at that time. A notable feature of the source base of the monograph under review is an extensive use of materials of a personal origin by its authors. In particular, the oral sources, for example, the authors' conversations with the villagers, are unique in terms of their informativeness and emotional impact. Due to the villagers' memories, it was possible to understand and feel the economic, social, demographic and moral psychological situation in the village at that time, peculiarities of a peasant's everyday industrial and communal life, working conditions of collective farm workers of different ages and sexes, the system of relations in the peasant industrial and social environment. Additional persuasiveness of the author's theses included in the monograph is provided by photos taken at work, which illustrate the production, household, and communal realities of the post-war Ukrainian village of the first post-war decade. The fact that the historians managed to find photos, which reflect not the pompous, but a real state of life of the village and its inhabitants deserves special approval.

The scholars studied in detail the contemporary realities of work and labour relations. The situation with the level of provision of the material base of farms, the gender situation in the post-war Ukrainian village, the state of workforce and the strategies used by villagers to solve their production, household and social problems were analyzed. The monograph revealed objectively that the realities of the collective farm production in the post-war Ukrainian village were: the material and technical base of collective farms destroyed owing to the war, irregular labour of peasants, an extremely low level of its payment, a predominant use of manual labour and substandard livestock as draft power in agricultural work. It was noted that the personnel potential of managers at all levels, especially heads of collective farms, was low. The bulk of them did not meet the requirements of time in terms of their business qualities. As a result, there were inefficient work planning and senseless decisions, actions that led to serious economic losses.

Based on the analysis of digital data complex, the scholars found out that the most numerous labour force was women and children. At the same time, elderly people and the disabled were involved in implementation of the state plans. Agrarian historians argued that the norms, forms and amount of taxes paid by the collective farm workers to the state at that time did not take into account a real state of economy of the Ukrainian collective farms and individual peasant farms. Homestead farming was the basis of a peasant life.

The authors of the monograph gave a prominent place to the coverage of such component of an everyday life as interpersonal relationships of collective farm workers in an industrial life. They revealed professionally that these relationships were built on goodwill, mutual support and mutual assistance. Although in the communication of a collective farm administration with the countrymen the following could happen: cursing, profanity, abuse of power, and assaults.

The focus subject on the pages of the reviewed monograph was such aspect of the realities of an everyday life in a village as the phenomenon of consumerism, so to speak,

on a “non-compensatory basis”, the attitude of district authorities, state institutions and their managers, industrial enterprises to collective farm goods. The scale of such abuses and their results for the economy of collective farms were shown on the example of specific facts.

Studying a social and everyday life of peasants, the scholars focused on highlighting the state of rural settlements and human estates, the quality of peasant dwellings, and their internal and external appearance justifiably. They revealed in detail the forms and methods of reconstruction by peasants of their homes and the establishment of the post-war life. First of all, the strategies used by peasants to restore their homes were revealed. In particular, such a common contemporary phenomenon as *toloka* was highlighted: enlisting the help of fellow villagers who, as a group, helped to cope with construction work in a short time, which required a considerable effort and time. An inappropriate role of the state in solving the housing and household issues of the rural population of that time was noted. It was revealed that, in contrast to reconstruction of cities, the authorities shifted the problem of village reconstruction to the shoulders of peasants. It was the reason that the reconstruction was carried out extremely slowly and a large part of peasants did not have their own housing for a long time.

A significant place in the monograph was devoted to the study of such an important component of an everyday life as the conditions of existence of a peasant family, care for the farm and self-sufficiency of peasants with food products. First of all, the extent to which families were provided with the livestock and poultry, how and who took care of them, what they were fed, etc. According to the agrarian historians’ proper consideration, the main source of food supply for a peasant family was their own farm. The farm maintenance required daily hard physical labour of women and children. Based on the analysis of the source database developed by the scholars and involved in the research, it was reasonably proven that in the majority of peasant families the food was low in nutrients and poor in proteins, fats and vitamins. The food assortment was usually limited to bread, cereals, potatoes, vegetables, milk and its processed products. Confections were home-made.

The subject of V. Marchenko’s and O. Nikilyev’s research was such component of the peasant every life of that time as the ways of communication and their influence on an everyday life of population, ability of peasants to reach neighbouring settlements and reception of such state by inhabitants. As it was expertly defined in the monograph, unfortunately, it was the norm for peasants to go on foot to the railway stations, a town, and surrounding villages.

It should be noted that the scholars did not leave behind the factors of existence of village that did not depend on the collective farms or inhabitants of a village: an extremely low level of electrification and telephone, postal communication, trade network. They revealed the quality of service to the needs of population and attitude of villagers to such situation objectively. It was convincingly shown that the trade network was improperly organized, and its material and technical base deserved better. The range of goods was limited and their quantitative provision of population’s needs was insufficient, and there was a chronic shortage of factory-produced products. A several-day absence from a free sale of everyday goods was a common phenomenon. Based on the analysis of a wide range of facts, the research revealed that peasants could buy only the most necessary things at a village shop, and even not always. In order to buy other things, especially clothes, shoes, office supplies, etc., they had to go to a town, to a store or bazaar. The logical conclusion of the researchers is that, in fact, in the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, a living environment of peasants was shaped by satisfaction of primary needs and was determined by the post-war poverty and minimalness of their requests.

V. Marchenko and O. Nikiliev also focused on educational and recreational spheres of a village life – those aspects that are usually on the margins of the scholars' attention. First of all, we mean relationships in families and education of a younger generation, about the state and ability to fulfill its functional purpose of health care system in a village. Regarding education of children, the authors studied a wide range of issues: relationships of children with each other and with their parents, other family members, neighbours; supply of toys; collective games, etc. Based on the analysis of primary sources, the researchers proved convincingly that the peasant children of that time played, as a rule, with homemade toys made by adults. Factory toys were extremely rare. The games of older children, which they played in their free time, were also characterized in detail.

The monograph explained in detail the state of affairs in the field of school and preschool education of rural children. The historians highlighted without distortions a material and technical condition of these institutions, the conditions of children's stay in preschool institutions, their food and medical provision, educational work in them. They indicated that in rural preschool children's seasonal institutions there was a total shortage of everything necessary for the maintenance of children and this was a characteristic feature of their everyday life. The least attention was paid to ensuring necessary sanitary conditions, it was good if it was cleaned. At the same time, it deserves a positive assessment that the researchers did not ignore the issues related to the category of children, who could not find a place in nursery school. In fact, V. Marchenko and O. Nikiliev were among the first in domestic historiography to study this scientific issue in this way.

The reviewed work depicted the situation with the receiving of education by rural children sufficiently. The state of the material and technical base of schools and their classes was shown in detail. It was revealed that the usual practice of the educational process at rural schools at that time was organization of classes in rooms unsuitable for this, where the norm was to hold simultaneous classes for two classes. The qualitative and quantitative composition of teachers needed serious improvement. The following materials were given: children's recollections of the forms and methods used by teachers for better assimilation of the material in conditions of a total shortage of textbooks, notebooks and other educational materials. The conditions for getting children to school and returning them home, preparing for classes were revealed. For example, rural school students completed their homework in the evening, with a lamp or a kerosene lamp, after completing all the household duties. The authors' conclusion was justified that in the post-war period, taking into account the social and material living conditions of their families, rural children did not have sufficient opportunities for full-fledged education. Due to poor financial background of family, village children were forced to go to work from an early age. It was one of the reasons why rural youth remained illiterate mostly. Having finished only primary school or received an incomplete seven-year education, village youth left their studies and replenished the contingent of collective farm workers. Village youth, who came from full families mainly, managed to get a full secondary education and continue their studies in higher and secondary special educational institutions.

The scholars studied a daily life of health-care sphere of the post-war Ukrainian village thoroughly. They showed that the realities of an everyday life were that the centres of its health sector could not provide quality services to villagers. The state of their material and technical base was not at a proper level. Rural medical institutions lacked the most necessary equipment, medicines, consumables, linen, furniture, food supply for patients. Violation of elementary sanitary and hygienic norms was a common phenomenon. A peasant had to worry

not only about his own recovery, but also to ensure his own stay in a medical institution: take care of heating the room, food, etc. Collective farms were theoretically obliged to allocate their own funds for restoration and maintenance of medical facilities. However, it almost did not happen in practice, given the difficult financial situation in which the collective farms were in the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s. The following factors also hindered effective treatment: the lack of specialists or their low qualifications, problems with transport and communication routes. Maternity homes needed repair and equipment, proper conditions for keeping women in labour. At the same time, taking into account the state of rural medicine, the practice of giving birth at home with the help of midwives was widespread in a village at that time. Taking into consideration a low availability and quality of treatment in rural hospitals, among villagers it was popular to receive “medical services” from local herbalists, who undertook to treat a wide variety of diseases. It was another reason for an increased mortality in a countryside, which was motivated in the reviewed monograph.

The authors revealed that the material and technical base of rural cultural institutions was extremely inadequate, they were used not for their intended purpose, but mostly as administrative and production premises, while studying the realities of leisure and rest life of the Ukrainian peasantry in the post-war era.

The issue regarding the staff of the rural cultural institutions became the subject of scientific understanding by the scholars. They stated with regret that in most villages, people who had no organizational skills, no knowledge, no relevant experience in cultural and educational work, professional training, and even necessary level of general education worked as club heads. As a rule, the position of head of a club head or a reading room head was added part-time to the main one, because it was poorly paid or not paid at all.

V. Marchenko and O. Nikilyev also found out positive aspects of rural cultural institutions activities. Even irregularly working rural clubs were popular among young people, they made it possible to bring new emotions to a hectic life. In the monograph, based on the analysis of the numerical source base, it was revealed that the main form of recreation of rural youth was dancing to the accordion or gramophone, watching movies, concerts of amateur groups, performances of local amateur groups. For the most part, the functioning of village groups of amateur artistic activities was hindered by the interference of heads of collective farms or village councils. The positive aspect of the peer-reviewed study is that it highlights the real recreational realities of the life of the villagers, provides facts on the use of alcohol, playing cards, dominoes, checkers, etc. The ideological directions of work of educational and cultural institutions were also reflected, one of the main ones being ideological. It was implemented mainly in the form of lectures, which were read both by full-time lecturers of regional and district lecture groups, and by representatives of higher educational institutions of cities. The topics of lectures were monotonous: political and economic topics, the Soviet government's success, the anti-Soviet activities of the enemies, etc. They were usually far from the problems that bothered a village man. Peasants were indifferent to such lectures.

In the reviewed monograph an important place is also given to such a component of an everyday leisure as cinema. The authors objectively found out that the material and technical support of this area was far from real needs of peasants. These are the extremely small number of both stationary and mobile film installations, moving them by horse-drawn carriage, frequent disruption of screenings, low quality film, limited selection of film productions in district cinema libraries, frequent disruptions of the announced screening, lack of premises that could accommodate all willing villagers, etc. However, as the researchers rightly point

out, there were always viewers: even under such conditions, people were happy to watch the film. Children were especially interested in the “cinema”, who, due to lack of money, invented any way to get to watching a film.

V. Marchenko and O. Nikiliev expertly highlighted that, in reality, among all types of leisure activities of everyday peasants, the most accessible and most widespread was spending time in the circle of relatives, friends, and acquaintances with various entertainments, songs, and dances. Political and state holidays in the village were of a formal nature. After their official part, the peasants returned home and in most cases worked in the gardens. The main, especially revered and traditional holidays were Christmas and Easter. Christmas holidays were especially loved by children because of various entertainments. Groups of village children went to acquaintances and neighbours with carols, gifts and sowing. In the poor post-war years, these rites were a rare opportunity to eat plenty of delicious food, and most importantly, to be treated to a candy. The authors reasonably believe that Easter was considered a significant holiday in a village. They prepared for it in advance, whitewashed houses, cleaned, prepared various dishes for the table. The formation of a festive table for this holiday was an event in which the whole family was involved, from little small to grown-up.

Weddings played a special place in the lives of rural people, even in difficult post-war times. As a rule, it was traditionally celebrated by almost entire village. In the monograph there are described in detail the specifics of preparation and holding of this event. It is shown how Ukrainian peasants in the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s solved the issue of clothes for each young couple, the number of invited guests and those who will sit at table, food for those present, etc. Various forms of marriage, celebration of this event by different categories of villagers were covered.

Thus, there are enough reasons to believe that the study of V. Marchenko and O. Nikiliev “Everyday life of the post-war Ukrainian village (the mid-1940s – the first half of the 1950s)” is a professionally written monograph, dedicated to a topical issue in the history of the everyday Ukrainian village of the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s. Its authors, given the lack of a comprehensive research on this topic, made a successful attempt to fill the existing scientific gap. The peer-reviewed monograph is of a significant scientific interest, useful not only for specialists, but also for everyone interested in the agrarian history of Ukraine. Its characteristic features are: impartiality, professionalism, the validity of statements based on the analysis of a wide range of various reliable and representative sources. It also contains valuable national experience from the reconstruction of the post-war Ukrainian village in the second half of the 1940s – the first half of the 1950s, which will be useful for modern Ukraine, that will win.

*The article was received November 16, 2022.
Article recommended for publishing 14/06/2023.*