

РЕЦЕНЗІЇ / REVIEWS

UDC 94(477.8):338.2(477.8)“1964/1991”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.30.299896

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROCESSES IN THE WESTERN REGION OF THE UkrSSR IN 1964 – 1991 (peer review of the monograph: Malyarchuk O. M. Socio-economic Processes in the Western Region of the Ukrainian SSR (1964 – 1991): monograph. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Ivano-Frankivsk: Symphony Forte, 2023. 552 p.

СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНІ ПРОЦЕСИ В ЗАХІДНОМУ РЕГІОНІ УРСР У 1964 – 1991 рр. (рецензія на монографію: Малярчука О. М. Соціально-економічні процеси в західному регіоні Української РСР (1964 – 1991): монографія. Вид. 2-ге, переробл. і допов. Івано-Франківськ: Симфонія форте, 2023. 552 с.

As a result of the collapse of the USSR and totalitarian system, owing to the abolition of political and ideological censorship and a gradual declassification of archival documents, there appeared the possibility of a more thorough and comprehensive study of the history of Ukraine during the Soviet period.

In modern historiography, there is considerable work on the specified issue, but the main part of it primarily deals with various aspects of social and political history of Ukraine. Instead, the issues of a social and economic development of Soviet Ukraine are not primary.

A number of complex scientific issues are meant that deal with the analysis of individual branches of the Soviet economy – industry, agriculture, construction, transport and communication, financial system, etc., as well as the social sphere, an everyday life of population.

Therefore, the peer-reviewed monograph by Oleh Malyarchuk* on the socio-economic development of the western region of the Ukrainian SSR in 1964 – 1991, is of a considerable scientific interest, taking into consideration the lack of a thorough special research on this issue.

The research is logically structured, written according to the problem-chronological principle and elucidates the main issues that make up the subject of the study. The monograph consists of Introduction, six Chapters, 23 Subsections, Conclusions, a List of Abbreviations, a List of References, as well as Appendices – 14 statistical tables and four documents.

In the monograph there is made the attempt to do analysis on socio-economic processes in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in 1964 – 1991, there is elucidated the essence of the Soviet economic model and revealed certain specific features of its functioning in the western regions of the Republic.

The monograph by O. Malyarchuk is based on significant sources. The author analysed the documents of nine state archives of Ukraine – the Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine, the Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine and the state archives of the western regions of Ukraine, making direct references to 33 funds, 43 inventories, 340 cases.

The researcher involved a number of published documents of the party and Soviet bodies, many collections of documents and materials, statistical reference books (70 titles). At the same time, the author should have analysed the statistical reference books “National Economy of the Ukrainian SSR” for the entire period under study, and not only for a few separately selected years. This approach would have provided an opportunity to analyse the trends and dynamics of the socio-economic development of the Republic and its western regions more thoroughly.

It is significant that in the monograph the author recorded and appropriately used the memoirs of contemporaries (10 people), that in its turn enriched the research with interesting historical details from the history of the western region of the Ukrainian SSR. But in the monograph there are no references to the published memoirs, in particular, of the party and Soviet functionaries at the time, although they would have complemented the analysis of the Soviet economic strategy. It would have been worthwhile to make a wider use of the press materials, republican, regional and district newspapers of the period under analysis.

In Introduction the topicality of the issue, the goal and objectives of the research, its chronological framework, geographical boundaries, scientific novelty and practical significance are elucidated. In Chapter 1 traditionally there is analysed the historiography of the issue, the source base of the research and its theoretical and methodological foundations, in particular the conceptual and categorical apparatus. At the same time, in detail the author explains the approaches of various scholars to the issues of methodology, but does not always define his point of view clearly, his own attitude to the mentioned issues and key concepts.

In the monograph there are raised a number of important scientific issues. In detail O. Malyarchuk dwells on the strategy of economic development of the USSR, considers changes in the economic concept of the Soviet leadership, the issue of industrialization of the western region of Ukraine, attempts to introduce new forms of organization and labour stimulation, the state of engineering and technical potential in the region.

The author focuses on the issues of industrial development, characteristics of its individual branches, primarily forestry, paper and woodworking. In the monograph it is written that at the beginning of the 1960s, the total area of the state forest fund of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR was 2,320.7 thousand hectares, or 46% of the area of the Republic's forests. The richest forests were in Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Rivne regions, where more than half of all wood stocks in the Ukrainian SSR were located.

From the beginning of the 1950s, a large cardboard and paper plant in the town of Zhydachiv operated in Lviv region. It employed 16% of all workers in the paper industry of Ukraine and produced 43% of paper and cardboard products. An important role in the development of this branch of industry was played by Kostopil plant, Mukachevo furniture plant, Chynadiyevo and Novovolynsk woodworking plants, and the others. In Zakarpattia,

Ivano-Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi regions, complex enterprises were established – timber processing plants, and in the rest territory of the western regions – forestry enterprises.

The author dwells in detail on the analysis of the work of the “Prykarpatlis” association, which included 12 timber processing plants in Ivano-Frankivsk region. They were engaged in forestry, processing of wild fruits, berries, mushrooms, logging and deep wood processing and furniture making. Similar associations were established in Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions. However, the progressive anthropogenic impact on the environment, as the researcher states, caused the reduction of the area of forests, impoverishment of their biodiversity, simplification of structure and productivity reduction.

O. Malyarchuk focuses on the analysis of oil and gas industry. In the 1950s, the Carpathian region was the centre of oil and gas production in Ukraine. The key role was played by the Dolyna oil industry, one of the largest plants in the industry – Nadvirna Oil Refinery – operated successfully. However, in the second half of the 1960s, the industry centre moved to Left Bank – Dnipro-Donetsk region. In 1965, Prykarpatia produced 46.2% of the entire Republic’s oil production, while in 1970 – only 19%. During a historically short period, under the conditions of the directive Soviet economy, the efficiency of the region’s oil and gas industry steadily decreased, and the oil and gas fields of Prykarpatia were depleted.

One of the sections of the monograph deals with the problems of the chemical and mining complex of the western region of Ukraine. The author provides an extensive factual material related to the chemical industry, individual enterprises of this industry, but too sparingly covers the issue of the coal industry development in the region, the Lviv-Volyn coal basin. The author presents coal production statistics only for the years of 1960 – 1970, completely omitting the data for the next two decades (it should be emphasized that the chronological framework of the study goes back to the beginning of the 1990s). In addition, the subsection lacks information about the environmental and social consequences of industry in the region, about the state and prospects of coal mines, the future of towns and villages located near mines, implementation of relevant social projects, etc.

In the monograph there are outlined certain aspects of the development of Group “B” industry, i.e. the production of consumer goods. But less factual material is mentioned as compared to the previous issues. The researcher analyses the state of the light and food industry in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, writes about the network of sewing, knitting, textile haberdashery, leather and footwear enterprises, as well as bakeries, meat processing plants, dairies, canning, confectionery and chocolate factories, etc. Heavy industry (Group “A”) was always a priority in the economic policy of the CPSU, and the production of consumer goods and satisfaction of the population’s daily needs were considered secondary objectives, which led to a shortage of food, basic necessities, to massive queues in stores, etc.

The so-called new course of the Party-Soviet leadership in agriculture, launched in the spring of 1965, is analysed on the basis of a significant factual material; the state of some of its branches, primarily agriculture and animal breeding, is under analysis; the personnel corps of workers and specialists is analysed. In the monograph there is elucidated the social policy of the Soviet government during the period under study, including redistribution of labour resources, development of a social and cultural sphere, an everyday life of the population, and environmental protection activities. O. Malyarchuk showed some manifestations of the population’s social activity, in particular the development of the dissident movement, the activity of religious communities, the revival of national consciousness during the period of Gorbachev’s “perestroika”.

It is important to emphasize that the researcher sought to trace the internal logic of the processes that took place in the western regions of Ukraine in 1964 – 1991. In other words, to show the connection between the state of economy, a social sphere of society, an everyday life of the population and the nature of the Soviet totalitarian system, a rigidly centralized system management, the peculiarities of the functioning of a planned, directive, command and administrative model of the economy, which was subject to a single union leadership and constantly neglected the interests of the Union Republics, individual regions of Ukraine, the urgent needs of country's ordinary citizens in order to solve "all-union objectives and plans", "large-scale strategic issues", etc.

At the same time, it should be noted: elucidating certain aspects of the issue, the author mainly refers to an illustrative statistical material for a certain year or several years. However, such a generalizing monograph requires a detailed statistical analysis of each raised issue (industry and its branches, agriculture, social sphere), which allows tracing the dynamics of the studied processes for the entire period – with the indication of an initial period (the year of 1964), an intermediate one (for example, the years of 1970, 1980, 1985) and a final one (for the year of 1991). In the monograph, there are no such summary tables that would reproduce the dynamics of the development of the described phenomena for the entire period – from 1964 to 1991. In addition, a chief focus should be on clarifying the specifics and features of the socio-economic development of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR.

In general, O. Malyarchuk's monograph makes a positive impression, it testifies to the author's significant scientific experience, deep knowledge of the research subject, an extensive use of various sources. The Conclusions to the monograph present the most important results obtained by the scholar, which contain the formulation of the solved scientific issues. The Appendices contain an extensive statistical material, which deepens the scientific analysis of the issue and complements individual subjects of the research. In our opinion, O. Malyarchuk managed to achieve the specified goal, solve the objectives and elucidated the main tendencies of the socio-economic development of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR in 1964 – 1991. We believe that the reviewed monograph is notable for its topicality, scientific novelty and fills one of the gaps in modern Ukrainian historiography.

The article was received August 29, 2023.

Article recommended for publishing 28/02/2024.