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EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE UKRAINIAN VILLAGE IN THE PERIOD OF THE MID-1950s – EARLY 1960s: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES OF MODERNIZATION

Abstract. *The purpose of the study is to conduct a holistic analysis of the evolution of the social infrastructure of the Ukrainian village in 1953 – 1964 and to identify deep contradictions between the state modernization plans of the thaw era and the real quality of life of the peasantry. The scientific novelty consists in the change in the paradigm of the study: the authors move away from a purely quantitative statistical description of infrastructure facilities in favour of analysing their qualitative functionality and accessibility. The article integrates the latest research of 2022 – 2024 to create a multifaceted vision of rural life. It has been proven that the systemic transformation of the village was half-hearted, and the foundation laid during this period had both progressive and destructive consequences for the further historical fate of the agrarian regions. The research methodology is based on the principles of objectivity and historicism. A complex of general scientific and special historical*

methods has been applied. The historical-system method enabled us to consider the infrastructure as a holistic organism that combines technical (electrification), trade and socio-cultural components. The method of critical analysis of sources became the basis for the deconstruction of the ideological layers of the Soviet historiography, and micro historical and anthropological approaches made it possible to assess the impact of reforms on the everyday practices of a particular person.

Conclusions. The study confirms that the Khrushchev thaw provided a powerful impetus for the Ukrainian village to emerge from the infrastructural decline of the Stalin era. However, this process was inconsistent and half-hearted: the complete levelling of differences between the city and the village never occurred. It has been determined that although rural residents felt, for the first time, as full-fledged subjects of the system of consumer services, trade and healthcare, the quality of service often remained at a critically low level. This gives grounds to characterize the modernization of that time as extensive, since the quantitative expansion of the network of institutions (electricity networks, hospitals, and agricultural markets) significantly outpaced their qualitative content and actual accessibility for the broad masses of the population. The authors state that understanding the errors of the then “residual principle” of financing and excessive centralization is necessary for the development of effective strategies for the revival of modern Ukrainian villages under the conditions of decentralization.

Key words: social infrastructure, Ukrainian village, the thaw era, modernization, social policy, electrification.

ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ ІНФРАСТРУКТУРИ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО СЕЛА В ПЕРІОД СЕРЕДИНИ 1950-х – ПОЧАТКУ 1960-х рр.: УСПІХИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ МОДЕРНІЗАЦІЇ

Анотація. Мета дослідження полягає у проведенні цілісного аналізу еволюції соціальної інфраструктури українського села в період 1953–1964 рр. та виявленні глибинних суперечностей між державними модернізаційними планами доби “відлиги” та реальною якістю життя селянства. Наукова новизна полягає у зміні парадигми дослідження: автори відходять від суто кількісного статистичного опису інфраструктурних об’єктів на користь аналізу їхньої якісної функціональності та доступності. У статті інтегровано новітні розвідки 2022–2024 рр. для створення багатогранної візії сільського побуту. Доведено, що системна трансформація села була половинчастою, а закладений у цей період фундамент мав як прогресивні, так і деструктивні наслідки для подальшої історичної долі аграрних регіонів. **Методика дослідження** ґрунтується на засадах об’єктивності й історизму. Застосовано комплекс загальнонаукових та спеціально-історичних методів. Історико-системний метод уможливив розглянути інфраструктуру як цілісний організм, що поєднує технічні (електрифікація), торговельні та соціокультурні компоненти. Метод критичного аналізу джерел став основою для деконструкції ідеологічних нашарувань радянської історіографії, а мікроісторичний та антропологічний підходи дали змогу оцінити вплив реформ на повсякденні практики конкретної людини.

Висновки. Дослідження підтверджує, що хрущовська “відлига” надала потужного імпульсу для виходу українського села з інфраструктурного занепаду сталінської доби. Однак цей процес мав непослідовний та половинчастий характер: повного нівелювання розбіжностей між містом і селом так і не відбулося. Встановлено, що хоча сільські жителі чи не вперше відчували себе повноправними суб’єктами системи побутового обслуговування, торгівлі та охорони здоров’я, якість сервісу часто залишалася на критично низькому рівні. Це дає підстави характеризувати тогочасну модернізацію як екстенсивну, оскільки кількісне розширення мережі установ (електромереж, лікарень, сільмагіз) значно випереджало їхнє якісне наповнення та фактичну доступність для широких верств населення. Автори констатують, що розуміння помилок тогочасного “залишкового принципу” фінансування і надмірної централізації є необхідним для розробки ефективних стратегій відродження сучасного українського села в умовах децентралізації.

Ключові слова: соціальна інфраструктура, українське село, доба “відлиги”, модернізація, соціальна політика, електрифікація.

Problem Statement. The mid-1950s – early 1960s, a period in the history of Ukraine, better known as the Khrushchev thaw, was marked by turning points in the life of the Ukrainian village. It was characterized by a radical reorientation of the state course: a gradual departure from the repressive Stalinist model of management in favour of a strategy of social pragmatism, the positive side of which was the gradual increase in the well-being of the rural population. It was at this time that the material and household foundation of the infrastructure of the Ukrainian village was laid, a significant part of which (electricity networks, capital hospital buildings, educational institutions, etc.) continues to function in the modern space of Ukraine. Analysing the processes of modernization in the Ukrainian village through the prism of the latest historical paradigm it becomes obvious that the systemic transformation of the rural environment in the Ukrainian SSR in 1953 – 1964 requires a holistic rethinking. The main scientific problem lies in the internal contradictions and half-heartedness of the modernization processes. On the one hand, the dismantling of the most odious foundations of Stalin's command management allowed for large-scale electrification, the development of a network of health care facilities, public catering and consumer services. On the other hand, the ambitious goal of bridging the gap between the city and the countryside was accompanied by a number of strategic miscalculations.

In particular, excessive centralization of resources, chronic underfunding of remote areas led to the fact that infrastructure development was often extensive, purely quantitative in nature. As a result, despite the emergence of new capital structures, the real quality of service provision (medical, commercial, transport) remained at a low level.

Thus, the issue of the real effectiveness of the modernization of rural space under the conditions of the Soviet totalitarian system and the influence of the infrastructure foundation laid during this period on the further historical fate of the Ukrainian village requires scientific clarification. In addition, under the conditions of modern transformations, in particular the decentralization reform, and the search for new models of development of agrarian regions, the study of the historical causes of the infrastructure gap between the city and the village acquires special importance. Understanding the systemic errors of the past such as excessive centralization, ignoring logistical features and the residual principle of financing the social sphere is necessary for the development of effective strategies for the revival of the modern Ukrainian village and the creation of a high-quality service environment in it.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. Modern scientific research (2022 – 2024) offers new methodological approaches to the topic. In particular, O. Sydorovych and V. Lytovchenko (Sydorovych, & Lytovchenko, 2024) examined in detail the structural transformations in the system of consumer cooperation highlighting its role in attempts to establish household services. V. Korol (Korol, 2023) significantly expanded the understanding of the technical aspect of modernization, analysing the impact of electrification on the transformation of domestic space and daily practices of the peasantry. In turn, O. Melnychuk and A. Polishchuk (Melnychuk, & Polishchuk, 2022) revealed the local specificity of socio-cultural changes using the example of a separate settlement in Podillia using an anthropological approach.

Thus, we can conclude that the historiographical basis of our scientific article is quite powerful; however, given the dynamic nature of modern socio-cultural transformations, it requires further clarification and rethinking. Despite the presence of thorough works, most of which are focused on studying the infrastructure of the Ukrainian village as a set of quantitative indicators, leaving out of consideration the qualitative aspect: the reliability of

these systems, the availability of services for the population, etc. That is why, our research is aimed at analysing infrastructure not as a static network of buildings, but as a living mechanism that was supposed to ensure the success of modernization, but instead failed to fully satisfy the needs of the population, becoming one of the greatest challenges for the Soviet social policy.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of the article is to conduct a holistic analysis of the evolution of the infrastructure of the Ukrainian villages in 1953 – 1964 and to identify contradictions between state plans and the real quality of life of peasants.

Research Results. The Khrushchev's thaw brought positive changes to the lives of the Ukrainian peasants. The processes of liberalization and de-Stalinization undoubtedly became a catalyst for the modernization of rural areas, which during the previous Stalinist period had suffered the merciless consequences of the genocidal policy of the Soviet leader. Thus, M. Khrushchev's focus on rural problems resulted in a strategy of comprehensive infrastructure development aimed at the systematic modernization of the Ukrainian villages in order to eliminate socio-economic and household disparities between the city and the countryside ultimately. Starting from the mid-1950s, significantly more funds began to flow into rural areas (purchase prices for agricultural products were increased, and taxes on household farms were reduced), which allowed the processes of electrification and gasification to become systemic. If in previous decades electricity was used mainly for the production needs of collective farms, then during the thaw period the emphasis shifted to household lighting of private homes and radio communication. Work on the arrangement of unified water supply and sewage systems also intensified, and in parallel the reconstruction of communication routes was also underway. It is worth noting that until 1954 the state allocated very limited funds for these needs of the peasants, which in the conditions of post-war reconstruction (lack of turbines, generators, and weak distribution system) did not allow intensifying work on these areas.

Only after in 1954 collective farms were allowed to connect to the state power grid, did the electrification of rural areas accelerate significantly. In particular, in 1953 the capacity of all rural electrical installations in the Ukrainian SSR was only about 350-400 thousand kW. Owing to the centralization of energy supply, by 1964 it was possible to connect more than 90% of state farms and about 80% of collective farms of the republic to the state network (Central Statistical Office under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, 1965, pp. 182–185). During the first year of the reform alone, electricity became available to 3,488 collective farms of Ukraine. Of these, in 584 farms, electricity was used exclusively for production purposes, and in 2,698 partly for household needs (Panchenko, & Shmarchuk, 2000, p. 249). This made it possible to electrify a significant number of peasant households (although at the initial stage, access to the network was mainly provided to representatives of the local and collective farm administrations and specialists). In the future, the dynamics only increased: for example, in Vinnytsia region alone, 73 villages were fully electrified in 1956 alone (SAVR, f. r.-2700, d. 6, c. 1443, p. 32). An important stage in overcoming the technological isolation of villages was the Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of February 21, 1961, which approved the Five-Year Program for the Completion of Rural Electrification (Korol, 2023, p. 20). According to this document, a transition from the operation of low-power local power plants to the systematic integration of rural networks into a single state energy system was envisaged. This decision in the medium term not only ensured the stability of energy supply, but also

created the necessary technical conditions for the systematic mechanization of rural life and the deployment of a network of socio-cultural facilities.

The beginning of the 1960s was marked by the active introduction of telephone facilities into rural areas. The primary goal of these measures was pragmatic in nature, i.e. improving operational communication between central and regional administrative institutions with district centres and village councils. At the same time, during this period, the practice of installing landline telephones in private homes of peasants began. However, access to this service was limited and had a distinctly status character: subscribers were mainly representatives of the local nomenclature and rural intelligentsia (doctors, teachers, agronomists). According to the Radio and Telegraph Agency of Ukraine, as of 1964, about 400 automatic telephone exchanges were operating in the republic, providing multilateral communication in rural areas (CSAAMU, f. 5111, d. 1, c. 378 p. 31). The development of the PBX network was an important step in overcoming the information isolation of the village, although the technical capabilities of the systems at that time did not yet allow for the connection of every ordinary resident.

In the mid-1950s – early 1960s another important vector of the evolution of the infrastructure of the Ukrainian village was the development and reconstruction of the road network. In 1957 – 1959, the practice of forming inter-collective farm road-building organizations became common, which accelerated the solution to the problem of building connecting roads. Although these processes progressed slowly on the scale of the Ukrainian SSR, in the late 1950s large rural settlements finally received regular connections with district and regional centres. The functioning of bus services was also a positive moment: the first regular bus services appeared (often these were trucks converted for passenger transport). However, the general condition of the road infrastructure remained unsatisfactory: as of 1964, only 27% of public roads had a hard surface. The vast majority of villages were deprived of asphalted entrances, which under the conditions of autumn-spring roadlessness and adverse weather conditions practically paralyzed transport connections. This situation not only complicated the logistics of agricultural products, but also preserved the socio-cultural isolation of the peasantry, limiting access to medical, educational and trade services in cities.

The logical continuation of technical modernization and improved transport accessibility was the deployment of a network of consumer service facilities. It is worth noting that the infrastructure of everyday life (shoe repair, clothing repair, furniture manufacturing, etc.) suffered large-scale destruction during World War II, and only in the mid 1950s did the authorities begin systematic steps to resuscitate it. As of 1955, 584 shoe repair and sewing workshops, 1,446 clothing sewing workshops, and 67 metal repair workshops were operating in the villages of Ukraine (Panchenko, & Shmarchuk, 2000, p. 249). However, these capacities were critically insufficient. According to statistics as of 1956, 87.3% of the Ukrainian peasants continued to sew clothes and underwear for private individuals, since in 37.1 thousand out of 44,180 rural settlements there were no state workshops at all (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649, p. 28).

One of the attempts to solve this painful problem for peasants was the initiative of the Board of the Council of Industrial Cooperation of the Ukrainian SSR (1956), which proposed to the Council of Ministers to expand the network of stationary facilities and introduce the practice of mobile auto repair shops. According to the plan of the Ukrpromrad, the creation of 200 mobile good service plants based on trucks was to provide remote villages with service (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649, p. 25). This model was most actively implemented in the

western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, in particular in Rivne region, where a ring bypass of villages was practiced. As of 1964, Ukrainian villages were served by 364 mobile workshops, which covered 20% of the population of villages deprived of stationary household facilities (Sydorovych, & Lytovchenko, 2024, p. 167). However, due to a weak organizational base, a shortage of special transport and the aforementioned impassability, the work of mobile workshops at that time did not meet expectations, failing to change the overall picture of household shortages in the Ukrainian countryside significantly.

As a result, by the beginning of the 1960s, the practice of turning to private artisans for repairs and sewing clothes had remained dominant. The main reason for this situation was unchanged: an acute shortage of ateliers and stationary workshops in rural areas. According to statistics, per 100 collective farm families there were 91 cases of private tailoring, and in 66 cases this was due to the complete absence of state-owned household establishments. A similar situation was observed with shoe repair workshops. Thus, out of 30 recorded cases, 25 were performed by private artisans.

The network of rural hairdressers also functioned extremely poorly, which indicated a low level of accessibility of basic hygiene services. In particular, in Chernihiv region, out of 1,600 settlements, 1,176 did not have any such institution. This state of infrastructure forced villagers to spend a lot of time traveling to district centres or rely on private masters, which actually offset the weak steps taken by the authorities to level the differences in everyday life between the city and the countryside.

The turning point in the field of improving consumer services was the issuance of the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR On Measures to Improve Consumer Services for the Population. It placed direct responsibility for the development of the social infrastructure of the village on local Soviets (Kondufor, 1979, p. 297), which in turn shifted the solution of the problem to the local collective farms, which were recommended to invest in the construction of tailoring and sewing workshops, canteens, bakeries, and hairdressers, etc. Such a strategy created a significant imbalance between more prosperous collective farms, capable of building full-fledged consumer complexes, and economically weaker collective farms, where the modernization of life remained only on paper. In fact, the success of infrastructural evolution in a particular settlement depended not so much on national planning as on the financial capacity and initiative of local leadership. Nevertheless, the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution gave impetus to the mass construction of household facilities. Thus, in the early 1960s, new workshops began operating in the villages of Kyiv region (SAKR, f. r.-5324, d. 1, c. 345, p. 209). The network also developed dynamically in neighbouring Cherkasy region, where 22 tailoring, 17 sewing workshops and 30 hairdressing salons were established in 1960, and nine local collective farms built full-fledged household complexes at their own expense. In total, in 1960 – 1961, in the Republic, 2,330 household factories and workshops were put into operation in rural areas, as well as over 100 hairdressing salons (Kondufor, 1979, p. 297). For the systematic management of this industry in the regions of the Ukrainian SSR, the creation of specialized departments of household services began. One of the first was the corresponding department in Kyiv region at the end of 1960. Later, the practice spread to other regions of the Ukrainian SSR.

However, despite the quantitative growth of the network, the quality of service provision often remained low due to organizational miscalculations. The shortage of qualified personnel to work in rural household workshops was a significant problem. Thus, in the village of Berezniaky, Smiliansky district, Cherkasy region, as of 1961, the sewing workshop and shoe

repair point worked with constant interruptions. If the sewing workshop functioned relatively stable, then only one master worked in the shoe repair workshop who physically could not cope with the volume of orders, which inevitably led to a decrease in the quality of work (SACHR, f. r.-2920, d. 1, c. 193, p. 14).

In parallel with the development of the sphere of household services, the system of rural trade also underwent significant transformations. If in the post-war years the village shop was associated mainly with necessities (salt, sugar, kerosene), during the thaw period the state policy was aimed at transforming it into a centre of modern life. Instead of primitive huts-shops, capital buildings built according to typical Soviet designs began to appear. In some places, the construction of multifunctional facilities was practiced, where household service workshops operated under the same roof with the shop (for example, in the village of Ksaverivka, Kyiv region, 1959) (SAKR, f. r.-4804, d. 1, c. 1091, p. 35). In large villages, even the construction of two-story department stores began: in particular, in Starobeshivskiyi, Volodarskiy and Maryinskiy districts of Donetsk region, 50 such establishments were built during that period. In suburban villages, there was also a specialization of retail outlets in the sale of food, footwear, clothing and household goods.

However, despite the external signs of modernization, rural trade faced a number of systemic problems. First, the low qualification level of personnel was acutely felt; due to gaps in the training system, sellers often did not have basic customer service skills. Second, shortages and irregular supplies of essential goods remained a chronic phenomenon. The network of establishments was unevenly distributed: if in cities one retail outlet served an average of 324 people, then in rural areas 486 (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649 p. 28). The practice of serving several rural settlements with one store was popular.

To solve the problem partially, in 1957, intensive construction of new facilities began. In particular, 31 retail establishments were established in Chernihiv region (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649 p. 144), and in Dnipropetrovsk region, a line of 50 stores was put into operation and 10 mobile vans were organized to serve remote villages to which access roads had never been built (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649, p. 163).

In general, village stores became not just points of sale, but, first of all, a place of communication. The appearance of capital brick buildings with large shop windows instead of closed store-pantries psychologically changed the status of the peasant – he became a buyer and not just a recipient of rations.

An important component of the modernization of rural infrastructure was the expansion of a network of public catering establishments such as canteens, teahouses and buffets. Starting from 1953, there was a steady trend towards the quantitative growth of this network, primarily due to the creation of canteens at state farms, machine-tractor stations (MTS), rural vocational schools and schools (Rybak, 1994, p. 66).

An important step in the popularization of public catering was the reduction in prices (on average by a third) for complex breakfasts, lunches and dinners in collective farm canteens (CSAAMU, f. 5111, d. 1, c. 290 p. 76). In particular, a three-course meal in the dining room of the Kozhukhivskiyi state farm in Kyiv region cost 40 – 45 kopecks, and in the Chervony state farm in Kherson region the price was even lower – 35 kopecks. This level of accessibility was ensured by the fact that products were sold to institutions at cost, and transportation costs and fuel were covered by the farms. In the early 1960s, the stage of technological renewal of the industry began. In 1963, new dining rooms and teahouses were opened in the village of Peremoha, Pereyaslav-Khmelnyskiy district, as well as in

the Bobrinskyi, Bortnychi and Shchors state farms in Kyiv region. These establishments were equipped with modern refrigeration units and kitchen mechanisms for that time, which significantly improved working conditions and food storage, especially in the warm season (CSAAMU, f. 5111, d. 1, c. 321, p. 108).

Despite some success in the development of the public catering network, a significant part of the settlements of Ukraine remained outside the coverage of these services. The deep infrastructure gap between the city and the countryside was confirmed statistically: if in urban areas there were 37 places in catering establishments per 1000 people, then in rural areas there were only 7 (4.2%). Of the more than 7000 collective farms of the Republic, permanent public catering was introduced in only 300 farms (Korobova, 1960, p. 53).

A critical problem remained the non-compliance of many establishments with basic sanitary and hygienic standards. A striking example was the dining room of the village of Berezhnyaky, Smilyansky district, Cherkasy region. Due to the emergency condition of the premises, plaster from the ceiling fell directly into food products, and the lack of dishwashing equipment led to gross violations of hygiene (in particular, washing dishes in common containers) (SACHR, f. r.-2920, d. 1, c. 193, p. 14). Such cases were not uncommon for the rural areas of the Ukrainian SSR of that period, so peasants often gave their preference in favour of home-made food. Along with the unsatisfactory technical condition, the efficiency of the industry was hampered by the low qualification of personnel, which led to a limited assortment and low quality of cooking. To correct the situation, a system of professional training was introduced through culinary courses and circles. The method of practical mentoring turned out to be quite productive. In particular, at the initiative of Trans Carpathianco-operators, the patronage of urban institutions over rural ones was introduced: once a month, qualified cooks from the city of Khust came to the surrounding villages to conduct master classes and transfer experience to rural colleagues (Kuvnyyova, 1966, p. 83).

The fundamental component of the social infrastructure, which directly affected the quality of life and the reproduction of the labour potential of the village, was the health care system. In the mid-1950s, a gradual transition began from an extensive but inefficient network of medical assistant and obstetric stations to the development of rural district hospitals and specialized maternity hospitals.

The need to intensify medical reform during the thaw period was due to critical mortality rates among rural residents. At the beginning of the decade, the situation remained unsatisfactory: only 380 rural hospitals operated in the Ukrainian SSR, and their technical equipment was extremely low. Only 88 institutions had diagnostic laboratories, and X-ray rooms were available in only 56 institutions (Panchenko, & Shmarchuk, 2000, p. 255). There was an acute shortage of narrow-profile specialists: surgeons, paediatricians, dentists and obstetricians-gynaecologists. The material and technical base of hospitals did not meet the requirements of the time: there was a lack of beds, inventory, medicines and instruments. There was discrimination even in the nutritional standards of patients: if in city hospitals 7 rubles were allocated for a patient's daily ration. 42 kopecks, while in rural areas only 5krb. 94 kopecks (Kelembetova, 1974, p. 69).

Positive changes began after 1954 owing to a comprehensive approach to personnel and resource provision. Starting from 1956, more than 800 graduates of medical universities were sent to rural areas annually (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649, p. 51). In parallel, the construction of new medical institutions was intensified. The example of Vinnytsia region is indicative, where in 1956 there were already 196 hospitals and 174 outpatient clinics (SAVR, f. r.-2355,

d. 11, c. 38, p. 9). In Sumy region, 17 collective farm maternity hospitals were built in just 10 months of the same year (CSAAMU, f. 2, d. 9, c. 2649, p. 88).

The collective farms played a key role in the development of the industry, financing the construction from their own funds. In 1957, 36 hospitals were built at the expense of the farms, and in general, in 1959 – 1964, outpatient facilities with a total capacity of over 15 thousand visits were put into operation. The modernization of medicine was of particular importance for the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, where endemic goitre and tuberculosis were widespread due to natural and climatic conditions, and a high level of infant mortality was also observed. The situation was stabilized only in the late 1950s with the opening of diagnostic offices and laboratories, which allowed for early detection of pathologies.

An effective model of that time was the creation of outpatient clinics that served peasants who worked on collective farms in different villages, but within the same district, simultaneously. An example of such integration was the Tartakivska outpatient clinic, which assisted residents of 25 settlements (about 11.8 thousand people). The presence of surgical, gynaecological, dental and X-ray rooms, as well as its own pharmacy, in such an institution indicated the gradual approximation of rural medicine to the standards of urban medical care (Malanchuk, 1970, p. 134).

Despite certain positive developments, the overall level of medical care in rural areas was significantly inferior to urban standards. Even in the early 1960s, the practice of placing medical institutions in adapted, poorly lit premises consisting of one room was widespread. Chronic underfunding of the industry led to the fact that there was not enough money not only to replenish the stock of necessary medicines, but also for basic heating of institutions in the autumn-winter period (Melnychuk, & Polishchuk, 2022, p. 49). The most acute problem remained the lack of specialized medical transport in most hospitals or at least adapted means of transporting people. In remote settlements, this led to critical situations: seriously ill patients and women in labour often had to be transported to the nearest district or district hospitals by horse-drawn transport. Such a delay in providing qualified care often became fatal for patients. A significant deficiency of rural medicine remained low diagnostic accuracy, due to the insufficient qualification of rural medical personnel. Misdiagnoses often led to fatal consequences. Untimely recognition of infectious diseases, in particular tuberculosis, posed a particular threat. The insufficient level of preventive medicine and gaps in preventive vaccinations created a constant danger of epidemics, which were difficult to control in the conditions of the rural infrastructure of that time.

Conclusions. A study of the evolution of the infrastructure of the Ukrainian village in the period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s enabled us to state that this stage was a time of contradictory modernization, which combined large-scale state projects with a chronic shortage of resources. The main results of the infrastructural transformations were:

First, the creation of a technological foundation. Owing to the completion of continuous electrification and the development of communication networks, new infrastructure buildings began to function: household workshops, canteens, hospitals. However, the weak point remained the road infrastructure (only 27% of roads had a hard surface), which preserved the transport isolation of many villages.

Secondly, there was a radical transformation of rural life and the trade system. This process was marked by the transition from archaic shops with a limited range of necessities to a network of specialized stores, department stores, and household complexes. Silmah ceased to be just a place for distributing goods, gradually turning into a centre of a new consumer culture.

At the same time, during the period under study, the systemic inability of the state service sector to satisfy the population's demand fully became obvious. The fact that 87.3% of villagers continued to use the services of private artisans testified to low trust in the quality of state service, which, in turn, stimulated the development of a sustainable shadow service sector.

Thirdly, medical care for residents of the Ukrainian villages underwent evolution. The creation of a network of district hospitals and outpatient clinics significantly expanded access to specialized care. However, the effectiveness of rural medicine was levelled by the lack of medical transport and low qualifications of personnel, which only deepened social inequality between peasants and city dwellers.

Fourthly, a significant role in the development of infrastructure in the Ukrainian villages belonged to collective farms, to which the authorities shifted the financial burden of modernization. This led to uneven development of rural areas. Next to exemplary villages with two-story department stores and modern canteens, which were taken care of by economically strong collective farms, there remained thousands of settlements with emergency facilities or without them at all. Thus, the Khrushchev thaw provided a powerful impetus for the Ukrainian village to emerge from the infrastructural decline of the Stalin era. However, like all reforms of that time, it was incomplete and half-hearted. Despite qualitative changes, the differences between the city and the countryside were not levelled completely. Although residents of the Ukrainian villages, for the first time in a long time, felt like buyers and patients of the system of consumer services, trade and healthcare, the quality of these services often remained at a critically low level. This gives grounds to characterize the modernization of that time as extensive, since the quantitative indicators of the network's development significantly outpaced its qualitative content and the actual availability of services for broad segments of the rural population.

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