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## THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL REALITIES OF THE 1920S OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ON PREMARITAL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE UKRAINIAN YOUTH

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## ВПЛИВ ІСТОРИЧНИХ РЕАЛІЙ 20-Х РР. ХХ СТ. НА ДОШЛЮБНІ ОСОБИСТІ ВІДНОСИНИ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МОЛОДІ

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*Political, economic and social experiments carried out in the 1920s of the 20th century were studied by many specialists. However, there has been a lack of publications devoted to the impact of historical realities of that period on premarital personal relationships of the Ukrainian youth.*

*On the basis of literature, mass media and archival sources, the influence of the Revolution and that time social realities on the premarital personal relationships of the Ukrainian youth is considered. Attention is paid to the influence of the theories of “free love” and “a glass of water” on personal relationships of boys and girls.*

*It is concluded that political, economic and social experiments of the Bolsheviks significantly influenced the premarital relationships of the Ukrainian youth. In the youth circles, the theories of “free love” and “a glass of water” became popular. Under their influence, the centuries-old traditions of premarital relationships between boys and girls were significantly distorted; a crackdown was had on the institution of the family, traditional understanding of the responsibility of parents for upbringing of their children. The new state simplified the registration of marriage and divorce procedure to a minimum. At the same time, in the village where the absolute majority of the Ukrainians lived, new visions of premarital relationships were not widely spread. There the premarital relationships of young people were preserved mainly in traditional forms, which presupposed creation of family couples within their social stratum. But in cities, a certain part of young people rushed to establishing “new” personal relationships between boys and girls. Primarily, they were the members of the Komsomol. On the basis of those “new” relationships extreme frivolity and banal immorality could not but grow. In the new vision of premarital personal relationships the authorities brought the thesis of an unconditional primacy of the interests of the political regime instead of the personal feelings of the beloved. That thesis was actually acknowledged to be fundamental and persistently promoted by the authorities.*

**Key words:** 1920s; premarital relationships; “free love”; youth.

**Introduction.** Ukraine entered the 1920s under conditions of the revolution and its consequences, which greatly influenced all aspects of the life of the society. Political, economic and social experiments carried out in the 1920s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were studied by many specialists [1]. However, there has been a lack of publications devoted to the impact of historical realities of that period on premarital personal relationships of the Ukrainian youth. The author will attempt to highlight how the revolution, experiments and ideological campaigns of the ruling party of that time influenced personal relationships of young people in the premarital period of their lives.

**Presentation of the research basic material.** The Revolution involved the youth of Ukraine in active social life. At that time it was the most active stratum of society. The Bolsheviks were well aware of the importance of propaganda in bringing people to their side. Preparing for establishing their authority in Ukraine in November 1918, they insisted on the need “to send hundreds of communist agitators and organizers to Ukraine” [2, p. 16.]. Many Ukrainian boys and girls fell under their influence. That part of the youth became the anchor of the Bolsheviks and their allies, sincerely believing Marxist concepts that became an integral part of the power vertical in Ukraine since the early 1920s would bring long-awaited prosperity to people.

Under all political regimes the youth is anticipated to continue procreation, i.e., marital relationships. These relationships involve certain personal relationships between young people of different sexes. And it was there where the war and the revolution made significant amendments. It should be noted that the classics of Marxism studied the relationships between classes, economic principles, political structure of the new state in detail, but the relationships between the individuals were actually on the periphery of their analysis. Evi-

dently, it was thought that as soon as collective ownership of the means of production would be introduced, antagonistic classes would disappear and human relationships would follow the ideal course. When the Bolsheviks took power, they did not have a clear idea of how the personal relationships between boys and girls in the new society would develop. Only a few works of the communist theorists considered historical relationships between a man and a woman and family relationships, but the analysis of those relationships was not completed with precise forecasts.

Followers of the classics of Marxism, the subject of theoretical studies of which was premarital and family relationships under socialism (O. Kollontai, I. Armand, A. Lunacharsky, and others) came primarily from speculations expressed by F. Engels in his work "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and State", then from literature of that time and their own experience.

O. Kollontai was undoubtedly a talented writer with a clear orientation towards literary criticism. In the analysis of literary works and, first of all, those describing the lives of "single women", on the basis of which she built her own views of the issues of love. Love is a natural desire for such women, but this desire should not lead to the loss of their own self, their own freedom. Love should be free and in no way dissolute. In many cases, love ends with marriage, but "the modern form of legal marriage impoverishes soul"; furthermore, "society must learn to accept all forms of marriage communication whatever unusual contours it would have under two conditions: they should not harm the race and not be determined by the oppression of the economic factor. As an ideal, there remains a monogamous alliance, based on "great love". But it should not be "permanent" and frozen. The more complex the psyche of a man is, the more inevitable "changes" are [3, p.46]. That is, if in a married couple someone has love elsewhere, then the old marriage breaks down and a new one is created. Extramarital long-term cohabitation is also permitted. The main thing is love. Family and family relationships are in the second place. It is not quite clear what should be done with the natural "fruits" of that love - children. This approach can be interpreted differently, but it influenced personal relationships of the Ukrainian youth and the policy of the new state in the sphere of marriage relationships.

One young man who was about eighteen or twenty years old at the beginning of the 1920s, recalled that the youth "argued a lot about the popular book by O. Kollontai "Love of Worker Bees". The author defended free love, that was, love without everything unnecessary... "like drinking a glass of water"... Love without sighs and without flowers, without jealousy and tears. Love with kisses and love notes was considered to be a bourgeois superstition. A sincere revolutionary had to defeat all this in himself/herself. We even held a meeting on this topic. Our views were divided: some were for free love, but with "flowers", i.e., with feelings, and others - without any "flowers". I supported

feelings with "flowers", at least with kisses... Just at that time I fell in love, I was wooing my future wife. How did I do it? We were reading Gorky together, "Storm! A storm will soon strike!..." Was it naive? But it was also great... Dancing... just dancing... was considered a bourgeoisie. They arranged trials of dancing and punished those Komsomol members who danced, gave flowers to their girls. Once I was even the head of the trial of dancing... They held the Komsomol wedding. No candles, no crowns. No priests. Instead of the icons there were portraits of Lenin and Marx. My bride used to have long hair, so she cut it off before the wedding. We despised beauty... When we got a son, we called it October in honour of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great October" [4]. It must be admitted that in the above-mentioned memoir O. Kollontai's views were slightly distorted. She was not cynical in her views of love. But, regarding the atmosphere in the youth environment of those years, it was presented as it was in reality. There were many proofs to that. Not only in the students' classrooms there were heard the discussions about the necessity of family and marriage, upbringing of children. In general, an eyewitness wrote, "The polemics – even the most brutal one – was greatly welcomed in the twenties" [5].

Another well-known Bolshevik I. Armand tried to develop the theory of the relationships between a man and a woman. She believed that mutual love is the basis of personal happiness of people, "it is very difficult for a person to live without personal happiness" [6, p. 77]. In 1914 I. Armand was preparing a special brochure on "free love", in which she argued that "even a short-term passion is more poetic and purer than married kisses without love" [7, p. 56]. V. Lenin gave her advice on the main points to highlight. Eventually, the brochure did not come out, but the very fact that the Bolsheviks' leader paid attention to it, proved that the problem was topical, although Lenin personally did not attempt to develop it.

The war and the revolution of 1917-1921 shook the foundations of the century-old traditions of the Ukrainian village, but they could not destroy them. But in cities "free love" had quite deep roots. The rural youth coming to the city had to reckon with new relationships. The theory of "free love" was thought as liberation of love from material calculations, from prejudices and gossips in the realities of the early 1920s. It could not but be reborn into realities far from the idea of theorists. One of the "old Bolsheviks" I. Mykhailov bitterly stated in October 1924 that on his remarks to children about the need to adhere to the norms of ethics in communication with people of different sexes, children replied, "Oh, please, dad, you've lagged behind the modern life. Today's life is different". And in this "modern life... some responsible comrades promote such ethics: a woman who does not give herself to a man at once is a bourgeois. There are women who consider a man to be a fool, an idiot if he is not a womaniser" [8, p. 214].

It should be noted that the ghost of “free love” influenced not only ordinary young people, but also outstanding personalities. For example, the wife of the world-famous physicist L. Landau recalled that when she, being a young girl, met her future husband in Kharkiv, he was a passionate supporter of free love and was confident that it would be possible to marry because of foolishness or because of any common or material ideas and only the stupid ones got married on the basis of love. At the same time, “free love”, even a passionate one, caused great doubts in his wife” [9].

In the 1920s, despite the pressure of the notion of “free love”, the “old” manifestations of courtship were preserved. As D. Malakov said, relying on the memories of his parents, first of all, his father tried to show his respectful attitude to his future wife. He accompanied her to the railway station. They went 25 versts by a horse carriage. “On the first hill, he held her waist, and those who had to ride the old Podilskyi ways, remember that hills... accompany the traveller all the time, so Vasyl did not take away his hand... So, as mother later said, those 25 versts defined the fate of both” [10, p. 20].

It should be noted that the emergence of premarital preferences, premarital relationships took place mainly within a social stratum. In fact, there was preserved the main reason for breaking the fate of lovers - belonging to different social strata. In addition, it must be taken into account that people oriented on centuries-old traditions that did not welcome creation of a family by people from socially distant strata.

In 1926, an eighteen-year-old Ukrainian worker fell in love with a girl from a family of merchants. Love turned out to be mutual. The young people decided to get married. But the worker’s mother was the first against this marriage, saying that she did not want to be an eternal servant of the young lady. The girl’s mother also opposed, because he was a guy from a common family and an uneducated worker. All this made the young people upset, but they did not go against the will of their parents [11].

In the Ukrainian village, premarital relationships among young people gradually transformed under the influence of changes that a new political regime made. New obstacles appeared in communication – the political ones. If earlier social barriers could have been rarely overcome, then the political ones became a reinforced concrete wall between lovers. The Komsomol organizations were becoming more active in villages. In 1923, in Kharkiv oblast, a young man Petro Shelest was a friend of a girl named Pasha. The young people liked each other. Recalling that friendship, P. Shelest wrote in his elderly age, “Apparently, it was my first youth love”. But political affairs became an obstacle to love. P. Shelest was going to join the Komsomol and offered Pasha singing in the church choir to leave that choir, join the choir “Prosvita” and the Komsomol. The fact is that, having joined the Komsomol, P. Shelest could not meet and be friends with the girl who sang in the church choir. But Pasha’s father categorically prohibited not only to join the Komsomol, but even to have relation-

ships with the Komsomol members. P. Shelest wrote, “I was upset by the fact that Pasha would not be able to join the Komsomol, and if I join the Komsomol, I will still be unable to be friends and meet with her because she is a church choir singer, almost a servant of a religious cult” [11]. In October 1923, P. Shelest joined the Komsomol. The relationships with Pasha were broken off.

Under the influence of the life realities of the 1920s the premarital relationships of young people developed so that the “theory of a glass of water” was formed on the basis of the theory of “free love”. It assumed that in the communist society to satisfy sexual desire and the need for love would be as simple as drinking a glass of water. It also declared the absence of any love and domination of simple physiological needs. There is no love; there is just a sexual need to satisfy. Talks about love, marriage are a bourgeois trick.

In the 1920s, a well-known Soviet dissident, General P. Hryhorenko, being a young man, turned out to be in the Donbass under the influence of those ideas, “During the years of my “stewing” in the working “pot”, the theory of the absence of love was dominant among the Komsomol and half-Komsomol youth. “There is no love. There is a physiological need and a natural desire to continue the human race... and there is no use in dreaming of princes and princesses and sighing under the moon”. There was created literature that promoted such an attitude to love, and the youth worn it thin by much reading. P. Hryhorenko admitted, “I, as a sincere Komsomol member, surely had a rational view of love and expressed myself only in such a way”. That phenomenon became widespread. P. Hryhorenko proved that such a life position in relation to a woman almost led him to a suicide [12].

The practice of forcing women to sexual relationships by their direct superiors became widespread. The newspaper “Visti VUTsVK” wrote in this regard in September 1928, highlighting the situation of the trade union Narkharch, “In this union, simultaneously in two cities, Odesa and Kherson, there were cases of raping and forcing working women to sexual relationships. These cases indicate that these outrageous events have entered the system. The Soviet public should hear the scream of working women – “Save us!” [13].

A similar state was far from the ideals of “free love” and apparently caused concern of the authorities. In late 1926, People’s Commissar of Education A. Lunacharsky made a report, which the following year was issued in mass circulation and distributed in Ukraine. The People’s Commissar of Education, relying on Lenin’s authority, responded sharply negatively to the “theory of a glass of water”, because of which “our youth has got mad. And for many boys and girls, it became fatal. Its followers argue that this is a Marxist theory... I find the famous theory of a glass of water to be anti-Marxist, anti-social... [14, p. 25]. A. Lunacharsky sharply condemned the theory of “absence of love”, “The people saying like our Komsomol members that love is simply reproduction are hopeless” [14, p. 24].

The speech by A. Lunacharsky meant that the modernist theory of “free love” and the “theory of glass of water” derived from it could not stand the test of life.

At the same time, in the 1920s, the old traditions of young people’s communication continued to exist in the Ukrainian village. An outstanding artist I. Honchar recalled that during those years in Cherkassy oblast the youth especially celebrated Easter and an old holiday of Ivana Kupala. On Easter, the youth played, sang, danced till dusk in festival dresses. On Ivana Kupala, which had been a holiday since ancient times, where girls and boys chatted as potential founders of new families, the girls made wreaths, and the boys made a fire over which they jumped either themselves or sometimes with the girls. “We celebrated till night, girls and boys were walking, joking, singing together” [15, p. 33].

Vechornytsi were a place of communication of the rural youth in Kyiv oblast. On January 7, 1928, the Nizhyn district newspaper “Nove Selo” wrote that the local youth celebrated vechornytsi in the honour of St. Andrew. The newspaper had a negative attitude to such evening parties, believing that there were only “vodka and revelry”. Apparently there were “vodka and revelry”, but there was, undoubtedly, personal communication among young people. Vechornytsi were essentially a youth club where they became acquaintances, which then led to premarital relationships and ultimately creation of a family. But the “sting” of the newspaper was directed against the fact that the youths’ vechornytsi were devoted to religious subjects [16].

In Kurenivka, a suburban village near Kyiv, which had not yet merged with Kyiv, the youth also kept rural traditions and customs in personal premarital communication. “In winter, boys and girls arranged vechornytsi, and in summer they gathered on logs or benches everywhere in the streets. Girls were sitting, and boys generally stood and joked with them. Both boys and girls wore national Ukrainian clothes... In short, as it had always been. Throughout Kurenivka the Ukrainian folk music, jokes, laughter, fun and dances were heard in the evenings” [17, p. 61].

In the workers’ villages in the Donbass, where there was a significant stratum of immigrants from the Ukrainian villages, traditional Ukrainian forms of courtship were preserved, to which new formed by the city were added. V. Sosiura recalled that on Palm Sunday, the girls of his working village slightly beat boys with cut branches of willow for fun. They “beat” the ones who they liked. That custom came from the Ukrainian village. But the custom to play forfeits during the youth party seemed to be an invention of the city. The essence of the game was as follows: young people were divided into couples according to their preferences, and then they sat in pairs together in chairs near each other. They were covered with a big kerchief and “confession” began. The girl asked, “Are you sinful? – Yes. – How many times have you sinned? – Ten”. According to the rules of the game it meant that the couple had to kiss ten times [18, p. 99]. The workers’ settlements of the Donbas kept the tradition of fights for girls “using big spiky

and cornel tree sticks we broke each other’s heads, ribs and cut each others’ bellies with knives” [18, p. 89]. When a boy was dating in a foreign village, he was met by local young people at night and being “loyal to the ancient mining tradition” they demanded the so-called “bribe” from the boy. In case of refusal, they mercilessly beat him [18, p. 101].

The youth of the working-class villages met regularly in a certain place in the evenings, where acquaintances and subsequent relationships naturally led to creation of young families. V. Sosiura, who was known to spend his youth in the Donbas settlement of Tretia Rota, recalled, “We, factory and rural youth, went to the square between the station and the factory and walked through the dusty alleys to the silver sounds of the factory orchestra. Boys wooed girls, and children threw burdocks that stuck in the local beauties’ dresses” [18, p. 102].

The NEP made the relationships between people more tolerant. Moreover, it was felt in relationships between sexes, in which a positive component cannot help dominating naturally. However, the state remained predatory. And since its punitive bodies were housed in cities, the city was the first to feel the heavy hand of the dictatorship.

The relationships of young people of different sexes in the city significantly differed from the rural ones. Here a significant role was played by Western culture. Young boys had the opportunity to invite their girlfriends to cinema, cafe, play, etc. Given that in relatively free 1920s many foreign films came to the cinema screens, and foreign music was very popular as well, it was not surprising that a significant part of the urban youth was subjected to the influence of Western culture. The youth arranged dance evenings playing popular the foxtrot and Charleston. Those dances were accompanied by communication of young people: they met, developed relationships. But, as S. Holitsyn noticed, “then they looked at Western dances and jazz like... I can’t even pick up the words what hideous epithets were used in the newspapers to describe idle dancers” [19]. Now it’s hard to believe, but a person might have been imprisoned because of the foxtrot. [19]. In 1926 in distant Siberian Yeniseisk there lived twenty young boys deported to Siberia for dancing the foxtrot [20, p. 95].

However, in the Ukrainian city in the 1920s traditions were kept since ancient times. As a writer S. Boiko said, characterizing vechornytsi on Kholodna Hora in the suburbs of Kharkiv, those were “customs and forms that have had centuries-old layers since Kvitka-Osnovianenko till present days” [21, p. 83]. Kholodna Hora was populated by “semi-peasant, semi-bourgeois people”, to which a criminal element was added. The party was held in a fairly spacious room where there were many boys and girls who spoke “surzhyk”. On the initiative of a guy, a local authority, drinks and snacks were jointly bought. The one who invested the largest sum of money became the hero of the evening. After drinks and snacks, dancing started. The harmonist played “Apple”, “Little bricks”, and even some “spicy”

couplets. Suddenly, through that bedlam in the group of girls, a Ukrainian song “A fulsome willow in the kitchen garden” was heard, and it made the bedlam keep silent and others join the song. And when they sang “Digging a well”, and then “Planted cucumbers”, then even the local authority and his friends began to sing. And when they started humorous folk songs, they began dancing and whistling. Then girls and boys giggled in the corners. At the table they played vingt-et-un, shouted, swore and tried to fight. But they calmed down [21, p. 83]. At such parties, premarital personal relationships between girls and boys were often established.

**Conclusions.** Thus, political, economic and social experiments of the Bolsheviks significantly influenced the premarital relationships of the Ukrainian youth. In the youth circles, the theories of “free love” and “a glass of water” became popular. Under their influence, the centuries-old traditions of premarital relationships between boys and girls were significantly distorted; a crackdown was had on the institution of the family, traditional understanding of the responsibility of parents for upbringing of their children. The new state simplified the registration of marriage and divorce procedure to a minimum. At the same time, in the village where the absolute majority of the Ukrainians lived, new visions of premarital relationships were not widely spread. There the premarital relationships of young people were preserved mainly in traditional forms, which presupposed creation of family couples within their social stratum. But in cities, a certain part of young people rushed to establishing “new” personal relationships between boys and girls. Primarily, they were the members of the Komsomol. On the basis of those “new” relationships extreme frivolity and banal immorality could not but grow. In the new vision of premarital personal relationships the authorities brought the thesis of an unconditional primacy of the interests of the political regime instead of the personal feelings of the beloved. That thesis was actually acknowledged to be fundamental and persistently promoted by the authorities. At the same time, political leaders were forced to state that “free love” in that understanding in which it spread among young people did not correspond to the interests of the state and a crackdown began. But this is the topic for further research.

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### **Сергієнко С. Ю. Вплив історичних реалій 20-х років ХХ ст. на дошлюбні особисті відносини української молоді.**

*На основі літератури, засобів масової інформації та архівних джерел розглядається вплив Революції та тогочасних соціальних реалій на дошлюбні особисті стосунки української молоді. Приділяється увага впливу теорій "вільної любові" та "склянки води" на особисті стосунки хлопців та дівчат. Зроблено висновки, що політичні, економічні та соціальні експерименти більшовиків суттєво вплинули на дошлюбні стосунки української молоді. У молодіжних колах стали популярними теорії "вільної любові" та "склянки води".*

*Під їх впливом багатовікові традиції надмірних стосунків між хлопчиками та дівчатами були істотно зірвані; було застосовано жорстокі заходи щодо закладу сім'ї, традиційне розуміння відповідальності батьків за виховання своїх дітей. Нова держава спростила процедуру реєстрації шлюбу та розлучення до мінімуму. Водночас у селі, де проживала абсолютна більшість українців, нові бачення дошлюбних стосунків не отримали широкого поширення. Там дошлюбні стосунки молоді зберігалися пе-*

*реважаю в традиційних формах, які передбачали створення сімейних пар у межах їх соціального прошарку. Але в містах певна частина молоді поспішала встановлювати «нові» особисті стосунки між хлопцями та дівчатами. В першу чергу вони були членами комсомолу. На основі цих "нових" відносин надзвичайна легковажність і банальна аморальність не могли не вирости. У новому баченні дошлюбних особистих стосунків влада висунула тезу про безумовну першість інтересів політичного режиму замість особистих почуттів коханої. Ця теза фактично була визнана фундаментальною та наполегливо пропагується владою. У той же час політичні лідери були змушені стверджувати, що "вільна любов" у тому розумінні, яке воно поширювало серед молоді, не відповідає інтересам держави, і почалася жорстка дія.*

**Ключові слова:** 1920-і роки; дошлюбні відносини; «вільне кохання»; молоддь.

### **Сергієнко С. Ю. Влияние исторических реалий 20-х гг. ХХ в. на добрачные личные отношения украинской молодежи.**

*На основании литературы, средств массовой информации и архивных источников рассматривается влияние социальных реалий революции и того времени на добрачные личные отношения украинской молодежи. Обращается внимание на влияние теорий «свободной любви» и «стакана воды» на личные отношения мальчиков и девочек. Делается вывод о том, что политические, экономические и социальные эксперименты большевиков значительно повлияли на добрачные отношения украинской молодежи. В молодежных кругах стали популярны теории «свободной любви» и «стакана воды».*

*Под их влиянием многовековые традиции добрачных отношений между мальчиками и девочками были значительно искажены; были жесткие меры в отношении института семьи, традиционного понимания ответственности родителей за воспитание своих детей. Новое государство упростило процедуру регистрации брака и развода до минимума. В то же время в селе, где проживало абсолютное большинство украинцев, новые представления о добрачных отношениях не получили широкого распространения. Там добрачные отношения молодых людей сохранялись в основном в традиционных формах, которые предполагали создание семейных пар в их социальном слое. Но в городах определенная часть молодых людей бросилась устанавливать «новые» личные отношения между мальчиками и девочками. В первую очередь это были комсомольцы. На основе этих «новых» отношений не могли не расти крайняя легкомыслие и банальная безнравственность. В новом видении добрачных личных отношений власти выдвинули тезис о безусловном главенстве интересов политического режима вместо личных чувств возлюбленного. Этот тезис был фактически признан фундаментальным и постоянно продвигался властями. В то же время политические лидеры были вынуждены заявить, что «свободная любовь» в том понимании, в котором она распространяется среди молодежи, не соответствует интересам государства, и начались репрессии.*

**Ключевые слова:** 1920-е годы; добрачные отношения; «свободная любовь»; молодежь.

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