

# The Relations between Soviet Government Entities and Scientific Institutions in the Context of a Postmodern Approach to History

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**Abstract:** *The article examines and analyzes the state structures of Soviet Ukraine in the 20s and 30s of the twentieth century, which were responsible for the organization, support and control in the field of culture and science of the country. In line with the postmodern transformations of this chronological segment, the system of state structures and their influence on the activities of semi-independent scientific organizations have been reconstructed. In view of postmodernism as a philosophical current, the nonviolent resistance of the scientific intelligentsia to proletarian culture, forced by the Soviet nomenklatura with a mass, uncompromising character, is revealed. The article proves that the evolution of modern society is due to the complex influence of a set of important trends and factors that determine the progressive development of its economic, political, social and spiritual spheres. The relevance of the study is due to modern transformation processes in a post-communist society focused on democratic, liberal European values. With the spread and development of liberal views in Ukrainian society, we are increasingly seeing the emergence of private scientific institutions, which are the prototypes of scientific organizations of the previous century. As a result, their internal activities and connections with other organizations are of great interest today, not only among scientists, but also among business representatives. This necessitates a more in-depth development of this problem, taking into account the evolution of the theory and practice of social and public administration of various forms of ownership of organizations and enterprises.*

**Keywords:** *Activity of scientific societies, Soviet Ukraine, postmodern transformations, state structures, scientific intelligentsia, post-communist society.*

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## Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth century in Ukrainian history was marked by turbulent and fleeting events against the background of state-building processes. At a time when the Russian Empire was going through the last days of its existence after the fiasco in the First World War, the territories of Ukraine, which were part of the empire, were given a chance for independence. However, the revival of the Ukrainian nation has created new problems related to too different views of domestic politicians on the future of the country. At a time when the national politicum was contemplating what the future independent Ukraine would look like, a new, radical political group, the Communist Party, was formed in Moscow. It showed her radicalism in the violent seizure of Ukraine, proclaiming a win-win slogan: "land to the peasants, factories to the workers." Thus, a new stateless historical period began for Ukrainians, and the protection of the country's national interests fell upon the shoulders of domestic scientists, the results of whose activities the whole world knew about.

The activity of the domestic intelligentsia and scientific societies in the conditions of Soviet policy has long been represented in the censorship-filtered works of totalitarian times. It is worth noting that the scientific literature written during the Soviet period mainly concerned the largest, central scientific institutions of the country, while the history of regional centers and their representatives was almost forgotten. In this context, the judgments of the Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov (2005) are relevant: "screams, rales and curses are carried from the pages of chronicles. Fear and hatred are their meaning. And the millennium of human Happiness, Joy and Hope, the huge epochs of peaceful labor that transformed the earth, were not reflected in the chronicles by Suleimenov (2005). The poet's reasoning is still relevant today, because for a long time the Ukrainian historical science of the Soviet era served as a political instrument for glorifying and valorization proletarian ideology, where the life of the average person did not play a significant role, but only served as part of then Ukraine.

Currently, it is vital to rethink the history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century using a multimodal approach. Having originated in the postmodern period, this approach involves a non-axiological unbiased and often deconstructive approach to the history of totalitarian regimes. Considering this, Udod's doctoral dissertation (2000) is significant, where for the first time in Russian historiography a scientist expressed his opinion about the power of the influence of historical science on the formation of the world

perception of society. Thus, the author notes that the distortion of historical facts under the pressure of the censorship bodies of communist propaganda led to the falsification of true historical reality. In his dissertation on the domestic intelligentsia of the 1920s and 1930s, Bachynsky (2004) states that the process of gaining independence and building the Ukrainian state clearly showed that the main driving force of these social phenomena is the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia were the first to respond to the slogans of “perestroika and democratization” put forward by the former party leadership of the Soviet Union, and became the initiators and first participants in socio-political movements and public associations.

At present, the study of historical processes in the 1920s and 1930s in Ukraine is carried out through a critical reassessment of the historical literature of the Soviet era, based on the use of new methodological approaches devoid of political planning. Therefore, the understanding of national history on the basis of thorough scientific research is relevant and necessary.

Modern historiography on selected issues is represented by scientific works, which fragmentarily cover the history of societies and their representatives - the scientific intelligentsia (Bachynsky, 2004; Suleimenov, 2005). Kotsur (2012), analyzing the historiography of Soviet times, proposed a classification of historical research, questioned the reliability of a number of facts and conclusions, which in the conditions of Bolshevism seemed to be evidence-based.

Vysoven (2004) and others considered the source base on the problem of the role of the intelligentsia in the development of science and education in their works.

### ***The postmodern approaches to recent history***

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there appeared four main groups of theories on the history (perennial, nationalist, modernist, and postmodernist) that demonstrated rapid changes in approaches to anthropological phenomena. This dynamic can be represented as a sequence of changes in the following paradigms: the cultural evolutionary theory – the structural-functional theory – the conflict theory – the postmodernist theory (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009). A variety approaches created by historians requires the deconstruction of the views on the historical events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that immediately preceded postmodernism as a global social phenomenon.

Prior to the postmodernist approach, historians believed that economism was the main driver of socio-historical progress. Later, however, it became clear that economic growth did not necessarily determine the quality and nature of social life. The postmodernist approach to history has proved that economics is only one of the factors of social freedoms, which also includes global and instrumental freedoms (Petković, 2004). Regarding the socio-political system of totalitarian countries, state planning and monopoly on the provision of social services and freedoms should have increased state responsibility. However, this did not happen in the USSR since there was no dialogue between administrative and scientific, public and other structures. Accordingly, there was no question of increasing personal or group political participation and promoting political freedom (Nerubasska, Palshkov, & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020).

In the late 1980s, research mostly dealt with the links between politics, political consciousness, and postmodern consciousness. The revealed patterns of change in policy under the bottom-up scheme provide rich material for revising and deconstructing the historical views of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Aronowitz, 1989).

Criticizing Karl Marx, postmodernists recognize the humanistic “artificiality” of his proposed market relations, whose implementation of in the Soviet Union, under the laws of naturalness and systematics, had restored natural capitalism and, at the same time, its primary contradictions (Jameson, 1990). Therefore, institutional processes during the formation of the communist system can be considered as those that did not occur naturally.

Postmodernists now realize that history has always been the most interpretive tool of social sciences since it is both an object and a subject of study. It was always based on a certain ideological assumption that determined the nature of historical thinking. One can argue, however, that before postmodernism, history relied on certain conceptual structures that sought speculative meanings disguised as analysis (Yilmaz, 2007). Postmodernist methodology has posed several key questions to historians:

1. Is it possible to represent human history holistically?
2. Is it possible to explain the past only by historical methods?
3. Can history lay claim to objective truth?

These questions, together with postmodernist conceptions of doubt and the relative nature of historical values, allow one to consider certain

aspects of the history of the Soviet Union as a country outside the global context of development in a more objective and multimodal manner.

Postmodernism acts as both a fact of history and its new methodology. This interpenetration shows the clear commitment of “orthodox” historians, who have always viewed history as “a chronicle of conflicts”, within always involves assessing parties, creating stereotypes, and granting the status of an authority to individuals and events. The questioning of values in the postmodern era has objectified the fact that structural and axiological approaches to history, characteristic of modernism, exclude multifaceted and comprehensive interpretations. Instead, postmodern historians view diachrony as the evolution of group and individual human identity (Price, 2021).

Recently, West European discourse has debated the nature of civil society in the Soviet Union and post-communist Russia, especially the birth of such a society in a totalitarian state. There are two views: a) totalitarian mechanisms were extremely powerful, so that there were no independent social organizations; b) an embryonic civil society took shape in the Soviet Union (Evans, 2016). This dualism of approaches necessitates a study of state institutions’ influence on the activities of scientific organizations in Soviet Ukraine.

The modernist conception of history was not positivist. It is relative, as is postmodernist. However, the latter denies “the fixation of texts and truths”, as well as the authority of historical subjects over the author. Therefore, the postmodernist conception is closer to the realities of ambiguous and rapidly changing life.

As noted by Michalowski (2017), historical interpretations are dominated by ritual or rhetorical deconstructionism. The recognition of such trends shows a broad perspective for understanding and predicting social change.

Given that the “fashion” for postmodernism passes, researchers seek to assess the impact it has had on social sciences. Roberts (2017) believes that the postmodern turn has had “particular implications for our understanding of the human relationship with history”, and one can observe their shortcomings. Postmodernists are critical of modernists, overly focused on text and discourse, which brings the history of events closer to the history of culture (Roberts, 2017). Furthermore, the postmodernist approach reduces history to the evolution of difference and identity, leading to the inflation of historicity. However, postmodernism objectifies the historical

process as the formation of human rights against the background of social reality, which makes its methods relevant today.

### **The struggle of Soviet party figures with the intelligentsia**

The period of the 1920s and 1930s in the history of the Ukrainian people has certain exceptional features, which are primarily characterized by a significant increase in national consciousness and the intensification of democratic processes. Such social changes in the Ukrainian environment were clearly evident in the first half of the 1920s. In the historical literature, this chronological period is known as the process of "indigenization" or "Ukrainization." This name was due to the temporary tactics of the newly created central leadership of the CPSU (b) in relation to the "little brothers", "sister republics", one of which was the Ukrainian SSR. The next, no less important period in the history of Ukraine, is the 1930s - the forced collapse of the Soviet government of any manifestations of party democracy and self-government as such. At this time there is a strengthening of authoritarianism and administrative-command system, which affected all spheres of life. The contrast of events unfolding on Ukrainian territory necessitates a thorough and detailed study of this historical issue.

The struggle of Soviet party figures with the intelligentsia began with comprehensive censorship during the reign of Lenin. It was believed that one must take all the culture left by capitalism and build socialism from it. It is necessary to take all science, technology, knowledge and art. Without this, one cannot build the life of a communist society. And this science, technology, art are in the hands of specialists. However, as practice has shown, the involvement of leading scholars of tsarist times was accompanied by the gradual restriction of their activities and the formation of a new politically controlled proletarian group of scholars.

Zyakun (2008) states that before the revolution in Ukraine and in the Russian Empire, the intelligentsia played an exceptional role in the spiritual life of society. This was due to the huge gap between the cultural and educational level of the average population and a small intelligentsia. But the 1920s and 1930s brought radical changes to the measured life of the intelligentsia (Zyakun, 2008). They were primarily due to the policy of the party leadership of the Soviet Union, which set itself the goal of forcing the intelligentsia to carry out activities in line with the newly created proletarian culture. As most scholars did not adopt new approaches to the organization of education and science of the country, the party leadership moved to

decisive action, which was based on uncompromising ideology and the fight against dissent.

A thorough study that reflects the complex conditions of the intelligentsia of Ukraine in the 20-30's of the twentieth century. As noted by Kotsur (2012), society was pushed to the background by the Soviet authorities. The very notion of intelligentsia and intelligence increasingly sounded contemptuous as softness, inconsistency, weakness of political will.

Tarapon (1999) paid considerable attention to the Proletarian cult, an organization that claimed the role of expressing the creative demands of the revolutionary masses and tried to subjugate the entire cultural life of the country to its influence. The scientist notes that the Soviet authorities sought to limit the development of Ukrainian culture by narrowing and controlling its activities. That is why the Proletarian cult was created. The author states: "According to the plans of the Bolshevik Party, Marxist criticism was to become" not only a function of literary studies, but also of party policy. " Its purpose was, according to the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) in 1927, to promote the identification and development of young literary forces, "comradely help individual writers and literary circles" to identify and correct "errors and perversions of a certain proletarian path to nationalist captivity" (Tarapon, 1999).

Such approaches opened up an unlimited field of activity to Marxist ideologues in culture. Since the term "bourgeois nationalism" covered a fairly wide range of "biases" and "perversions," Marxist criticism was directed at almost the entire nationally conscious creative intelligentsia.

Another Soviet body that supervised the activities of public (educational) organizations of Ukraine in the NEP (New economic policy) (1920-1929) was the Main Political Education. Golovpolitovita was created as a body of state propaganda of communism, which was subordinated to the direct ideological leadership of the Central Committee of the CP (b) of Ukraine. To carry out its tasks, this institution has organized a single network of institutions for socio-political and general cultural education and upbringing of the adult population in terms of management, organization of construction and relationships of its constituent parts and methods of work. All public, scientific organizations of Ukraine, which at least partially fulfilled the tasks of political education, had to coordinate their plans with the party.

As early as April 1921, a Scientific Committee was established within Ukgolovprofos (Provincial Committee for Vocational and Special Education), which was part of the People's Commissariat of Education, to

monitor the activities of scientific societies in Ukraine and direct it in the desired direction. This body was to monitor and coordinate the scientific intelligentsia in the wake of the proletarian revolution. The interference of officials in the internal affairs of societies is clearly visible regarding the names of societies during their re-registration.

Thus, the tactics of the Soviet government in the national and cultural aspects were completely under the control of specially created bodies, whose main task was to comprehensively filter the scientific achievements and achievements of scientists. The party monopolization of domestic science and culture was established, and a clear planning in science was introduced, which significantly limited the research space.

### **Necessary conditions for further research**

Among a number of educational (scientific) institutions an important place was occupied by scientific societies formed in tsarist times. They actively acted and served as a kind of impetus in the educational and scientific sphere of the Soviet state in the first years of its existence. An exceptional feature of societies in comparison with other educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) was democracy and self-government in management. However, this was the unfavorable factor that caused their rapid decline in the growing of command-and-control system.

The importance of societies in the period under study is emphasized by Savchuk (1995) and Bachynsky (2004). Thus, scientific institutions in the period 1917-1921 tried to preserve and create all the necessary conditions for further scientific activity. They became the nucleus that united the scientific elite of the country of representatives of different generations.

In general, scientific societies of Ukraine in the period of 20-30s of the XX century became a kind of center of democratic science of that time, because their functional basis was the principle of autonomy, which gave the Electoral Collegiate Council broad powers to manage society and facilitate the use of science. The council of the society, as well as the university council, had wide powers: considered and approved research programs in sections, commissions, was in charge of financing, publishing activities, formation of the society's personnel. Scientific societies acted on the principle of collegiality in decision-making, which contributed to the formation of a qualified community and the establishment of democratic principles in the organization of science. Productive cooperation of scientists was accompanied by the organization of various scientific and practical



events, which ensured the exchange of scientific information not only between representatives of the domestic intelligentsia, but also scientists from near and far abroad. The educational activity of the societies, which was manifested in the reading of public lectures, which accelerated the dissemination of information about the latest achievements of science, as well as the involvement of the general population in natural science knowledge, was also important.

In the early of 1920's, there were about 35 scientific societies in Ukraine, diversified in their field and located mainly in large cities. These and other information about scientific societies are given in the works of today's researchers. In particular, Tkachenko (2009), in his dissertation research, using archival materials, provides a complete list of scientific centers that operated in Ukraine in the early 20s of the twentieth century, and also determines the geography of their location. A logical continuation of the generalizing scientific works on scientific societies is the study of Parakhina (2006) "The contribution of scientific societies at AUAS (All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, hereinafter – AUAS) in the development of ethnological research in the 20s - early 30s of the twentieth century." The researcher was able to briefly analyze the activities of societies at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences to characterize the formation, geography of location, specialization and contribution of societies to domestic science. Thanks to this work, the following scientific societies became known: Kharkiv (founded in 1921), Poltava (1918), Myrhorod (1920), Pryluky (1927), Nizhyn (1925), Ekaterinoslav (1924), Zaporizhia, Odessa (1926), Mykolaiv (1923), Kamyanets-Podilsky (1924), Kremenchug (1923), Oster (1924), Konotop (1926), as well as the Chernihiv branch of the Ukrainian Scientific Society).

In this context, it is worth noting scientific works of Kotsur (2012) and others, who reconstructed the activities of the largest medical centers of Ukraine - Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa medical societies. Thus, Kotsur (2012) revealed the importance and social significance of medical centers. First of all, this is clearly reflected in the tasks set by the company. According to the scientist, the example of the Kharkiv Medical Society included: "Sanitary and anti-epidemic. activities of its members, which were aimed at the prevention and overcoming of epidemics, diagnosis, search and justification of effective means of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases of humans and farm animals. Kharkiv Medical Society and its members paid constant attention to the etiology and prevention of social diseases".

Kotsur (2012) reveals the best models of the structural organization of scientific institutions and notes that the activities of members of societies were clearly differentiated and organized, that is, it had both theoretical content - contributed to the dissemination of the latest scientific advances, scientific improvement of doctors, development of scientific-theoretical and applied foundations of various branches of medicine, and practical content - the fight against infectious and social diseases.

The period of 1928-1931 became a rubicon for the whole country. Portnov (2011), speaking about the changes that have taken place in Ukrainian society, notes: "Already in the late 1920s, the first political processes took place in Soviet Ukraine. The accusations were made primarily against representatives of the academic and artistic circles. " It was during this period that domestic society truly felt the power of the totalitarian system.

The full repressive machine started working after Lenin's death in 1924, when he was replaced by Stalin, a person with clear and uncompromising views on state-building. Among other general secretaries of the Communist Bolshevik Party, Stalin resorted to the most brutal methods of punishment for the slightest manifestation of dissent. If under Lenin the party leadership used censorship as a ban and opposition to the free-thinking of the intelligentsia, during the reign of Stalin special punitive bodies were created, the main task of which was to fight all legal and illegal methods against the national bourgeoisie (intellectuals). The main features of the totalitarian regime were: unlimited power of a single leader; comprehensive bureaucratization of public life; introduction of planned elements of management over all economic processes of the country; planned apoliticization of the public and its alienation from state affairs; rigid, uncompromising ideologization and mythologization of public opinion; creation of punitive, repressive bodies and special places of detention for those who dare to go against the system.

During this period, the regime's focus was on all spheres of human life, but it most severely affected the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which led to its inevitable impoverishment and poverty. To survive in inhumane conditions, scientists had to use social mimicry, disguise, hide their true thoughts and feelings, and so on. This led to the fact that the independence of thought became a dangerous parity, and completely different qualities prevailed - conformism, the ability to adapt, demonstrate devotion and "commitment" in the implementation of party guidelines.

The history of the Ukrainian people of this period is surrounded by many controversial issues related to the active public activities of the scientific intelligentsia. Tarapon (1999), analyzing the social position and manifestations of resistance to the totalitarian system by representatives of the creative intelligentsia of Ukraine in the 1920s - early 1930s points to the importance of the intelligentsia for society and the complexity of its coexistence with totalitarian Communist Party regime "The author notes that "the creative intelligentsia was one of the first to realize the establishment of a command-administrative system, state-bureaucratic methods of cultural management, class-vulgarized approach to creativity and tried to resist it". According to Tarapon (1999), an example of the active resistance of representatives of the literary intelligentsia to the imposition of a party monopoly in culture is "the fact of the publication by Bagryany (1996) in 1929 of the poem " Ave Maria ", which was published in one of the leading sectors of the press and was born without official permission from censorship (!). These were not only the author's reactions to the banning of a number of his works, but also a real rebellion, clearly outlined in the dedication to the poem: "To all rebels and protestants, all who were born a slave and do not want to be a slave, all offended and choked and their poor mother - I dedicate the cry of my heart" (Tarapon, 1999).

In the context of the study of the problem, Savchuk (1995) notes that in the period under review became dominant administrative-command methods of organizing science, which excluded democracy, initiative and self-government in scientific societies. This "automatically took them out of the planned scientific institutions" and led to their liquidation. A striking example of the party's destructive steps on the issue of scientific institutions, according to the researcher, was the November session of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in 1929, which decided to liquidate all local scientific societies that were part of the Academy of Sciences (Savchuk, 1995). This decision was officially approved in 1930 by the resolution of the Central Committee of the CP (b) of Ukraine "On the tasks of the party in the field of scientific work." The relevant normative document called for the fight against dissent in the scientific and educational spheres, as well as encouraged educators to uncompromisingly accept the principles of collectivity and planning in the organization of science. First of all, the above applied to scientists united in scientific societies. Since then, the internal organization of independent communities until recently was taken under personal control by the relevant state bodies, which made it virtually

impossible for the societies to work (Tkachenko, 2009).

## Conclusions

Comprehensive offensive of the totalitarian system in Soviet society in the early 30's of the twentieth century. left no chance to the scientific community for their existence. The first to stop their work were the cells that operated at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the fate of which was decided by the relevant order. Only for a short time did those scientific communities that acted separately survive. However, the repressive command-and-control system of Soviet society left no chance for anyone who tried to act outside its planned settings.

Thus, an analysis of the historical literature on the influence of the party nomenclature on the activities of scientific societies and the intelligentsia of Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s shows that under the conditions of the growing command-administrative system of state administration, the scientific community was going through difficult times caused by the rejection of the new proletarian elite of free, self-governing views of the old intelligentsia of imperial times. Researchers also use comparisons to characterize the emergence, extent and spread of repressive, totalitarian forms of government in the Soviet state in the first years of its existence. A group of scientists (Bachynsky, 2004; Zyakun, 2008), assessing the first ten years of existence of the Soviet state (1920-1930), point to the introduction and spread of censorship as a method of counteracting and struggle against scientific freethinking. Another group of scientists (Savchuk, 1995), characterizing the second decade (1930-1940), inform us about the creation of punitive and repressive bodies to combat both individual representatives of the scientific community. elites, and with entire groups, including scientific societies. During this period, the country truly felt the power of the totalitarian system, which covered all spheres of human life.

Thus, the analysis of the historical literature gives grounds to state that in the conditions of strengthening the command-administrative system of public administration the scientific community experienced difficult times caused by the new proletarian elite's rejection of free, self-governing associations of intellectuals. Researchers have described the emergence, scale of repression, the formation of totalitarian forms of government in the Soviet state in the first years of its existence. In particular (Bachynsky, 2004; Zyakun, 2008), assessing the first decades of Soviet power, point to the introduction and spread of censorship as a method of combating scientific

freethinking.

Savchuk (1995), characterizing the second decade (1930 - 1940), notes that at this time the Soviet authorities are creating special punitive and repressive bodies to combat both individual representatives of the scientific elite, and with entire groups, in particular, scientific societies. In the historiographical discourse on the activities of scientific societies of Ukraine in the conditions of Bolshevism policy of the 1920s and 1930s, the idea of the totalitarian regime's destruction of self-governing scientific associations, their subordination to party control, and the final elimination of creative freedom was established.

Historical investigations into the financial situation of scientific societies within the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences under Bolshevism testified to the deterioration of the financial situation of scientific centers in the 1920s. According to Parakhina (2006), this was caused by the unification and incorporation of the latter into the structure of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. After all, it was AUAS, having tied a number of scientific institutions to itself, that significantly reduced their funding, which negatively affected publishing activities. Another, no less negative step of the Soviet government towards scientific societies, was the selectivity of subsidiary aid, which led to the disappearance of a number of scientific centers.

Comparative analysis of the economic and political and legal situation of Ukrainian societies at the turn of the two centuries - XIX and XX gave grounds to note some positive changes in the scientific research of associations of scientists in the post-reform period and their decline under totalitarianism.

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