THE GENDER SYSTEM OF CARELIA (1950-2000)

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Introduction
Adopting the West-European theories and practice in Russia has always provoked fruitful discussions both among scholars and within the social and politic environment. Since the democratic development of Russia was officially approved of in the beginning of 1990th these discussions have become more prominent. Gender issue, particularly women's studies are getting an essential part of the discussions in modern Russia. More and more non-government women's organizations apply to the gender approach in their strategies, while some researchers are studying Russian realities focusing on gender aspect. At the same time, attitudes towards questioning the gender relations at the social and politic level vary tremendously. The paper presented below can be regarded as an attempt to adjust the gender approach to research of the local history. The aim of this paper is to try to adopt the gender system theory examined and interpreted by a Swedish women’s researcher Hirdman Yvonne to the history of the Republic of Carelia, situated in the north-west of Russian Federation.

The gender system is a social and cultural space/process in which concepts on masculine and feminine are being formed which can be traced on institutional, cultural and biological levels. Both consciously and unconsciously sticking to the concepts on masculinity and femininity prevailing in their social and cultural space people try to fit their gender. This process of shaping and fitting the gender also produce inequalities between men and women. Power relations within the family, and social, politic and economic dimensions are given a special attention in this theory. Besides, the elements of the system reproducing subordination of the women are carefully analyzed. There are two logics lying behind the gender system function: the principle of dichotomy, i.e. division of life into male and female/the segregation of the sexes , and the principle of hierarchy, namely dominance of the male norms. The concrete display of the gender system which is connected to the place, time, age, class, generation, mentality etc. is a gender contract. The gender contract can be identified by analyzing a certain social and cultural space generating formal and informal norms and ideas on masculine and feminine. It should be also noted that gender, economic and politic systems are interrelated.

The gender system theory appears to be a universal tool / method to study any society due to the immanent co-existence of women and men. The changeability of the system enables us to trace the dynamics of shaping and changing norms and stereotypes in the society, and how these norms affect people belonging to a certain social group fitting their gender. The interrelation of the gender, economic and politic systems is also of a vital importance for understanding the historical process from the gender perspective. Thus, the application of the gender system to the history of Carelia in 1950-2000 appears to be rather expedient.

Russian trends
Development of the gender system in Carelia in the given period has been affected both by All-Russian trends and peculiarities of the local national, migration, social and economic policy. Thus, living standards in urban area have been significantly higher than that of the country due to the Soviet economic strategy aimed at forcing large-scale industries at the expense of agriculture. Therefore, transformation of the patriarchal norms among rural population constantly being under pressure of the state led to the deformity of the norms at the turn of the century. On the whole, the gender contract of Soviet Russia can be defined as a contract of "working mother" as many Russian sociologists point out.
The October Revolution of 1917 year which declared not only the hegemony of the proletariat but also a full equality between men and women contributed directly to the massive involvement of women into the labor market. Lenin's words express the Soviet ideology in this respect: "Social production and women's participation in it is required in order to liberate women, and therefore, give them equal rights with men". Labour was regarded as the most important prerequisite of women's self-assertion. Moreover, a massive involvement of women in the labour market was a necessary part of the economic policy of the state required a huge amount of cheap and reliable labour forces to set up and sustain a process of industrialization started in 1928 year. Widespread ideological propaganda contributed to the formation of an effective and enthusiastic working class which was comprised both of women and men. Apart from that, the idea of self-restriction and asceticism was popular among most Soviet workers. However, women were in addition grateful to the Communist Party and state for granting equal rights with men which enhanced their enthusiasm to some degree. However, the price paid by the women for the "bright future" was somehow higher than that the price of men, since often conditions for childbearing and childcare had scarcely been set up to allow women to combine their paid work with motherhood. Fatherhood traditionally was confined to the biological contribution of men to conceive a baby and supply the family with money. Though often the man's salary was not enough to cover family expenses, and women should go to work. Children in that case were left either to nurseries or to their grandmothers.

Notable feature of the gender system in the USSR is that Soviet women were the greatest conductors of transforming the Soviet ideology, and it's preserving in the society through the school education system and the special women's organisations aimed at attracting women to the paid work which were especially active in the 1930th. The female teachers in the schools were strictly limited to the school program given in the light of the Communist party's merits, and, therefore, they "were bounded to bound" the pupil's minds imposing the Soviet way of thinking. In such narrow space for thinking, these women could hardly seriously question traditional male and female values and obligations prevailing in the family.

Local features

Generally speaking, two kinds of gender contracts can be distinguished in Carelia: one for the countryside and one for the urban area.

According to a defence strategy of the Soviet State adopted in 1920s, processing industries were not developed in the border area of the republic, to the west of the railroad Murmansk-Leningrad, and, therefore, agriculture and forest cutting belonged to the only occupation among local people in this territory. Thus, the majority of Finno-Ugrian population of Carelia lived to the west from the strategically important railway road: the rural population in 1959 year consisted of 48% Russians, 24,4% Carelians, 15,5% people from Byelorussia, 3,5% people from Ukraine, 3,2% Finns, 1,5% Vepses, and 3,9% other nationalities; while the urban population in the same year was amounted to 72,5% Russians, 6,5% Carelians, 8,4% people from Byelorussia, 3,6% people from Ukraine, 4,9% Finns, 0,9% Vepses, and 3,2%. The rural population is still concentrated in Finno-Ugrian area - 100% in Veps National Volost, Kemskij, Kondopozhskij, Pitkarantskij, and Prionezhskij districts as All-Russian census of 2002 year proves.

The intricate complexity of traditional Finno-Ugric beliefs and Orthodox influence contributed to preserving patriarchal traditions in this area longer than that in the towns. Furthermore, the rural population was condemned to survive in disaster conditions due to the deliberately unbalanced development of rural and urban areas according to the industrialization policy. That led to the formation of the gender contract comprising the deformity of patriarchal traditions meaning a "spoiled" image of masculinity associated with alcoholism and social orphanage since women combining the paid work (which was much heavier than the work in the towns) and household could not give sufficient attention to their children.

Another type of the gender contract can be found in the urban area, where by contrast with the rural area, paper and pulp industry, tractor and shipbuilding, and heat and power production industry etc. were rising up. Thus, industrial development took place to the east of the railway road. This territory was populated mostly by Slavs including people from Ukraine, Byelorussia and Middle Volga region. Moreover, a huge labour force demand in 1944-1949, caused by the mass repressions and war losses,
was filled up by women, doing mainly unskilled poorly-paid work (1939 - 37,7% women of total labour force, 1970 - 53-54%).

This area was marked by growing worker's settlements and towns. Political propaganda was concentrated here, and social-cultural sphere was given clearly higher attention than that of the rural population. The contract of "working mother" as everywhere in the USSR had been developing here since the massive involvement of women had occurred. However, notable peculiarly of Carelia was that until the 1970th the majority of women were concentrated in the industrial sector (sawmills, machinery building plants etc.) where they did indirect manual unskilled and, therefore, poor paid work. One can assume that such a heavy work made the burden of the Carelian women especially hard. For that reason, help of the grandmothers in children upbringing was inevitable, and, therefore, grandmothers' contribution to the care of the children is a decisive factor of the gender contract in the urban area in Carelia.

Finno-Ugrian villages

As mentioned above the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population of Carelia, namely Carelians, Veps, and Finns, lived to the west from railway road Murmansk-Leningrad and was occupied in heavy agricultural works and partly in seasonal logging works in the forest. Finno-Ugrian ways of life and the Carelian language traditionally maintained stronger positions in the region around Belomorsk, while the indigenous population in the surroundings of Olonets was more affected by the Slav culture which clearly demonstrates a lot of Russian loanwords used in the dialect in this area.

Until the 1940s the patriarchal social order was inscribed in the gendered division of space in the living quarters. The main room was divided vertically into female and male compartments, and each corner of the main room had a specific name. "The great corner" or "the corner of god" appeared to be the most important of the corners. The master of the house sat in this corner and entertained male visitors. The opposite corner, on the women's side, was reserved for women and female guests. The position of the patriarch of the family directly under the "gods" in the upper part of the main room, as "god" or head of his wife and family, was analogous to the position of God as the head of humankind. The husband had a right to beat his wife for the sake of remanding her inferior position in relation to her husband. There was a clear division into the male and female work. Fishing, hunting, plowing, and earning money outside the village belonged to the male work, while cleaning the house, cooking, child upbringing, and milking the cows was of the female sphere. Meanwhile, women did male work when their husbands earned money by cutting woods outside the village. However, men did never female work as it was ashamed and threatened their masculinity.

Transformation of the traditional masculinity and femininity started as the state began to pressure the villages and expose different experiments in the agricultural sphere as a whole. The corner-stone of the Soviet economic strategy was an intensively development of heavy industries at the expense of consumer goods and agriculture. Capital investments in 1946-1950 in the agricultural branch was fourteen times as little as in the industrial development of Carelia (17 million rubles in the agriculture, and 242 million rubles in the industries). Apart from the poor financing, the country side experienced a huge labour demand caused by war losses and repressions of the Finno-Ugrian people. The rural population reduced from 60 to 28,4 thousand people in 1945, and female population was 5 times as much as male population. Thus, one can assume that the recovery of the agriculture after the war was to the greatest extent on women's hands. Women's significant contribution to the recovery enhanced their status in the country side considerably.

It should be mentioned that there were some attempts to increase the rural population by resettling the population from other districts of Carelia as well as other parts of Soviet Union, but they gave a fade result. Unwillingness of most people to come over and settle in the villages can be explained by the economic weakness of the kolkhozes, disaster living conditions and limited by law allowances to have a plot of land attached to a house so that people could not cultivate as much vegetables as they managed and grow as much cattle as they wanted. In the kolkhozes the overwhelming majority of the cultivating work was done by hands. For instance, one kolkhoz had got 1,5 agriculture machine on average in Kestengskji raijon. During the whole Soviet period the state artificially set the prices of agricultural products at the extremely low level in comparison with the price levels actual in the industries. The state purchasing prices of agricultural products had not changed since 1928, while the state prices of industrial products increased by 20 times from 1928 to 1950. Taxes from the plots
attached to the houses of the people working for kolkhozes comprised one fifth part of all expenses of
the peasant household. The kolkhozniks got 25 kopecks for one liter of milk, while the price in the state
stores was 2 rubles and 70 kopecks per liter of milk, i.e. 10 times higher. In the mid-1950s the small
agricultural units were abolished, and were united into bigger units, while the plots attached to the
houses became miserably small. In the end of 1950s all small farms and kolkhozes were liquidated,
and instead of them larger units called sovkhozes were formed. These reformation contributed to
increasing financing of the agriculture sector from the state and led to specialization of the agriculture
production providing sovkhozes with necessary machinery equipment. Thus, stock breeding (diary
farming, poultry keeping, and fur production) become the main branch in the agricultural sector of the
Carelion economy by 1970s, i.e. corresponded to 80% of GDP of the agricultural products. Therefore,
the situation turned to the better and some progressive sign came up clearly during the 1970s.
However, living standards were still lower than that of the urban population: the pension of the people
occupied in the agricultural sector (introduced only in 1964 year!) was 3 times as little as the pension
of the people living in the urban area (12 rubles : 36 rubles respectively in 1966, and 13 rubles : 43
rubles in 1971). One can note that 45% of the agricultural works still belonged to the manual works.
The fact that until 1974 year the people living in the villages had no right to have a passport and,
therefore, no right to leave their village as they wanted clearly proves that the state treated the rural
and urban population in different ways. Though, Carelian women from the villages found a peculiar
way to escape by getting married with a man living in a town. As a result, the number of men at the
age of 16-34 was 4,6 thousand higher than women at the same age by the end of 1980s. The social
security infrastructure in the villages was definitely underestimated by the state. There were 4 doctors
per 10 000 people in the country side in the 1950s; that of the urban area was 22 doctors per 10 000
people.
High taxes, unrealizable plans of the crops set up by the state, lack of the machinery, extremely low
purchasing prices of the agricultural products prescribed by the state, poor social infrastructure, power
and energy supplying made the people in the villages to survive giving a narrow room for
cultural/social/personal development which is an essential element for changing the stereotypes in the
society. In terms of the country side the state was more likely to use a pressure as a tool than to
conduct an effective propaganda work and try to improve living conditions of the rural population as it
did in the urban area.
While living conditions got worse and worse (with some improvements in the 1970s), men appeared to
be weaker than women to meet these severe experiences which resulted in a constant growing number
of men drinking alcohol drinks. As a consequence, men started neglecting their traditional male
obligations as fishing, preparing wood fire, bringing water to the house etc. Since men started ignoring
their traditional job because of hard drinking, women did it instead of them, at the same time
continuing their traditional work about the house. As a consequence, women's' status in the villages
grew from year to year. In addition, heroic behavior of the women after the war during the recovery of
agriculture in the republic, and their heavy work equally to men's work in the kolkhozes and
sovkhzes contributed to enhancing the status of the rural women in their villages.
"Perestroika"s policy towards liquidation of the non-perspective villages and a huge economic crisis
in the 1990s provoked accomplishing the gradual process of changing the concepts of masculinity and
femininity in the Finno-Ugrian villages. In this period, almost all financial support from the state had
stopped for some years and unemployment has become a scourge of the country side as many
sovkhzes have been closed down. Men proved to be less flexible than women in the changing
economic situation and worsening living conditions which led to an increasingly growth of alcoholism
among them. Due to the alcoholism and heavy work, life expectancy of the men living in the rural area
fell from 62,4 years in 1990 to 53,4 in 2001. (As for the rural women these figures correspond to 73,5
in 1990 and 69,9 in 2001.) Gradually, the authority of the men who used to decide over and master
their families in the 1930s declined dramatically in the 1990s. The indirect fact proving the discredit of
masculinity in the villages is that witch-doctors which traditionally were men in the beginning of XX
century became predominantly women in the end of the century.
In this period and still nowadays masculinity in the villages is strongly associated with alcoholism. As
status of the women rose considerably, most of them avoided beating by their husbands. However, the
Finno-Ugrian women, the strongest preservers of traditions in their society, paradoxically have not
exercised the gained power in their relations with their husbands probably due to their strong
adherence to traditions and old norms which limited their ability to destroy/change stereotypes on male and female obligations about the house and children. The worst thing in the rural gender contract is that poor attention has been given to children upbringing due to the heavy burden of the women, and inactivity of their husbands. The socialization process of the children has been taking place mostly among their friends and within their families in the form of adopting the behavior models of their relatives. The socialization space has been catastrophically narrow, one-sided, and full of negative examples which insensibly leads to the further degradation of the villages or simply to their disappearance. Thus, social orphanage has become an every day’s phenomenon in the rural area. Statistic data provide reliable evidence to the absence of sexual education among the rural pupils and lack of knowledge about contraceptive agents. Thus, despite the bad living conditions birth rate is still higher in the villages than in the towns: 35,9 born per 1000 women at the age of 15-49 in the countryside, and 31,1 born per 1000 women in the towns. The majority of the children are born by the women at the age of 18-19 years. Furthermore, horrifying figures on infant mortality prove a catastrophic situation for the motherhood, and child bearing: 174,1, 174,5 and 111,6 dead in 1995, 1999 and 2002 respectively. To sum up, the present gender contract in the Finno-Ugrian villages is featured by an enduring working woman taking care of the home and her husband which is often drunk. The social orphanage is a special feature of the gender contract which threatens the existence of the villages as a whole. Though, in some villages the more threatening feature is currently found in addition to the social orphanage, and that is a growing number of women getting alcohol addicted. One can assume that under such circumstances patriarchal gender relations are transforming into ugly and hardly describable forms. Unemployment in conjunction with strictly limited conditions of social cultural development of the population makes degradation of the rural population a serious threat in modern Karelia.

Towns and workers’ settlements
As mentioned earlier, the development of industrial sector and growth of the urban population had been taking place mostly to the east of the railway road Murmansk-Leningrad. While, the workers' settlements grew in numbers (14 in 1945, 37 in 1959, 40 in 1970, and 44 in 1990), the towns increased in terms of population. Petrozavodsk, capital of the republic, has been a dynamically developing economic and industrial center. By 1970 its population reached 184,5 thousand, while in others 11 towns an average population was amounted to 40 thousand.

The growth of the workers' settlements is closely connected to the forest industry development as they were built near the cutting areas. The female labor was gradually getting an essential part of the forest industry which was caused by a sharp demand of the labor force in the forest industry in 1930-1950s. That demand contributed to involving women's work force into the forest industry, and wood processing factories.

Massive involving of women into the industrial sector began with issuing a special plan in 1930 aimed at increasing number of working women during the fifth five-year plan. The Karelian plan of 1931 year set up a goal to raise women’s labour share in the industry to 25,7% or 12 thousand women from 20,5% actual for 1930 year.

So called elucidating work was elected as a tactic to attract women to work for the industry. The work included arranging various meetings and conferences for housewives and female peasants with the purpose to explain that it was necessary for women to work to gain their self-assertion and feel comfortable in the new society, and that girls needed to get educated likewise boys. This work also comprised a political agitation which often resulted in admitting some women to the Communist Party. Thus, the number of female members of the local Communist Party achieved 8239 in 1938 year (18,63%) from 3900 in 1930 year (12,26%).

Socialistic competition rapidly spreading all over Karelia became an important measure to attract women to do paid work. It is worth noting that some women did exhausting work damaging their health and fertility. Thus, on the forest cutting works, women’s teams logged of the trees and transported logs from the forest. One of the female team led by Marfa Koboeva and Ivanova (Rugozerskij forest plant) logged 11-13 m3 (28-33 trees) per day! Given the low level of mechanization, this work claimed a lot of physical crafts and efforts. However, the majority of the
women working in the forest industry carried auxiliary, low qualified and poor paid work such as cutting branches. 4000 women were employed in the sawmills, and made up 36.3% of the total number of the workers in this sector in 1933. Meanwhile, the number of working women grew in other industries: thus, 21.8% of the workers of the building industry were women (1933). A factory producing mica-loading paper in Petrozavodsk was gradually becoming a female dominated industry. As it opened there were only 19 women working there, in 1932 their number increased to 351, and in 1937 up to 569.

The total percentage of women’s participation in the industries was amounted to 28.4% in 1931, 29.7% in 1933, and 40.1% in 1936. The figures clearly demonstrate that the massive involving of the women into the labor market in the republic was achieved by the end of 1940s. Yet, as in other regions of Soviet Union and many countries in the world, women did low qualified job which badly affected their salaries, and sometimes truly heavy work which damaged their health. The number of the women doing semi-skilled and low skilled work increased from 10.5% to 32.7% and from 1.6% to 24.5% respectively during 1932.

The position of women as paid workers strengthened due to Patriotic War (1941-1945) when more women started doing male job on the forest logging, sawmills, and other industries. After the war women living in the towns were actively attracted to go work in the factories and plants built in the urban area as more labour forces were needed to continue industrialization in Carelia. A major part of investments was allocated to set up paper and mass production, energy and power supplying systems, tractor-building, ship-building, and aluminium industry. Onezhskij plant in Petrozavodsk producing machinery for agriculture and equipment for paper and mass production, Nadvoitskij aluminium factory, Petrozavodsk plant on reinforced concrete constructions, brickworks Kondopoga and Letnerechensk, sawmill in Segezha offered job to women. The number of workers in the industries increased from 20.3 thousand in 1945 to 98.9 thousand in 1955. Without the massive involvement of the women in the plants and factories growing in the urban area such a rapid industrial development and number of workers was hardly possible. One can add, however, that women were primarily recruited for the manual work, and, therefore, were paid worse than men.

Yet, not only women implied a great source for replenishing labour force demand; 40% of the plants and factories were built by the prisoners sent to Carelia; both female and male workers from Ukraine, Belayarussia and Volga Region (30 000 people came from these regions during the first decade after the war) came to the republic and got employed in the forest industries. Both prisoners and immigrants constituted fundamental population of which workers' settlements in Carelia. A variety of social and cultural elements which were brought to Carelia by these groups of workers defines development of special features of the general gender contract shared by the urban population in Carelia as a whole. Thus, in the town of Medvezhjegorsk where initial population consisted of prisoners the gender contract is characterized by macho-culture affecting the male norms in this area (macho-culture is an essential part of the Soviet prison environment). While, families from Ukraine and Belayarussia were inclined to sustain a female image associating with health, strength and work. There is no doubt that the impact of the prisoners and immigrants on the gender system in the towns and settlements they lived gives a significant space for further consideration and analysis.

Returning to the general trends of the gender system in the Carelian urban area one can note that the massive involvement of the women into the production industries made the authorities reflect on developing day care system for small children. The establishment of this system began in the beginning of the 1930s with organizing day nurseries and kindergartens by the factories and plants where a big number of women worked. 289 day nurseries and 424 kindergartens for 6,5 and 5,8 thousand children correspondingly were functioning in the republic in 1936. There were already 9000 children going to 400 day nurseries in 1940. The overwhelming majority working in the children day care system was women; traditional women's obligations in children upbringing were started to transfer from the family/private sphere to the state/public day care sector with only women working there. This transferring was fully being in the line with Lenin's slogan calling to turn a little household into a big socialistic one.

It is worth, however, noting that medicosanitary conditions and skill and education of the personal were far from being acceptable. Moreover, given the number of women started doing paid work, the number of day cares built up was not enough. Thus, many working mothers did not manage to find any place available for their child in the nursery or kindergarten. At the same time, they could not give
up their job and live on their husbands' salary to bring up the children partly due to the low level of salaries not sufficient if only one of the spouses worked, partly due to the strong propaganda of a working woman carried through the posters, movies, songs, and propaganda work etc. Given the fact that the mothers were allowed to have only one paid month to take care of a new born child (one paid month plus they had before to give a birth to a child), the only possible solution for most families was to rely on grandmothers' help in care of the children. In general, the role of the grandmothers in upbringing the children was very significant in many regions in Soviet Union, and which impact it had on the children's further life and preserving the old norms and stereotypes in the society in general, is a separate and extensive subject for studies.

Furthermore, most families could not control the number of the children they wanted to have since neither information on contraceptive agents was available nor any aborts were allowed from 1934 until 1955. Thus, there were no possibilities for the families and for the women in particular to control the process of procreation. For that reason, in spite of bad conditions for motherhood and having children, the birth rate was still high: 36.9 born per 1000 people in 1950, 30.3 - in 1959, 25.8 in 1970, 21 in 1980, 19.2 in 1985, 13.3 in 1990. Apparently, one can notice, that the state might had been interested in sustaining the prohibition of aborts and strictly limited knowledge of the population on controlling the reproduction process; even in hard conditions for having children, the families often were forced to have many children without knowing how to control the number of children.

Meanwhile, the enlargement of the day care system was progressing. In the period of 1951-1955 the number of places in the day care centers increased by 4364, and in the period of 1956-1960 the kindergartens and nurseries got 8090 new places. Yet, it was not sufficient to cover the demand. That's why the practice of the grandmothers’ upbringing their grandchildren was quite widespread.

Later on, the paid maternity leave was prolonged to 112 days. As soon as the maternity leave was over, single mothers got miserable child allowance if their salary did not exceed a certain level set by the state. However, no child allowance was paid to the women having husband. Child allowance was paid in case if salary of the husband was extremely low. In the given conditions the mothers were completely economically dependent on their husbands during the period they were at home with their baby.

In spite of the poor conditions for motherhood and care of the children, the state succeeded keep women working in the industries and other sectors of economy. One of the most effective and long-perspective tool to do that (the same tool was used to keep the people satisfied with the system as a whole) was a penetrating propaganda work held in the schools where the major socialization process took place. It should be mentioned that the valuable channels and conductors of the Soviet ideology in the schools were women as they made up the majority of teachers. Preparation of the school programs for literature, the Russian language and history was given a special attention as these subjects were meant to form world view of the pupils. Historical events were thought so that the role of the Communist Party was often exaggerated. The reading of the works of great authors and poets such as Chehov, Pushkin, Tolstoi, and Lermontov was focus on the subordination position of the people under the Tsar regime. A wide spectrum of verses, poems, novels, stories, and diaries were scarcely mentioned. Therefore, the female teachers gone through the political propaganda work as they were young were meant to make the pupils perceive Soviet norms and values as the only right ones. The female teachers having no access to the new West-European ideas, and strongly constrained by the school program rather unconsciously were the great supporters of the Soviet ideology and it's reproduction in the thinking of the new generation. The Communist Party admitted the role of the women in strengthening the position of the party saying that the Party educated reliable and faithful to the Soviet ideas women which embodied a great power in the Communist building. In this narrow space for thinking, both female teachers and school girls could hardly question their role of mother and housewife which they were meant to follow, even though they did/will do paid work as their husbands/fathers did. So, the gender contract prevailing within the family had been also influenced by the Soviet system and education system in particular as it constituted certain boundaries for thinking, which in its turn made it hard to question the determinism of the tradition roles of the woman and the man within the family.

Meanwhile, in the period of 1960-1970 living conditions were considerably improved: houses were equipped with water supplying raised from 26 to 52% during 1960-1970, district heating raised from 13% to 40%, sewerage system increased from 26% to 52%. So no heavy physical work (making fire
wood, bringing water etc) usually done by men was left anymore. However, the women were not
liberated by the state from their traditional obligations within the family as the consumer service such
as laundry, canteens, and dry-cleaning was poorly developed. Cooking took a lot of time, since the
food / goods sold in the stores were scarcely processed. Thus, unbalance between the work men done
at home and women done stood out clearly during this period. Women did generally a lot more work
about the house than men, though performed paid likewise their husbands.

In this respect, it is interesting to look at the investigation on a day's time distribution conducted in the
1980s. As the sociological studies prove women spent 3,18 hours per day to do work about the house
on a work weak, while men only 1,10 hours per day. On Saturday and Sunday women's contribution to
the household was 7,16 and 5,30 hours per day respectively, while men spent 2,02 hours on Saturday
and 2,04 hours on Sunday. As a result, free time allocation was wholly opposite: men had got 3,16
hours of free time per day on a work weak, women had got only 1,30 hours per day; men had got 9,38
hours of free time on Saturday and 7,4 hours on Sunday, the corresponding figures for women were
4,20 hours and 6,12 hours.

As women were clearly overloaded by combining the work within and outside the home, and men
traditionally did not take care of their children, the latter ones were often not given sufficient attention
in the family. On average men spent 35 minutes per day on a work weak taking care of the children,
while women spent 46 minutes for that purpose. On weekends, this time was slightly more, namely
men spent 44 minutes on Saturday and 1 hour and 8 minutes on Sunday taking care of their children,
while women spent 1,14 hours and 57 minutes. One can assume that both relatives for different
reasons could not manage to pay enough attention to communication with their children. In this
respect, it should be noticed that grandmothers often replaced the relatives spending much more time
with the grandchildren than the relatives.

The reasonable question is why living and working conditions as well as social system, including
maternity and child bearing and consumer service had not been improved since the 1960s so that
women's obligations in the family and their role as mothers could have been facilitated. The
explanation can be found in the economy policy defining both by the central and local authorities. The
majority of the investments continued to come in extension of the industrial sector of the republic and
construction of new factories based on extracting the natural recourses of the republic (ore mining and
processing plant in Kostomuksha, stone-working factory and plant on producing schungite in
Kondopoga, plant on colophony mastic extraction in Medveszegorszk, plant on producing schungite
gravel in Petrozavodsk etc.). 95-97% of the investments was meant to build up new plants, while only
3-5% was supposed to spend to renovate the old ones. As a result, plants were getting old-fashioned,
and manual work constituted 42% of the total works held in the industrial sector. The manual work
was mostly done by women as some researchers point out. So, in stead of renovation of the old plants
which would raise their efficiency, improve working environment and bring profits which would allow
financing the social sphere and making living standards of the people better, the authorities preferred
to extend the industrial sector and build new plants. However, workers whose education level raised
and enthusiastic spirit fell were not motivated to work on the low efficiency lines, in the unpleasant
environment and low salary hardly covering their material needs and encouraging their professional
and cultural development. Consequently, stagnation in the economy sector reflected in the minds as
people lost interest to work effectively. As a result of this economy policy in Carelia, social program
which was approved of on the XXIV congress in 1971 aimed at improving conditions for pregnant
women and mothers in particular could be hardly implemented in real life, since no little investments
were left to raise social security. Furthermore, female employees to the great extent constituting social
sector were paid worse salary than the industrial workers and employees (86% of the employees in the
social security, health and physical culture branch were women, 85% people working in the education
system were women, 75% of the employees working with art and culture were women).

As a result of the economic stagnation as well as stagnation in the minds taking place in the 1980s and
the collapse of Soviet Union a huge economic crisis broke out in Russia, in Carelia in particular which
led to enormous cutting-down the industrial sector. Thus, timber industry in the republic diminished
by 53,3% (68,7% throughout Russia), while metal-working and machinery construction industries
were cut down by 84,6% (54,7%) from 1991 to 1997. The massive cutting-down the industries led to
a sharp unemployment, 74% of the employees lost their work were women in the beginning of 1990s.
In Carelia unemployment among women was 3 times higher than among men: 2,8 thousand women
and 0.9 thousand men were unemployed in 1992. Gradually the difference reduced. In 2000 6.2 thousand women and 3.6 thousand men had no work.

The worsened living conditions and instability in the society led to falling the birth rate: 13.2 born per 1000 people in 1990 year and 7.9 born per 1000 people in 1999. As the social programs were being cutting down, the day care centers started closing down: from 542 (60470 places) in 1991 the number of the centers fell to 311 (28196 places) in 2000 year. Yet, given the number of children, the number of the day care centers is enough due to the very low birth rate during the last decade. As maternity issue has become almost neglected, the grandmothers’ assistance is still taking place in many families, though to less extent.

"Perestroika" made the Soviet values and ways of life a subject of a sharp criticism, an idea of a “women's natural destination” became extremely popular. According to Michael Gorbachev: “Women must be liberated and allowed to stay at home longer”. This can be explained by wish to eliminate/diminish covert unemployment estimated at 30 – 50% of the total labour force of the USSR. Thus, the image of a working woman so attractive in the USSR was criticised. This trend has been progressing during the transition phase as the division into male and female sphere is getting sharper. Surprisingly, the course towards democratisation sometimes has been associated with returning to traditions implying a hard working man, bread-winner, and a woman, good wife and mother. On the other hand, a lot of women adjusted to the changing conditions started their career in the small- and medium scale business. However, doing business in the highly profitable industries such as timber industry, building, transport and extractive/manufacturing industry in Carelia is hardly possible for women. These industries belonged to a male dominated sphere: forest industry (85%), building (75%), transport (76%) and extractive and manufacturing industry (61%). While, the majority of the employees working in the low paid sector financed by the state constitutes women: 87% of the people working with health, phisycal structure, and social security system were women in 2001, 85% working in the education system were women, 76% women worked in the culture and art field. Women are less paid in all branches: in the industries a woman’s salary on average constitutes 73% of a man's salary, in the agriculture this figure makes up 73%, in the building industry - 83%, in the social security, health and physical culture sector - 74%. In general, the female salary constitutes 67% of the male salary. Apparently, it contributes to feminization of the poverty. However, in respect to the labour market segregation it should be noticed that in contrast with West European countries, loaning, financing and insurance sphere belongs to female dominated branch as 82% of those who work in this sector are women (2001). It can be probably considered as a Soviet heritage, as there were women who often were responsible for accounting in the Soviet enterprises. However, at that time economic development was determined by a political will so that no decision making could be made in the economic sector by its actors. Women were rather so to speak reliable executors. Nowadays one can assume that women play the same role as they did during the Soviet Era, while the male minority in the business elite rules the emerging market economy. It is worth noting, however, that women working with loaning, financing, and insurance are paid considerably better than those who working for instance in the education system; the salary of the latter ones is 5 times less.

Women's representation in the present local parliament constitutes 18% which reflects weakening the status of the women in the society as a whole. In the Soviet period women's representation in the Carelian Supreme Soviet was a lot higher, i.e. 30-35%. The fact is that 30-35% presentation of the women in the authorities was like an unwritten law as it demonstrated that equality between men and women in the USSR had been already achieved. In reality, the electing process was carefully controlled by the Communist party, especially in the period of so called "stagnation" when gender, social, professional, national and personal staff of the delegates had been defined in good time before the election. One the other hand, even though the role of the delegates was formal in the decision making process, the Supreme Soviet still offered a big room for excising women in the politics, and achieving their personal self-assertion. On the contrary, the democratic development of Russia nowadays tends to lead to a male democracy as women's participation in the politics is gradually diminishing.

The Carelian post-soviet society has been experiencing complicated development when new values had been repudiated, but new ones have not yet been formed. The economic crisis, complete discredit of the Soviet ideology and cutting-down the social security and security to get a job have led to very negative effects in the society such as growing psychic frustration among women and alcoholism.
among men since generally men as in the country side appeared to be less flexible to adopting to the changing conditions.

To sum up, the gender contract in the towns and workers' settlements is featured by a working mother meant to combine paid work, work about the house and care of children, and sometimes husband. The role of the grandmothers has been significant in upbringing the children, as household and childcare were only partly socialized during the Soviet Era. Moreover, the phenomenon of a grandmother taking care of her grandchildren is a necessary element of the gender contract which undoubtedly represents a fruitful ground for further research. Fatherhood as a good image of a man had hardly become a subject of the public discussions. It should be noticed, however, that Soviet women had great potentialities for achieving their self-assertion and doing career as an official ideology supported the image of a working woman, though their thinking and actions were limited by the Soviet norms and values, and participation in the politics was confined to the work within the Communist Party.

The gender contract in the towns of post-Soviet Carelia is still dominated by a contract of "working mother". Besides, the new gender contract is featured by feminization of the poverty, and some sort of revival of the idea on natural dedication of the woman as a mother and keeper of the hearth/family which resulted in diminishing women's participation in the politics, strengthening their position in the female branches, while their obligations about the house stayed unchanged. These trends in conjunction with a clear labour market segregation demonstrate that recently segregation of the sexes have appeared to be more distinct. The gender contract in the workers' settlements is approaching the gender contract in the rural area. The axe of the logging works in the 1990s as pointed above made unemployment a scourge of the people living there, and many people (mostly men) having lost their job started drinking alcohol. Traditional roles within the family are being preserved, though the status of the women in the family is growing mostly due to the discrediting masculinity because of the drinking.

In conclusion, it should be underlined that the transitional phase which Carelia (and all other regions in Russia) is passing through is characterized by complexity of the trends both within families, and in the economic, political and public sphere affecting the gender system in the republic. Deeper adaptation of the gender theory and careful analysis of the gender contracts, two logics lying behind the gender system, and gender conflicts developing throughout the history of Carelia in respect to the place and social cultural background is undoubtedly required.

Notes


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