
Coping with Chaos

Gender and Politics in a Fragmented State

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The Kuchma regime used a divide-and-conquer approach to groups and individuals demanding gender equality.

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IN the late 1980s and early 1990s, an explosion of new forms of civic engagement brought tens of thousands of women into public life in Ukraine. Several very promising federated women's organizations emerged, uniting thousands of women into a new and vocal public that worked through the independence movement to demand path-breaking changes in state policies concerning families.¹ During the 1990s, hundreds of new women's organizations were established, many of which benefited from extensive foreign funding and training.

Many observers were hopeful that the establishment of new women's non-governmental organizations—particularly women's rights NGOs that worked closely with foreign women's rights advocates—would have a strong political impact. Despite the professionalism of this wave of new women's rights initiatives, however, women as a group were not able to build on their earlier political advances.² Rather than forming a mobilized public capable of engaging broader networks of citizens in challenging the authoritarian political system that came into existence under President Leonid Kuchma, organized women's activism instead entered a period of decline and divisiveness. Disabled by internal conflicts, the women's movement was powerless to prevent a gradual reversion to the Soviet political system, which excluded women from political influence and confined women's issues to subordinate state structures pertaining to the family. The conditions that prevented feminist-inspired activism and advocacy from achieving its intended impact in Ukraine under Kuchma are explored in the discussion that follows.

The Soviet Gender Regime

During the Soviet era, Ukraine was subjected to the maternalist gender regime common to state socialist countries.³ The Communist Party claimed to have liberated women from all forms of gender oppression. Despite legal guarantees of gender equality, the socialist political system perpetuated oppressive traditions that treated childbearing and family duties as the primary focus of women's concern. This maternalist system provided working mothers with relatively generous maternity leaves and inexpensive childcare and granted "Mother Heroine" awards to women who bore ten or more children. Nevertheless, it offered women as a collectivity few opportunities to develop into a meaningful political force.⁴

Women were prevented from developing organizational channels that would promote communication, coordination, and commitment among women in positions of authority. In the 1930s, the Party abolished its Women's Section (*Zhinviddil* in Ukrainian, *Zhenotdel* in Russian), the structure that coordinated work with women Party members. Women's issues were subsequently delegated to a secondary tier of Soviet state and Party structures concerned primarily with encouraging higher birthrates and providing services to children. These structures offered few opportunities for Soviet women to develop into a distinct mobilized public united around broadly shared definitions of new political claims. They served instead primarily as transmission belts for official policies that perpetuated norms that held women primarily accountable for family responsibilities.

Despite state claims that women and men were equal, women's advancement, both in the workplace and in the Party, continued to be blocked by the discriminatory belief that women were "mothers first, workers second." Women were encouraged to work, but were relegated mainly to low wage, dead-end menial jobs or traditionally "feminized" occupations concerned with children and family welfare.⁵ As a consequence of gender bias, not only were women workers segregated into lower-paid, less prestigious jobs, but men held nearly all the managerial positions even in feminized occupational fields.⁶ Occupational stratification and segregation into lower-prestige economic sectors also hampered advancement to Party leadership. Although women were encouraged to join the Communist Party and related official organizations, men occupied nearly every position of genuine authority.⁷

As a result of long-standing state practices that ex-

cluded women from decision-making positions, women's political interests were camouflaged in official maternalist rhetoric even after the Soviet Union began to reform and opened up issues for debate. Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged that a few women's issues had still to be resolved. However, the Soviet leader did not raise the issue of gender inequality or even suggest solutions to the host of practical issues, such as chronic shortages of food and other basic goods, that oppressed so many women. Instead, he suggested that women needed to commit themselves more wholeheartedly to their family responsibilities. As Gorbachev put it, "many of our problems . . . are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and a slack attitude to family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything." It was time, he said, to curtail Soviet women's employment and public activity to "help make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."⁸ To help women better carry out their duties as wives and mothers, he initiated a revival of the defunct women's organizations called Women's Councils (*Zhinochi rady* in Ukrainian, but typically referred to by their Russian abbreviation, *Zhensovet*).

Officials soon claimed that there were thousands of Women's Councils in Ukraine's workplaces, with a total membership of nearly half a million. In reality, however, these official women's organizations existed primarily on paper and failed to attract a popular following.⁹ Like most official organizations, Women's Councils were widely considered to be ineffectual and nepotistic rubber-stamp organizations controlled by Party cronies who lacked any real commitment to increasing the political power of the demographic constituency they represented or of serving its needs.¹⁰

Instead of creating an institutional network of leaders capable of responding to political liberalization with concerted and sustained political action on behalf of women as a group, the official women's organizations and Party structures associated with women's issues were weak organizations that existed primarily on paper and were concerned only with matters that benefited the Party power structure. Women's Councils and similar party structures concerned with women's issues did not create opportunities for women to address the disempowering practices that crowded most women into low-wage or dead-end jobs and compelled women to devote much of their time and energy to procuring various scarce goods and services—most of them "guaran-

teed” by the state. Instead, they contributed to public perceptions that under Soviet rule, women as a group had no grievances or unmet needs of their own and had benefited from generous state policies that had furthered their advancement.

Gender and the Politics of Rukh

The late 1980s marked the beginning of a period of intense political contestation that increased the Soviet establishment’s vulnerability to new claims. Expanding political opportunities facilitated the emergence of the first independent women’s organizations. These organizations reshaped the political realm, publicly challenging Ukraine’s power structure to address issues that had gone unacknowledged during the Soviet era. They did so by refashioning official rhetoric to form a maternalist collective-action framework that women in the independence movement used with great success.

Once the Soviet system began to relax its use of repression, women in Ukraine abandoned the official organizations. In western Ukraine and Kyiv, many threw their energies into helping the independence movement increase its political power. The emergence of the popular Rukh movement created new local institutional spaces within which dozens of women became charismatic leaders and developed local followings for new forms of civic activism. The leaders of Rukh and its closest and most influential allies (e.g., the Native Language Society, the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union) were nearly all men.¹¹ However, at the local level, particularly in repressive eastern Ukrainian locales where male activists were more likely to experience reprisals and intimidation, it was often women who organized Rukh’s local following.¹² Women educators, scholars, and performers helped Rukh by sponsoring poetry readings, concerts, and theatrical performances.¹³ These cultural events created an environment conducive to reinterpreting the grievances many people experienced in their everyday lives as injustices that demanded political action. At the close of seemingly apolitical cultural events, it was far easier to overcome lingering fears of repression and persuade those present to engage in higher-risk and more overtly political Rukh activities.

Once Rukh had been formally established, local women leaders began to expand the scope of their activities and focus on mobilizing women as a distinct group. Three new independent women’s organizations coalesced around a “maternalist” form of activism that used novel tactics ranging from vigils to demonstrations

to force the state to deal with issues that had routinely been ignored by the political establishment: military hazing, the decline of the Ukrainian language and culture, and environmental problems.

Violence in the Soviet armed forces was a problem that troubled a wide range of ordinary citizens, including the many thousands of women who formed Soldiers’ Mothers Committees in the late 1980s. Women from Rukh helped to strengthen local support for the Soldiers’ Mothers Committees proliferating throughout Ukraine.¹⁴ Soldiers’ Mothers and Rukh activists worked together in western Ukraine and Kyiv to greatly expand the group’s activities.¹⁵ They conducted the first independent investigations into deaths in the Soviet armed forces and successfully used the resulting public sympathy to pressure Ukraine’s parliament to recall Ukrainian soldiers serving in other republics and to authorize the formation of national armed forces. Rukh activists shielded thousands of deserters and draft-dodgers, established the country’s first shelter for victims of violence, and helped soldiers’ mothers to develop a system of monitoring and advocacy on behalf of victims of military hazing.

Women educators, scholars, and intellectuals in western Ukraine founded the Union of Ukrainian Women (Soiuz Ukrainok). This organization modeled itself on an eponymous association that had existed throughout western Ukraine before Soviet rule. The union focused its efforts on engaging women in cultural-revival activities and raising the status of the Ukrainian language. Chapters quickly spread throughout western Ukraine. A strong municipal chapter and national headquarters were later established in Kyiv.¹⁶ By the mid-1990s, the group had established chapters in every major Ukrainian city and claimed to have 15,000 members.¹⁷

Women in the Kyiv branch of Rukh established the Women’s Society of Rukh (Zhinocha Hromada Rukhu). The Women’s Society went beyond cultural revival to develop a political agenda that would engage women in forming new and better state institutions and policies that would facilitate the expansion of women’s political influence.¹⁸ The Women’s Society lobbied Ukraine’s parliament to close the Chernobyl nuclear power station and held the first public meetings to provide accurate information about the health consequences of radiation fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power accident. It organized the first public discussions of women’s political interests.¹⁹ These activities later led the Women’s Society to sponsor the first conferences evaluating the social, economic, and political status of women in Ukraine.²⁰ By the mid-1990s, the Women’s

Society had a sizable membership of more than 11,000.

Drawing creatively on the Soviet state's maternalist rhetoric, the founders of these organizations engaged women in politics as *Berehyni*, "guardians of the hearth," or activist-mothers. Women who established new maternalist groups developed a widely resonant maternalist collective-action frame that attracted thousands of ordinary women and men in a wide range of political campaigns demanding that the state humanize its treatment of children and families in Ukraine. Maternalist groups overcame the powerlessness that had long prevented women from participating in politics. For the first time in many decades, women were granted institutional channels through which to develop the skills and resources needed to bargain effectively with the political establishment.

Rukh's Decline and the Fragmentation of Women's Activism

Rukh acted as an organizational center within which a new group of charismatic women developed highly effective forms of activism and established promising new women's organizations that were independent of the state and the Communist Party. When Rukh's strength declined after independence, these new women's organizations remained important channels for engaging women in public life. However, they faced a new set of challenges for which they were ill-prepared.

The same processes of disintegration that led to the independence movement's decline also weakened Rukh-affiliated women's groups. The rapid expansion of grassroots women's activism in the late 1980s and early 1990s had been facilitated by the unexpected disintegration of the Soviet state and the growing strength of independence activism. In its heyday, the independence movement had a highly centralized organizational structure rooted in Rukh, substantial consensus on its primary goals, and a high degree of geographic concentration in Western Ukraine and Kyiv. Once the Soviet Union collapsed and its chief goal was achieved, however, the independence movement rapidly disintegrated. At the root of this disintegration was growing disagreement within the Rukh leadership over new goals and how to achieve them in an independent Ukraine.

Ukraine's independence left women activists struggling to understand what role they could or should play in public life.²¹ An independent Ukraine had been their primary goal. The country independence was not accompanied by the promised resolution of various long-standing problems. Instead, a host of new problems, such

as hyper-inflation and unemployment, now confronted women throughout Ukraine. Economic and social uncertainties resulted in broader public demobilization that further exacerbated the effects of Rukh's disintegration on women activists. Struggling with hyper-inflation and wage and pension arrears, many activists had little time or energy left for civic affairs.²²

The disintegration of the opposition movement created new opportunities for the resurgence of the *nomenklatura*, which found itself well-positioned to exploit the power vacuum that followed the Soviet state's collapse. They began to obstruct reforms. During *glasnost*, women reformers in western Ukraine and Kyiv had enjoyed considerable support from pro-reform allies in the state apparatus and the new reformist political parties.²³ However, in the 1990s, even in Lviv and other former Rukh strongholds, reformers began to encounter growing hostility from local state structures and the revitalized *nomenklatura*.²⁴ In the changed political conditions after Ukraine's independence, the establishment of a strong, independent civic organization, especially in the machine-politics-dominated south and east, proved an elusive goal.²⁵ Many newer and more fragile local chapters of Rukh-affiliated women's groups nearly collapsed in the struggle to define themselves and to decide what role to play in building a new Ukrainian state.²⁶

With independence, an influx of competitors spurred the disintegration of nationwide coalitions of reformers. In Kyiv and eastern Ukraine, Rukh-affiliated women's federations soon found themselves surrounded by a growing field of competing organizations. These included dozens of quasi-governmental groups that purported to be non-governmental organizations but were in reality clients of well-placed patrons who were hostile to reform. The former Communist Party elite quickly reinvented itself, preserving the same set of relationships to the power structure under new names. The Women's Councils were renamed the Union of Women of Ukraine (*Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy*). The leadership declared that the Union was a non-governmental organization, but it retained its privileged position within the power structure. Centrist pro-presidential parties formed allied women's groups and women's parties that operated primarily during elections to co-opt or divide grassroots networks of women activists. The main clientelistic women's organizations were wings of centrist, pro-presidential oligarch parties closely allied with Leonid Kuchma. The People's Democratic Party (Narodno Demokratychna Partiya) of Valerii Pustovoitenko, a former prime minister, formed a women's

wing called Diia (“Action”), as well as two short-lived women’s political initiatives that operated only during elections, the Women’s Party and later the Women for the Future Party. Pustovoitenko’s alliances also dominated the leadership and composition of the National Women’s Council of Ukraine. Nominally a non-governmental organization, the National Women’s Council further blurred relationships between women’s NGOs, the government, and pro-presidential political parties. Ostensibly a coalition to which all major women’s NGOs belonged, the National Women’s Council was headed by a People’s Democratic Party member and Pustovoitenko appointee who was in charge of the State Ministry of Family and Youth. Its membership was dominated by quasi-governmental pro-presidential party women’s wings.

Further complicating coalition building among national-democratic women, various smaller women’s organizations emerged as alternatives to Rukh-affiliated women’s groups and forged alliances with right-leaning political parties that competed against Rukh. On the far right, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists funded the League of Ukrainian Women, the Olena Teliha Society, and an organization once known as Mothers and Sisters for Ukrainian Soldiers, later renamed Mothers and Sisters for Ukrainian Youth. The center-right Sobor and Green parties competed for alliances with the Olena Teliha Society. Competing against one other for the same limited pool of potential donors as well as for members, national-democratic women’s organizations undermined each other, particularly in regions where local chapters were weak.²⁷

Foreign funding soon became a new and even more powerful source of divisiveness.²⁸ Foreign-funded women’s programs began to arrive in Ukraine in 1994 in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing in 1995. Foreign foundations and development agencies subsequently set up ongoing women’s-empowerment programs in Ukraine. The arrival of foreign-financed women’s programs brought a large increase in the number of small women’s organizations founded around a women’s-rights agenda. Foreign-funded women’s-rights advocacy campaigns sought to raise awareness of sex trafficking and domestic violence and to aid in the establishment of gender research institutes, anti-trafficking centers, hot lines, and shelters. Foreign foundations also made grants that introduced special courses to combat gender stereotyping into the curricula of higher and secondary educational institutions. But quite a number of these new initiatives had little public impact. Frequent

shifts in foreign policy and grant-making priorities encouraged local activists to move frequently from one hot-button issue to another. Similar organizations often built no ties to each other, subsisted only on their own narrowly defined issues, and did not engage in coalition building. Moreover, rather than building the capacity of existing local women’s groups, some of the new foreign-funded groups were formed at the expense of Rukh-affiliated groups. The Rukh Women’s Society and the Union of Ukrainian Women lost many of their most gifted leaders to the organizational splintering that resulted from the lure of foreign grants and travel opportunities and the frustrations of Rukh-based activism.²⁹

Rukh’s disintegration, the resurgence of the *nomenklatura*, and the arrival of foreign assistance projects unleashed fierce competition for funding and patronage that exacerbated disagreements over the proper goals and styles of activism. Although the absolute number of women’s organizations and initiatives grew steadily over the 1990s, rivalries and divisiveness led to the formation of increasingly isolated local publics.³⁰ Even groups that at first had worked on similar issues proved unable to cooperate or form coalitions around common agendas. Indeed, by the late 1990s women’s non-governmental organizations were focusing most of their activities on self-perpetuation. Many had become clients of political parties. Others had splintered into factions or simply ceased to exist after failing to receive sufficient resources to continue their activities. The primary audience, both for truly independent organizations and even for some quasi-governmental groups, became foreign donors and foundations rather than the domestic community.

The State’s Creeping Authoritarianism

The splintering in the ranks of the reformers and the co-optation of civic activists permitted the state to ignore women’s interests during Kuchma’s presidency. Factionalism largely prevented reformers from challenging the government’s growing authoritarianism and its general unwillingness to develop mechanisms for implementing new policies and laws. Busy with the struggle for foreign grants and enmeshed in patronage relationships, most women’s rights initiatives could do little in response to government corruption, secrecy about state budgets, and the lack of accountability among lawmakers and government officials, not to mention increasing restrictions on political activities. Media smear campaigns that treated civic activists and organizations as dominated by Western (in particular, American) inter-

ests unleashed suspicions that undermined efforts to strengthen or build effective regional and nationwide coalitions of reformers.

Divisiveness among women's organizations permitted civil servants and government officials to continue to deny the importance not only of gender discrimination but also of the many other issues raised by maternalist as well as feminist activists. Without any unified pressure for a genuine reconstruction of gender dynamics in Ukraine's power structures, the presidential administration, leading members of parliament, high-level government officials, and leaders of pro-Kuchma political parties addressed women's political demands primarily by making sentimental, patriotic speeches on Mothers Day and International Women's Day and by establishing quasi-governmental women's charitable organizations that the president and his allies controlled from above and manipulated to promote his interests during elections and popular referendums.³¹ Meanwhile, women's issues continued to be equated exclusively with the welfare of children and youth, which also continued to be coded as "female" or "feminized." Consequently, women were relegated to weak parliamentary commissions and poorly funded official state bodies concerned with social services.

Civic activists were unable to develop a shared discourse and a shared platform that linked civic groups around a common political agenda. As a result, they remained weak and divided. Here foreign funders were to blame, especially because of their frequent shifts in grant-making priorities and their preference for working exclusively with local groups that adopted foreign feminist discourse. Dependence upon short-term foreign funding did not simply increase tensions among similar groups that should have been working together. It also led women's rights groups to make frequent changes in their campaign goals that undermined the political influence of their advocacy efforts in the parliament.

Gender and the Verkhovna Rada

Proponents of women's issues and interests who posed challenges to the power structure were unable to gain a foothold in parliament during the Kuchma decade. The patterns of gender inequality institutionalized during the Soviet era in government bodies, legislative councils, and state ministries and agencies went unchallenged and persisted. Soviet leaders had once paid lip service to women's equality while doing nothing to achieve it. Similarly, under Kuchma politicians adopted the newly invented discourse of the *Berehynia*, praising women

as guardians of the Ukrainian nation, but ignoring demands made by maternalist activists. Even traditional women's issues withered in importance as a result of the growing hostility toward reformers on the part of the parties and factions that blocked the implementation of new policies and laws.³² Reforms, even when couched in the discourse of patriotic family values, were rarely approved by elected officials—lawmakers in particular.

Because of the long-standing pattern of exclusion from the upper echelons of the Communist Party and the weakness of women's civic organizations, women in Ukraine were poorly positioned to take advantage of the new political opportunities presented by competitive elections. Consequently, their overall legislative representation declined sharply with the advent of competitive elections and the demise of gender quotas. In the mid-1980s, there were 234 women deputies in the Ukrainian legislature, which represented 36 percent of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. Since then, the number of women in Ukraine's legislature has declined significantly. After the 1990 elections, the percentage of women in Ukraine's national legislature, the Verkhovna Rada, declined from one-third to 3 percent. It subsequently rose slightly, first to 5 percent in 1994 and then to 8 percent in 1998, but fell again to 5 percent in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

The proliferation of new forms of women's activism and organization helped to raise some important issues in public, but these had little resonance in parliament. Pressure from international organizations aided the passage of new programs and plans to achieve gender equality and combat gender discrimination. In 1995, Rukh-affiliated women's organizations came together with their chief ideological rivals and participated in parliamentary hearings to add guarantees against gender discrimination under Article 24 of Ukraine's constitution. The actions of the Permanent Commission in the Verkhovna Rada initiated one of the first analyses of the social and economic status of women in Ukraine and called for new forms of regulation to improve women's social and economic status.³³

Nonetheless, little was accomplished by these early efforts. Dismissive attitudes toward gender issues prevailed in legislative and executive institutions—even among women. Legislators generally viewed protecting families as the state's main role in women's lives. Much as in the Soviet era, the politically powerful saw no need to further empower women. Women's equality remained marginal to the concerns of leading legislators. A bill on equal rights and opportunities for men

and women was proposed by a proto-women's rights lobby in 1999, failed to gain political support, and was rejected by parliament in 2001. Many of the deputies who voted against the bill claimed that it went against Ukraine's national interests and served the personal interests of its sponsor, whose wife, a women's rights advocate, had allegedly received millions of dollars from foreign foundations to "play at gender." Critics in the Rada scoffed that Ukraine could ill afford this until it solved the problems of needy children.³⁴

Just as in the Soviet era, women lawmakers continued throughout the 1990s to be appointed to low-profile parliamentary committees associated with the family or with children, rather than high-profile committees concerned with the distribution of major resources or the resolution of issues deemed politically significant. Consistent with the Soviet-era practice of gender-coding policy issues, in 2003 three of the nineteen women members of parliament sat on the Motherhood and Childhood Protection Parliamentary Committee. Only two parliamentary committees—one of which was concerned with youth policy, sports, and tourism—were chaired by women.³⁵ There was not a single woman on the parliamentary committees concerned with organized crime and corruption; European integration; law enforcement, national security, and defense; pensioners, veterans, and the handicapped; freedom of speech; and construction, transportation, and communication. Needless to say, several of these committees dealt with policy domains that have been a central focus of women's advocacy work on behalf of victims of organized crime, soldiers and handicapped veterans, and victims of domestic violence.

The marginality of women in parliament may explain why, despite their acceptance of maternalist rhetoric, they failed to organize a women's caucus concerned with resolving the child-welfare issues that the Soviet gender regime had deemed to lie at the center of women's political interests. It is less surprising that they failed to pursue the "new" issues (e.g., domestic violence, gender equality) that foreign-funded women's rights advocacy programs made a priority. No specific parliamentary body, committee, or group during the Kuchma presidency took an interest in equal-opportunity issues—indeed, parliamentary hearings suggested that such topics would be met with ridicule. Overall, women's rights advocates were unable to develop the political legitimacy that would have enabled them to grow into a lobby able to challenge the widespread belief among lawmakers that there is no gender discrimination in Ukraine and that Women's Day, Mothers' Day, and

elections are the only times elected officials should pay attention to women.

Political Parties

Women's issues were also marginalized in parliament because women's advancement with the new party system continued to be blocked and because women's political influence was limited by coercive patron-client relations. In the 1990s, as during the Soviet era, men occupied nearly all of the top leadership positions in the country's political parties. Only a few women were able to rise to national political prominence.³⁶ The handful of high-profile women who led parties of political significance belonged to warring factions. The Fatherland Party (Yulia Tymoshenko), the Agrarian Party of Ukraine (formerly led by Kateryna Vashchuk), the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (Nataliya Vitrenko), the Democratic Party of Ukraine (Hanna Antonieva), and the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (formerly led by Yaroslava Stetsko) tended to disagree about most of the major questions raised in parliament. The leadership of the People's Democratic Party, the chief pro-presidential party of power, hand-picked loyal members to head women's parties such as the All-Ukrainian Party of Women's Initiatives, the Women of Ukraine Party, and the All-Ukrainian Union for the Future of Women. Sponsored and controlled by oligarchs and allies of President Kuchma, these women's parties were part of a highly effective strategy to confuse voters and further erode public support for the reformist parties.

Political parties differed little in their neglect or dismissive treatment of most of the issues their members or potential supporters might code as "female." Several parties had a sizable female membership. In 1999, women members comprised 40 percent of the People's Movement of Ukraine and the Liberal Party of Ukraine, 45 percent of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Green Party of Ukraine, and nearly 50 percent of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Even these parties, however, gave relatively little attention to policy issues that might appeal to women voters. Nor did they pay attention to overtly political issues raised by new advocacy groups sponsored by foreign women's-empowerment programs. These parties were indifferent to women's political interests and cultivated their support only during elections, when their affiliated women's organizations engaged primarily in charitable and cultural activities oriented to children and the elderly.

The most publicly visible and best-funded of the new women's wings were pro-Kuchma women's programs

and organizations. The People's Democratic Party affiliate, Diia, the Union of Women of Ukraine (Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy), and the Women for the Future party were quasi-governmental groups that acted as extensions of the government. Powerful patrons provided lavish funding and generous opportunities to engage in NGO activities (e.g., women's leadership training) that attracted foreign civil-society-building funding and travel opportunities. The leadership of Diia operated a well-funded women's leadership school, attended international women's rights conferences, and engaged in activities that often resulted in foreign women's-empowerment grants, but in return, at election time, Diia was expected to concentrate on sponsoring local concerts and parties for needy families. The Union of Women of Ukraine (run by a member of the *nomenklatura* who served as deputy chair in the Council of Ministers) and Women of the Future (run by a former minister at the defunct Ministry of Women, Children, and the Family) organized scores of similar pre-election media events at which leaders of these women's rights groups were filmed distributing gifts to needy senior citizens or children.

Just as in the Soviet era, women legislators were better represented at the lowest levels of political representation. The proportion of women in local legislatures rose gradually after an initial decline following Ukraine's independence. In smaller locales, women once again constitute as many as half of the deputies in some local legislative councils. Despite these gains, they are under-represented in legislative councils at the city and regional or oblast level. On average, the proportion of women serving on regional councils is 10 percent, twice the current representation of women in parliament. There were few women in the oblast and city councils that were strongholds of Rukh and other national-democratic forces.³⁷ Women legislators were under-represented even in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city and the home of many of Ukraine's leading women's rights activists, gender scholars, and women politicians. In 2000, women constituted nearly 20 percent in the Kharkiv municipal council (seventeen out of a total of ninety deputies), but only 10 percent in the Kharkiv oblast council (seven out of sixty-eight deputies). The few women in Kharkiv who occupied important political posts were closely allied with pro-presidential or oligarchic parties. However, they tended to occupy subordinate posts in charge of party-affiliated women's associations. Although women who lead the women's wings of political parties personally benefit from their positions, they remain marginal within the party elite.

Government, Executive, and State Institutions

Women also remained excluded from positions of authority in government, executive, and state institutions. Men continued to dominate the powerful decision-making positions, while women occupied token positions with little genuine authority.³⁸ In the absence of effective public pressure to open up the closed government elite, the *nomenklatura* regained control, impeding the efforts of the few politicians, political activists, and civic associations that sought to challenge long-standing patterns of gender discrimination. In the struggle between leftist, centrist, and rightist political parties and factions over government posts, far fewer women were appointed or elected to positions in government, the executive branch, or state ministries and commissions. Women who were former Communist Party leaders continued to occupy token managerial positions in the state and party structures associated with women's issues. Just as in the past, these women were dependent on their male patrons. Moreover, Kuchma and his allies put their own loyalists in charge of gate-keeping institutions, and the gatekeepers were typically hostile to reformers of every kind. Various obstacles were placed in the way of efforts to enhance women's visibility and influence in political life and decision-making. Most notably, clientelistic organizations were created that pursued women's rights in a manner guaranteed not to challenge the power structure.

Genuine advocates of women's practical or strategic interests failed to find a foothold in executive bodies, state ministries, and agencies during the Kuchma presidency. Decision-making power on policy matters was concentrated in the Council of Ministers, where women had a long history of token representation. Before 1990, women held deputy chairs in the Presidium and in the Council of Ministers, headed the Social Security Ministry and the State Committee on Natural Preservation (Environment), and served as vice-ministers in other ministries. By contrast, from 2002 to 2003, not one woman was appointed to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Women accounted for only 8 percent of deputy ministers, and only 4 percent of deputy chairs of state committees. A handful of women were appointed to head state committees.

In the civil service women outnumbered men overall but occupied few senior positions. Although women dominated the civil service numerically and occupied many middle-management and specialist positions (53 percent and 81 percent respectively), they were rarely promoted to higher-category jobs. Women were under-

Table 1

State Structures Concerned with Women's Status

Dates of operation	Body	Head	Changes
1990-1994	12th Parliamentary Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Family, Mothers, and Children	Heorhiy Khodorovcky (1990-1992) Valentyna Yeshchenko (1992-1994)	Dissolved at end of 12th parliamentary session
1993 to date	Cabinet of Ministers, Division on the Status of Women, Family, Mothers, and Children	Lyudmyla Vynohradova	
1994-1998	13th Parliamentary Committee on Health, Mothers, and Children	Yurii Spizhenko	Dissolved at end of 13th parliamentary session
1995-1996	Presidential Committee on the Status of Women and Children	Olena Krandakova	Dissolved when Ministry of Family and Youth was established
1996-1999	Ministry of Family and Youth	Susanna Stanik (1996-1997) Valentyna Dovzhenko (1997-1999)	Reorganized in 2000 as department under State Committee of Youth, Sport, and Tourism during reform of system of state administration
2000-2001	State Department on Family and Youth	Valentyna Dovzhenko	
2002-ongoing	State Committee on Family and Youth	Valentyna Dovzhenko	
1998-2002	14th Parliamentary Committee on Health, Mothers, and Children	Serhii Shevchuk	

represented in top-level government jobs (they occupied only 15 percent of the jobs in the two highest seniority categories) and were unable to gain entry to the levels of government at which decisions are actually made. For example, in 1999 only nine women chaired executive bodies in the central state administration (roughly 1 percent).³⁹

The under-representation of women in positions of authority in the central government and the civil service diminished their influence over major national policy areas and state-building processes. As a result women's issues were poorly represented in the state administration in the 1990s. Women were typically assigned to head low-profile, under-financed government structures concerned with the welfare of families or children. Severe budgetary constraints and personal dependence on higher-level patrons limited the effectiveness of such programs. Few legislators, government officials, and civil servants in government ministries acknowledged the significance and salience of gender discrimination or other issues raised by women's groups. The few who did were powerless to make effective changes on their own. The

creation of a "vertical" state mechanism to complement and diversify the actions of central organs dealing with the family and youth requires the founding of regional administrative boards and departments.

Administrative structures perpetuated the segregation into separate, low-priority policy domains of issues coded as female under the Soviet gender regime. Women's issues were relegated to low-level peripheral state administrative organs concerned primarily with children and youth (see *Table 1*). In response to the efforts of women's rights activists to encourage the state to develop more extensive bodies and programs for the benefit of women, the state machinery continued to mouth a commitment to gender equality but in practice emphasized the role of women only in regard to family and children, essentially perpetuating traditional gender roles.

State Responses to International Organizations and Treaties

Since the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),

international organizations have intensified their efforts to encourage states to move beyond a focus on protecting mothers and take action to ensure that women and men are guaranteed equal rights in all spheres of society.⁴⁰ The Soviet state paid lip service to CEDAW and related activities of international inter-governmental and public bodies concerned with promoting gender equality, but did little to move beyond a focus on women as mothers. Like the Soviet state, the Ukrainian state in the 1990s formally acceded to gender-equality conventions but persisted in a quasi-Soviet maternalist approach to women's rights that diverged from the norms and practices of international organizations.⁴¹

During the Soviet era, there were no specific state organs in Ukraine devoted to fulfilling commitments to improve the status of women. Under Kuchma, Ukraine's maternalist state institutions continued to resist the efforts of international organizations to move women's rights initiatives away from a focus on maternal duties and toward a gender-equality paradigm. The first tentative efforts to raise issues of gender equality were made by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Family, Motherhood, and Childhood. Established in 1990 and dissolved in 1994, this parliamentary commission was charged with evaluating legislation, work conditions, and the rights of the family, mothers, and children. Although its initiatives on women's rights were primarily maternalist and concerned with child welfare, the commission was the first official body to address the question of discrimination against women and turn government attention to Ukraine's failure to fulfill its obligation as a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. International "gender-parity" terminology was not widely used in its documents or its understanding of its mission. For instance in 1992 the commission did not include gender equality as a demand when it fought successfully for the passage of the laws on "Changes and Additions to the Code on Marriage and Family in Ukraine" and "State Assistance of Families and Children." Nor did it raise the issue of gender equality in its development of plans of action toward the creation of two state programs intended to provide assistance to mothers and children, "Family Planning" and "Children of Ukraine."

The government of Ukraine officially supported the world program of action adopted by the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing and the program of action approved by the Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in Vienna. In accordance with the recommendations made by these international bod-

ies, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved a National Action Plan for 1997–2000 and a second National Action Plan for 2001–2004, both aimed at improving the position of women by enhancing their role *outside* the family. The national plans seemingly adopted the Beijing Conference's argument that equalizing the status of women and men depended on adopting the principle of gender parity in all spheres of life. Similar language stressing gender parity—and again inspired by United Nations and other international documents—was used in 2000 when Ukraine adopted a new Code on Marriage and the Family that stipulated equal rights and duties for men and women in family matters and marriage. A 2001 presidential decree gave women equal rights and opportunities in public and political life.

However, the government did not adequately fund, develop, or staff programs to combat discrimination against women outside the family. Maternalism, focused on improving child welfare, remained dominant in efforts by state bodies to implement international women's rights treaties. The government budgeted virtually nothing to fund its promise to achieve gender equality by the year 2000. At best, the long-term national plan for improving the status of women and enlarging their role in society introduced new post-maternalist approaches in the evaluation of women's and men's status in society. It reflected a purely formal acceptance of the international understanding of gender equality and the importance of gender parity in addressing issues such as family planning, human rights, and the status of women as well as reforming state approaches to the family, adults, and children and improving legislation aimed at the resolution of gender inequality. Recent documents outline certain long-term aims of forthcoming national action plans and state programs to bring about equality between men and women through the creation of a national mechanism at the government level and nationwide state administrative structures responsible for regulating legislation regarding the rights of women and carrying out national programs. Some new state structures and reforms were initiated to assume a gender orientation. However, gender-parity principles have not yet undone the Soviet-era segregation of issues related to children and the family into a poorly funded, low-priority female-coded policy domain.

State structures and institutions also provide evidence that the initial steps in the mid-1990s to enact state commitments to international gender equality norms were followed by a return to a maternalist understanding of women's rights. The Committee on the Status of Women was dissolved in 1995. At this time, women's issues

came under the jurisdiction first of the Presidential Committee on the Status of Women, Mothers, and Children and then of the Ministry of Family and Youth, founded in December 1996. The Ministry of Family and Youth was the first top-level state agency to address the implementation and administration of national policy regarding the welfare and status of families, women, youth, and children.⁴² Its main task was to implement and develop equal-rights policies that would improve women's status and bring Ukraine into conformity with international norms on gender equality. However, the ministry was able to achieve very little before it was closed in 1999 and the State Department of Family and Youth was formed and entrusted with many of its functions. In accordance with a quasi-Soviet, family-centered policy approach, most of the department's budget for improving women's status was earmarked for children's recreational activities. For instance, in 2002, the budget for improving women's status was less than 1 percent of the State Committee on Youth and Family, the equivalent of just under \$5,000 (25,600 hryvnias). Moreover, nearly all of this money was budgeted for children's recreational programs. Such programs differed considerably from the kinds of activities women's rights advocates have in mind when they talk about combating gender inequality.⁴³

Conclusion

After the Soviet Union's collapse, international women's rights advocates assumed that progress toward women's empowerment depended principally on the development of feminist-inspired women's rights initiatives. Hundreds of women's rights organizations were founded in newly independent Ukraine. However, this wave of women's rights activism was unable to develop sufficient political leverage to pressure the state and government to address the issues and concerns women raised. Ideological differences between advocates of maternalist activism, which drew on pre-existing Soviet discourse, and devotees of the feminist understandings favored by international advocates undermined efforts to raise awareness of women's issues. The disintegration of Rukh, the retrenchment of power structures, and pressures from Western funders combined to create inhospitable conditions that led to extreme divisiveness among women's organizations.

Fragmentation and co-optation were not the only forces that disabled women's NGOs. Splintering permitted the Kuchma regime to ignore women's interests and to co-opt women's rights advocates to join quasi-

governmental organizations controlled by a power structure that was in reality hostile to reforms and reformers. The governing elite funded virtual NGOs that blended maternalism and feminism, but it did not adequately fund, develop, or staff Soviet-style maternalist programs aimed at children's welfare. Nor did it devote institutional resources to combat discrimination against women outside the family and bring Ukraine into compliance with international treaties and practices in the European Union. Instead, maternalism focused on improving children's welfare remained the dominant approach of state bodies charged with implementing international women's rights treaties.

The strongest challenge to the dominance of the Soviet *nomenklatura* was posed by the Orange Revolution. The leaders of the Orange Revolution might shake up Ukraine's power structure in the future by bringing proponents of reform into local, state, and national legislatures as well as state and government structures. After independence, the reformers associated with Rukh were unable to implement new policies and were easily defeated by the former members of the *nomenklatura* who had won the presidency and regained control of parliament and, more broadly, the state. Throughout the 1994–2004 presidency of Leonid Kuchma, the absence of a unified opposition permitted oligarchic networks to consolidate their control over the government, the economy, and the media. Kuchma and his close allies blocked the implementation of reforms that would have created an infrastructure for economic growth and strengthened the rule of law. Individuals and groups that support reforms are now better positioned, and the government may in time begin to address the broad range of issues raised by women's organizations.

Despite broad-based protest and grassroots campaigns on behalf of governmental change, pro-Kuchma forces remain in control at the local level, especially in the east. The presidential administration and its allies have pressured the cabinet, parliament, and the courts to decentralize power and further concentrate decision-making in the hands of supporters of fundamental. Oligarchs still own and control major media outlets and other crucial enterprises. However, democratization should greatly increase the opportunities for independent and grassroots civic activism on behalf of women's issues in the coming years.

Notes

1. See Alexandra Hrycak, "Post-Soviet Grassroots Women's Associations," in *Women's Community Activism and Globalization: Linking the Local and Global for Social Change*, ed. Nancy Naples and Manisha K. Desai (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 64–82.

2. For a more detailed discussion of how the changing social and political context affected women's activism, see Alexandra Hrycak, "The Dilemmas of Civic Revival: Ukrainian Women Since Independence," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (summer/winter 2001): 135–58.

3. In the following, I draw on scholarship by Susan Gal, Gail Kligman, and Katherine Verdery; in particular Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Katherine Verdery, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 8, no. 2 (1994): 225–55.

4. See Alexandra Hrycak, "From Mother's Rights to Equal Rights," in Naples and Desai, *Women's Community Activism and Globalization*, pp. 64–67.

5. Women predominated in manufacturing, agriculture, education, food preparation, social services, and health. See Hrycak, "Dilemmas of Civic Revival."

6. For a further analysis of gender asymmetries in Soviet workplaces, see Gail Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) and Michael Paul Sacks, "Women, Work, and the Family in the Soviet Union," in *Understanding Soviet Society*, ed. Michael Paul Sacks and Jerry G. Pankhurst (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 71–96.

7. In 1988, women made up just under one-third of all Party members and about one-third of Party branch secretaries at the lower levels, but men occupied nearly every position in the Party and state structures that carried genuine authority. See David Lane, *Soviet Society Under Perestroika* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 220.

8; Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 102.

9. Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Political Communities and Gendered Ideologies in Contemporary Ukraine* (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1994), pp. 20–21. Pavlychko writes, "There are 57,000 *zhensovety* (*zhinochi rady* in Ukrainian) in the Ukraine. I remember quite clearly how they were formed. After Gorbachev's speech at the 27th Congress of the CPSU when he called on the country to strengthen the women's movement, the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences (a research institution for literary scholarship where I work) received a command from the local raikom to form a *Zhinocha rada*, to elect its board, and to report immediately to the raikom about the results. It caused a certain animation in the Institute, men invented sexist jokes, women were embarrassed, but the board was elected and the raikom obtained the necessary information. From that time on, nobody in the Institute ever mentioned the existence of this body" (Solomea Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism: New Women's Groups in the Ukraine," in *Perestroika and Soviet Women*, ed. Mary Buckley [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992], p. 90).

10. On more than one occasion during my research it was pointed out to me that women Party leaders in charge of child welfare in Ukraine lost what little legitimacy they possessed in 1986 when they failed to take an active public stance demanding that the state protect all children from the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power accident and instead helped to evacuate the children of the Party leadership. Such criticism was leveled in particular at Valentyna Shevchenko, who was the leading Party official in charge of children's welfare at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear power accident and continued to occupy high-level state posts well into the 1990s (author interview with Larysa F. of Common Action, Lviv, June 25, 2001).

11. Only three women were elected to central leadership positions at Rukh's founding congress. Only two women were elected to such positions at Rukh's second congress. See Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism," p. 86.

12. See Solomea Pavlychko, "Progress on Hold: The Conservative Faces of Women in Ukraine," in *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia*, ed. Mary Buckley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 220.

13. Similarly, women also facilitated the formation of local religious congregations as well as chapters of ecological and cultural associations that operated as crucial sources of support for Rukh.

14. Author interviews with the founder of the Dove Crisis Center for Soldiers (Kyiv, June 7, 2001) and the head of the Soldiers' Mothers Society, Kyiv City Organization (Kyiv, March 27, 2001, May 19, 2001).

15. Author interview with the head of the Mothers' Committee in Support of Sons in the Military (Lviv, June 21 2002).

16. Soiuз Ukrainok's activities at first focused on cultural revival and concerts (author interview, Oksana S., Common Action, Lviv, June 15, 2001; author interview, Iryna K., Common Action, Lviv, June 18, 2001; author interview, Atena Pashko, president, Soiuз Ukrainok, Kyiv, March 2001).

17. Membership figures for the mid-1990s are drawn from *The Directory of Women's Organizations and Initiatives in Ukraine* (Kyiv: Women's Information Consultative Center, 1996).

18. See Solomea Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev* (Edmonton, AB: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1992), p. 17.

19. Author interview with Tamara M., former member of Rukh Women's Society Political Council (Kyiv, May 3, 2001).

20. In May 1993 the Rukh Women's Society organized a conference on "Women in the Creation of the State." It was attended by leading scholars and officials from across Ukraine who conducted one of the first critical examinations of women's status in Ukraine. Papers assessed women's representation in state and government structures as well as in other areas of society. At the conference's close, a resolution was passed that urged the president, parliament, and cabinet of ministers to introduce gender quotas to guarantee the equal representation of women in parliament and in the government. The Rukh Women's Society went on to organize further conferences on women's political and legal status and to coordinate legal campaigns on behalf of equal rights legislation and constitutional guarantees of equality. See Lyudmyla Smolyar, "Women's NGOs in the System of Civil Society of Ukraine" (paper presented at the Global Network for Women's Advocacy and Civil Society, www.philanthropy.org/GN/KEN/gntext/fullview_politicalrights_women_advocacy_lyudmyla.htm, accessed September 5, 2001).

21. This point was made by several former leaders of Soiuз Ukrainok (author interviews, former member of Lviv Soiuз Ukrainok, Lviv, June 15, 2001; author interview, former head of Lviv Soiuз Ukrainok, Lviv, June 18, 2001).

22. Author interview, former head of Kyiv Soiuз Ukrainok (Kyiv, March 22, 2001).

23. When I asked women activists about the establishment of Rukh-affiliated women's organizations in western Ukraine and Kyiv during the late 1980s and early 1990s, they all stressed the importance of strong support for women's organizations among the leaders of Rukh as well as affiliated political parties (author interview, Lviv, head of the Mothers' Committee in Support of Sons in the Military, June 21 2002; author interview, former member of Lviv Soiuз Ukrainok, Lviv, June 15, 2001; author interview, former head of Lviv Soiuз Ukrainok, Lviv, June 18, 2001; author interview, president, Soiuз Ukrainok, Kyiv, March 2001; author interview, Rukh Women's Society member and founder, Dove Crisis Center for Soldiers and Their Parents, Kyiv, June 7, 2001; author interview, head of Soldiers' Mothers Society, Kyiv City Organization, Kyiv, March 27, 2001, May 19, 2001).

24. In the words of one Lviv women's rights activist, state administrators did nothing but stall women reformers: "There are people [in the Lviv state administration] who are responsible for public relations. Their office is called 'Contacts with the Public' or something like that. But there are no contacts made there. They have no respect for anyone. For some reason, they have lost respect for others. When you go to see them, you get the feeling from them that you are taking up their time. They sit there looking busy, looking through papers or letters, and when you come into their office you are expected to apologize profusely for taking up their time. 'I'm sorry for taking up your precious time.' He could reply, 'Come in, let's have a talk. Let's figure out a resolution,' but that's not how these things go. Not for us, not for anyone. That's the trouble, they need to be there for us. I don't go to consult them on what color pantyhose to buy, black or white. I go to them with constructive ideas. At first you hear 'Come by on Thursday,' then 'I'll call you,' then 'Come next week,' then 'The Pope is visiting this week.'" (author interview, Larysa F.).

25. Women's NGOs in Kharkiv were deeply divided by bitter animosities that prevented the formation of inter-organizational coalitions even among similar groups that shared a common ideological orientation (author interview, Kharkiv City Department of Public Relations, Kharkiv, May 22, 2001; author interview, former member, Kharkiv City Women's Fund, Kharkiv, May 22, 2001). The most prominent organizations were clients of

pro-presidential parties. Foreign-oriented feminist groups isolated themselves from Ukrainian civic affairs and forged closer ties to Russian scholars (author interview, Kharkiv Gender Studies Center, Kharkiv, May 29, 2001).

26. Members of the Poltava Soiuz Ukrainok chapter in eastern Ukraine indicated that local officials treated them with great hostility (Fourth Conference of Soiuz Ukrainok, Kyiv, March 31 2001).

27. Regional differences in support for independence further weakened the Rukh-affiliated organizations. Soiuz Ukrainok and the Women's Society of Rukh had established their strongest following in western Ukraine and in Kyiv, where independence mobilization had created enduring networks of women activists who were ready and available to engage in ongoing activist work. However, the local organizations in southern and eastern Ukraine were weak. The Kharkiv Soiuz Ukrainok and Zhinocha Hromada were tiny organizations that by 2001 consisted of little more than a single person who kept the organization together through sheer force of personality.

28. My interviews revealed that foreign funding (in particular, competition for foreign grants or travel opportunities and disagreements over how to distribute foreign funding) was the most frequently mentioned source of divisiveness within and between women's NGOs. According to a former member of Soiuz Ukrainok who left the group to work on foreign women's-empowerment programs funded by USAID-funded Winrock International and the International Renaissance Foundation, funding was the main source of divisiveness in both Rukh-based and foreign-oriented women's NGOs (author interview, Kyiv, April 13, 2001).

29. Dozens of former local leaders of Soiuz Ukrainok and the Rukh Women's Society left these maternalist organizations, and many founded feminist NGOs that better meet donors' expectations. One of the first women to do so told me she had become frustrated because "There were a lot of ideas, and a lot of talk about 'working for the good of Ukraine,' but nothing concrete was ever done. I realized I was created for something else, so I left the Soiuz Ukrainok" (author interview, Kyiv, March 22, 2001). She recruited numerous other disaffected former SU leaders to foreign-funded projects after she was hired by a series of U.S.-funded projects, including the USAID-funded U.S.-NIS Women's Consortium and, more recently, the Soros Foundation's Women in Society project.

30. In 1991, tens of thousands of women participated actively in the Rukh-led campaigns against military hazing, but ten years later my research found fractured publics to be more common; some of them included only a few individuals who came together periodically to discuss women's issues.

31. Leonid Kuchma consistently incorporated the notion of Ukrainian women as *Berehyni*, guardians of the family and the nation, into his public addresses on women's affairs. For instance, he invoked the *Berehynia* in his official 2003 address to participants of the Second Forum of Businesswomen of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, in which he gave special thanks to the women in the audience because, "in addition to their household chores and caring for their families and children, they found time for business." Similarly, in his March 8, 2004, International Women's Day greeting to the nation, he noted the particular qualities of the *Berehynia*: "The Ukrainian woman has a special mission of preserving our spirituality, traditions, and historical memory, of passing down our patriotism, profound respect for our forefathers, and their habits. It is not without reason that Mother, who personifies continuity of the human race and all the best in the world, has always been worshipped in Ukraine. So, being a source of the nation's vitality and peacefulness, society's wisdom and harmony, the brightest features of the Ukrainian womankind have been embodied in our today's activity."

32. A number of women's groups have lobbied to strengthen the legal protections against gender discrimination. Since the late 1990s, they have at best persuaded the government to officially acknowledge certain gender issues. For example, in 1999 the government approved the "National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women in the Republic of Ukraine." Despite symbolic steps of this kind toward a formal guarantee of gender equality, the government failed to commit itself to provide funding and resources to improve women's status and resolve the economic problems they face.

33. In 1993, a Division of Women, Family, Motherhood, and Childhood was established within the Cabinet of Ministers. It took on the responsibility for improving women's status that the first Parliamentary Commission had outlined in the state program for "Long-Term Improvement of the

Status of Women and the Protection of Family, Mothers, and Children" (July 28, 1992). Like its predecessor, the new agency treated women's issues, as in the Soviet era, as social welfare programs to promote children's welfare.

34. Tatiana Zadorozhna, member of parliament (Kyiv, Parliamentary Hearing on the Gender Equality Draft Law, January 17, 2001).

35. United Nations Development Programme, "Gender Issues in Ukraine: Challenges and Opportunities" (Kyiv, 2003), p. 13, available at www.un.kiev.ua/en/docs/get.php?id=54/, accessed November 15, 2004.

36. One review of political party leadership since the 1998 parliamentary elections identified only six women as belonging to Ukraine's party elite: Yulia Tymoshenko (Fatherland), Halyna Artiukh and Liudmyla Matiiko (Hromada), Nataliya Vitrenko (PSPU), and Olena Bondarenko (NRU) and Halyna Harmash (SPU). See Mykola Tomenko and Volodymyr Oliinyk, *Partiina elita Ukrainy 2000* (The Leadership of Political Parties in Ukraine in the Year 2000) (Kyiv: Logos, 2000), pp. 10, 30–31, 50, 148–49, 184. Women are more often local-level heads of oblast or municipal party organizations (e.g., Lviv oblast Sobor).

37. Women felt most marginalized in Lviv. I was told by one candidate who had not been elected: "Here in Lviv oblast, we have very poor representation of women: there are no women in any legislative branch of government, we have six women in the city council, and the same number in the oblast council. Is this democracy? Six women in all, more than eighty men? We don't even have 10 percent" (author interview, Larysa F.).

38. "Gender Issues in Ukraine," pp. 13–15.

39. "Ukraine: Fourth Periodic Report of State Parties" (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, New York, August 1999), p. 13, available at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw27/ukr4-5.pdf40/, accessed May 21, 2003.

40. Nitza Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organizations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 100–138.

41. See United Nations Development Programme Gender Unit, *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, ed. Tamara Melnyk (Kyiv: United Nations Development Programme, 1999).

42. The main objectives, conditions, and tasks of the ministry were to include collaboration with other central executive bodies to devise scientifically based state policies regarding the status of family, women, youth, and children, as well as demography, incentives for mothers, the protection of health, and the sound development of children and youth in terms of education and adoption of humanitarian principles; elaboration and execution of programs dealing with the improvement of conditions for family, women, youth, and children; the opening of special institutions to work with minors; and the establishment of preventative measures to deter crime and the abandonment of children by family members; passage of special laws and other legislation relating to the rights and interests of the family, women, youth, and children, and the adoption of propositions to see that they conform to international standards; cooperation with other central and local executive organs in bringing about improved conditions for family, women, youth, and children; coordination of actions by central and local executive organs regarding the protection of the rights and interests of the family, women, youth, and children; cooperation with the international community on issues of family, women, youth, and children.

43. Improvement of the status and treatment of women has also been entrusted to other state organs. Some, such as the Ministry of Health, are beginning to adopt gender policy as it is understood in the international community. The human rights ombudsperson, whose task it is to receive human rights complaints from individual citizens and protect human rights, has developed projects to fight human trafficking, specifically in women, and forced prostitution.

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