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Ukraine

The anti-social ferocity of neoliberals



Sources: South wind [Image: Ukrainian Minister of Social Policy Oksana Zholnovich]

Recent statements by Ukrainian Social Policy Minister Oksana Zholnovich about the "destruction of everything social" and "the departure of Ukrainians from their comfort zone" have provoked a huge outcry and a wave of criticism.

However, it is far from the first case in which officials directly involved in social policy publicly express anti-social comments. What does the presence of people like Tretyakova/1 or Zholnovich in the government indicate: casting errors or a conscious policy to discredit ideas of social solidarity and the complete marginalization of people in need of social assistance?

In his statement to the International Forum For Sustainable Development, Oksana Zholnovich recalled how the direction of the Ministry of Social Policy treats society:

"We have to break everything social today and simply reformat from scratch the new social contract constituting the social policy of our state. Many citizens are, in a sense, teenagers: 'The state owes us: care, help, but I will not participate in my personal development, in my personal life, I am not willing to take responsibility for myself.' And it is this philosophy that we must definitely break."

Zholnovich's words on the "Comfort zone" particularly outraged Ukrainians. The critics rightly ask who, among the inhabitants of Ukraine, Find yourself in a comfort zone after more than a year and a half of war large scale and several decades of under-funded social policy. The statement of Zholnovitch continues the *good* tradition of Ukrainian politicians who infantilize the beneficiaries of the social assistance, dividing society into "responsible citizens" and individualistic "teenagers".

In addition, the large-scale invasion has intensified negative trends in the field of social policy. The neoliberal ideology, which assumes that any problem must be solved Individually, with your own efforts, you risk losing popularity, even among Ukrainians close to these ideas. The massive destruction of homes, massive physical and psychological wounds, The catastrophic economic consequences of the war and much more have considerably widened the circle of people who need help to survive and recover. Therefore, the number of those who read the sermons Minister Zholnovich's neoliberal and then think about "how good it is to be a worthy representative of the middle class in front of the retired, sick and others profiteers" will decline rapidly. But it seems that politicians Ukrainians have not yet understood that their *anarcho-capitalist* fantasies are incompatible with the challenges it poses. war and growing dependence on the European Union, with its social system less cannibalistic.

In addition to cannibalism, Zholnovich demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the social foundations and history of an inclusive social policy. Although the different countries have very different approaches, from Switzerland's complex private systems to the vast egalitarian systems of the Scandinavian countries, all They share an understanding of the functional importance of social policy. No It matters who is in power – conservatives, liberals or left- in countries with firmly established social institutions, no one (let alone the Minister of Social Policy!) You can afford to declare your intention to destroy the "social". No one can afford to say that aid parents lead to "low-quality

children", as Galina Tretyakov did, chairwoman of the Social Policy Committee of the Verkhovna Rada [parliament]; or complaining that people "eat too much", as Andrii Reva did, the predecessor of Zholnovych (when referring to Germany, which has one of the more generous social systems). No one can afford it, because politics Social preserves what sociologists call social cohesion.

If Zholnovich, Tretyakova or Reva They had taken the first-year sociology courses, they would have known that the The question of how to maintain integration in societies was a question Key to the founding fathers of sociology. For Zholnovych and company, I offer a small reminder below.

With the development of relationships Capitalists, new social groups emerged and developed rapidly. Some of them, for various reasons, could not integrate into society and solve their problems through purely market mechanisms. These Groups included, in particular, the new class of industrial workers. In addition, workers needed health insurance in case of accidents of work, so, and in response to the trade union movement, the insurance of health appeared in Germany. The elderly and children couldn't count either. always with the help of your family members, since the different Generations lived more and more separately and women began to work. To avoid the complete disintegration of society during Such radical transformations, social assistance mechanisms were introduced in order to replace family and community support schemes Weakened.

There was also a wave of Institutionalization and expansion of social programs after the World War II: after this large-scale catastrophe, many countries They realized the need to integrate all members of the society. It is no coincidence that, after the Second World War, the Human rights were systematized in their current form, where human rights socioeconomic rights appeared as important as political rights. The Expansion of social programs and guarantees is almost always a indicator of the democratization of society and not of *laziness*. Each country has its own history, but all social support systems Ancient and relatively effective responses to historical challenges fundamental and not the realization of radical capitalist fantasies.

Where do such valuable specialists come from? like Zholnovich and company? Such rhetoric is not specifically Ukrainian, but which has its roots in neoliberal economic thought. Its main features Characteristics are: hostility to social solidarity and function social of the State, economism (which focuses exclusively on indicators macroeconomic (such as GDP), radical individualism and the understanding of market forces as the basis of social relations. This doctrine It has existed for a long time, but its practical application began in the 1970s. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, probably the Most famous representatives of neoliberal policy, carried out their reforms in the 1980s. This means that Western countries know The consequences (mostly negative) of neoliberalism.

Thatcher and Reagan were political leaders in Great Britain and the United States, countries historically known for their less generous social systems than most European countries. The The situation of social policy in Britain and the United States is not as *pink* as it may seem to supporters Boris Johnson's Ukrainians. The housing crisis continues in both countries. In the field of medicine in Britain, a collapse is expected, which does not prevents Ukrainian health reformers from pretending this is the best Example to follow. American medicine is known for its high cost both for patients and for the State. At the same time, it is inaccessible as never before for a country with this level of economic development. Without However, in both countries there has been a response: in Britain there are strikes and protests due to the health situation, and in the United States, in the In recent years, there have been successful processes of unionization of Teachers.

Neoliberal policies are also have been felt in other European countries; For example, many criticisms have been made. unemployment policies in France and Germany. After all, their Reforms of systems to help the unemployed marginalize people: the state only covers basic needs with subsidies, instead of fighting against the structural causes of unemployment. Or an example in the medical field: Germany has long been experiencing a difficult situation in the recruitment of new young medical staff, a situation that has arisen aggravated by the pandemic. However, this problem did not go unnoticed, which led to the organization of young medical personnel to fight for their rights, a field in which they have already achieved some success.

All these countries have their own "Trimmers" of social policy (although less "ferocious") and their "zholnovichi" that infantilize people in solidarity. Just like their counterparts

Ukrainians, propagate false and populist myths according to which social support It leads to "laziness" and "irresponsibility." But they're not enough popular or strong enough to be able to "destroy everything social," and certainly not hold posts in the Ministry of Social Policy.

Now, many Ukrainians are integrated into European social systems. If we take the example of refugees Ukrainians, we can be sure of two things. First, that the institutions guarantee the existence of generous social support mechanisms, Even as European experts appeal to social chauvinism, calling for savings at the expense of non-citizens of the country in question. Secondly, whereas support in crisis situations has led to faster integration and better in society, and not to an "irresponsibility". This is demonstrated [by the statistics on the employment](#) of Ukrainian refugees, who, unfortunately, are often instrumentalized in Ukrainian society to show that women "Responsible" Ukrainian women do not want to "live on welfare" and therefore So much, they are much better than other refugees. At the same time, of course, The conditions in which other refugees' refugees find themselves are ignored Countries: The intellectual thinkers of Ukrainian neoliberals do not understand the role of the "social" played in the achievements of their compatriots refugees.

The question remains open as to why the Antisocial and primitive libertarian rhetoric is still so widespread among the Ukrainian officials and in the mainstream debate. There may be many Explanations. For example, because of the political and ideological battles that give Tretyakov and others like her carte blanche to label them "socialist" everything they don't like. The peripheral status of Ukraine, dependent on strong countries, unable to deviate from the global trend of reducing Social programs and costs can also have an impact. However None of these arguments is convincing enough to sacrifice social solidarity by copying the worst failed models.

When Zholnovich tries to give his admonitions an intellectual touch and says it will "reform the social contract," does not explain what the essence of that contract will be if the social function of the State He self-destructs thanks to his efforts and those of his colleagues. This does not explain Why those who left the country because of the war should leave the functional European systems to return to post-war Ukraine, where Conditions will be difficult anyway and the efforts of the "Reformers" could simply

become anti-human. Does not explain which place It is assigned to the military and all victims of war in a "contract" with the State, which only knows how to appeal to "personal responsibility" in the Solving mass social problems. According to the Zholnovych scenario and If the company is concerned, Ukraine would face catastrophic polarization of society If the "reformers" made concessions and helped the military but not everyone else. However, we risk total disintegration if Even those who save Ukrainian society from occupation do not receive Nothing in return for what they have done. By "destroying everything social" with its famous "contract", Zholnovych will destroy not only social programs, but Also the possibility of a harmonious existence of Ukrainian society.

Note:

1/ Deputy of Servant of the People, the party of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Ndt.

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