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**FROM THE FIRST STUDENT, MISS O. LEVKOVTSEVA, TO THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE NIZHYN HIGH  
SCHOOL IN THE 1920'S-EARLY 1930'S XX CENTURY**

**Summary**

*The purpose of the article is to trace and analyze the history of women within the walls of the Nizhyn Higher School on the basis of complete archival and historiographical material. The key tasks are the analysis and attempt to reproduce the peculiarities of the formation of higher women's education on the example of the Nizhyn Higher School in the 20s and early 30s of the 20th century.*

*In the spring of 1919, the legal establishment of Soviet power on Ukrainian lands took place. The USSR took a pragmatic approach to the issue of women's education and began to actively fight illiteracy, giving women equal access to higher education with men. After all, the Bolsheviks aimed to create a «new» Soviet woman, in whose standardized image education played an important role. On November 20, 1919, a communist regime was established in Nizhyn. Subsequently, the People's Commissariat of Education of the USSR adopted a number of laws and resolutions that also affected the Nizhyn Higher School, which during the 20s and 30s of the 20th century underwent a number of reorganizations from the Scientific and Pedagogical Institute named after Nizhyn Pedagogical Institute of Professional Education for the Training of Subject Teachers.*

*Studying the topic of women's education at the Nizhyn Higher School, it can be argued that since 1920, under the conditions of the Soviet government, we can talk about the beginning of the admission of girls to the institute. The first student of the Nizhyn historical and philological institute was Olena Levkovtseva, who was born on December 10 (22), 1900 in the Chernihiv region in the village of Svidovets, Kozeletsky*

*district (now Nizhyn district) in a family of teachers. The desire to obtain an institute diploma prompted the young O. Levkovtseva to submit an application for admission to the Nizhyn Institute in 1919, that is, a few months before the establishment of Soviet power. Analyzing the memories of the student herself about the circumstances of admission, which are contained in the statement of her personal file, which is located in the Nizhyn Archive, it can be stated that the girl's admission was not easy. Undoubtedly, in the conditions of that time, the discovery that a woman could study alongside men in the same classroom seemed too bold a decision. On the other hand, it is impossible to claim a radical attitude against the admission of women to education at the Nizhyn Institute. After all, there were Higher Women's Courses within the walls of the institution. Nevertheless, Olena Levkovtseva managed to pass the exams well and enter the institute. In the first year of study, she was the only girl among the students. During the research, we discovered some inaccuracies and discrepancies in archival documents and the biography of the student herself. The year in which the girl entered the institute is debatable. Therefore, there are still certain doubts about its primacy.*

*As evidenced by the results of the study, many other girls showed a desire to learn. Every year their number grew. The social composition of the first female students was diverse. Among them were many children of peasants from the surrounding villages and children of local employees and townspeople. Most of them were graduates of gymnasiums, commercial schools, and teacher's seminars. An analysis of the personal affairs of female students shows that social origin was a frequent obstacle to admission. Preference was given to the children of employees, workers and peasants. At that time, Bolshevik purges at the institute were a common and everyday phenomenon. Social affiliation was constantly checked. For the «wrong origin» they were immediately deducted. Getting a diploma was hindered by financial problems. In addition, according to the Bolshevik doctrine, physical labor was added to intellectual activity. Therefore, after classes, most of the female students worked in the subsidiary farm of the institute, which existed from 1919 to 1934. As a result, insufficient preparation of female students, overloaded with various types of extracurricular work led to a sharp reduction in the number of students during this period. Despite all the difficulties, young people were eager to learn. The student body also took an active part in public work of the city, elimination of illiteracy and low literacy.*

*In addition to female students, the number of female teachers at the institute also increased. Also, many were appointed to positions in the service apparatus of the educational institution. By ethnicity, they were Ukrainian and Russian women. They came mainly from Tula, Voronezh, Volyn, Chernihiv and Poltava provinces. Among the newly elected teachers were also residents of Nizhyn. The majority identified themselves as townspeople, daughters of workers and employees. According to age indicators, these were women from 20 to 55 years old. Most of them were non-party. They were graduates of Ukrainian and Russian higher educational institutions. Teacher of French language and literature Olha Oleksandrivna Gryzhimailo had a diploma from a foreign university. The woman was educated at the Sorbonne. After analyzing archival documents, it was established that women mostly read such subjects*

*as foreign language, music, psychology. Many of them preferred librarianship, worked as secretaries, office workers. Subjects such as history, philosophy and mathematics were still taught by men.*

*Investigating the personal affairs of female teachers, we discovered the following interesting facts. The above-mentioned Olga Oleksandrivna Gryzhimailo (1923–1931) and Lidiya Petrivna Boykova (1924–1934), a chemistry teacher, worked for the longest time at the Nizhyn Higher School. The rest of the women continued to teach at the institute for less than five years. The reasons for this phenomenon were a difficult financial situation, family circumstances, and illnesses. That is, we see a similar picture that was observed in the everyday life of female students.*

*So, the mass of women in the educational environment of the Nizhyn Higher School can be asserted only from the second half of the 20s and early 30s of the 20th century. Because until that time, young men still prevailed in student classrooms, and most positions were occupied by men. The reasons for this phenomenon lay primarily in the political situation at that time, because the Bolsheviks came to power with their laws and regulations, which significantly affected the everyday life of ordinary citizens, especially the intelligentsia.*

**Keywords:** *Nizhyn Higher School, Nizhyn Institute of Public Education, women's education, feminist history, female teachers, female students.*