

SCTCMG 2018

International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

PROBLEM OF WOMEN-WORKERS OPPRESSION IN CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

M. R. Torburg (a) *, S.V. Dobronravov (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) National Research Technological University «MISA», 119049 Leninsky Prospect 4, Moscow, Russian Federation,

(b) State University of Management , 109542 Ryazansky Prospect 99, Moscow, Russian Federation,

Abstract

The authors analyse the social and philosophical content of the film "North Country" (2005) by famous American film director Niki Caro, shot on real events occurred in the US in the 70s - 80s of the XX century. The problem of oppression of women workers in mine conditions unfolding globalization is central. The film shows negative consequences of the globalization process and outlines a way to overcome them. Because of appearance of cheap steel on the US market, mine owners are forced to close their businesses, which leads to a reduction in the number of jobs. The current unfavorable situation in the mining industry causes an increase in competition between workers, which is aggravated by the specifics of mining work. Men use traditional ideas about the subordinate position of women as a tool for squeezing women from their jobs. The authors conclude that traditional perceptions of women's lack of independence, rooted in the mass consciousness, prevent workers from fulfilling their professional duties, increase their exploitation by owners and the administration of enterprises. Business owners use all their economic and administrative resources to protect their interests. In addition, traditional perceptions of the subordinate role of women undermine the value of solidarity. Only through joint efforts, workers can resist the arbitrariness of the owners and administration of enterprises. However, the interests of workers can be protected only with the assistance of intellectuals who are aware of their problems and are interested in solving them.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Globalization, mining, oppression, competition, solidarity.



The Author(s) 2019. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

For a long time, simple physical labor was not the subject of philosophical reflection. Individual elements of the study of physical work can be seen in the writings of the authors of the Renaissance (XIV - XVI), but only to the extent that he was involved in spiritual activities. Thus, according to the reasoning of the famous Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568 - 1639), a person is likened to God through creative activity, an integral part of which is labor: «... the hand is given to man as an instrument of the divine soul. Because thanks to her, he creates tools and clothes, and strength, and everything that nature has refused him, he creates himself and does with such art that he seems to be God» (Renaissance Aesthetics, 1981, p. 426). Only in the works of Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) physical work has been recognized by the foundation of the whole human being and thinking (Marx, 1955). From this time, theoretical studies began to appear, aimed at understanding the most diverse types of work - philosophy of technology (Kapp, 1925, Engelmeyer, 1912 - 1913), philosophy of the economy (Bulgakov, 1912), work philosophy (Simmel, 1900). The book of domestic authors, in which «for the first time in world literary practice, in addition to the history of the development of geodesy and mine surveying, the philosophical aspects of both the sciences themselves and their practical application are set» (Pandul & Zvirevich, 2008, p. 4), appeared only in 2008.

Miner's activities, until recently, did not come to the attention of philosophical consciousness in Russian science. Even today, such studies are also extremely rare. A number of notable sociological works on mining activity in Russian science appeared from the mid-1990s. Their authors have subjected to a detailed analysis a sharp breakdown of the Soviet socio-economic system and the adaptation of miners to the newly emerging living conditions (Buryanov, 1996; Zhigunov, 2000). In this article, the authors explore the problem of increasing disunity of the working class and the growth of tensions between the sexes in the context of globalization. This, in their opinion, provides valuable material for complex social and philosophical studies.

Today, a philosophical approach to the comprehension of labor, as well as the entire social reality, is particularly relevant because of its universal and multilevel nature, which makes it possible to view social and philosophical problems in the context of the large-scale and universal changes in the modern world that are called «globalization». It should be noted that the first manifestations of globalization were recorded by Marx just in the process of his study of the role of labor in the life of society in the middle of XIX: «In place of the old local and national isolation and existence through the products of their own production comes a comprehensive connection and a comprehensive dependence of nations from each other. [...] The fruits of the spiritual activities of individual nations become common property.» (Marx & Engels, 1955, p. 428). Marx also introduced the term «globalization» into scientific circulation (Attali, 2008, p. 192).

Nowadays, the process of globalization has become extremely intensified, has acquired a total and dynamic character, embracing all spheres of human life — economic, political, cultural, etc. Some researchers, for example, E. Giddens, director of the London School of Economics, see mainly positive features and irreversibility in the process of globalization. — «globalization has many advantages in all spheres of life of the world community ... It has no alternative» (cited in: Pokrovsky, 2004, p. 55). Others, on the contrary, are subject to severe criticism of globalization. For example, the German authors G.-P. Martin and H. Schumann argue that today's capitalism, due to the impact of globalization and

informatisation on the economy, «destroys its own foundation, because it undermines democratic stability and the state's ability to function» (Martin & Schumann, 2001, p. 27). In our opinion, the process of globalization is fundamentally progressive, but highly controversial.

In economics, globalization has led to the fact that the economic systems of individual countries are not only totally dependent on each other, but also to comply with the global conjuncture and the economic ups and downs have acquired a universal character. This situation has both negative and positive features for society as a whole. On the one hand, the integration of national economies facilitates economic relations between the countries, contributes to more efficient investment of capital, and enables universal access to the latest scientific and technological advances. On the other hand, the openness of national markets for foreign manufacturers often leads to a decline in domestic enterprises. The appearance on the market of cheaper goods, as a rule, leads to increased exploitation of employees that worsens throughout their working conditions and leads to a reduction in living standards. As a result, social and political tensions are rising in the world.

2. Problem Statement

This paper examines the negative effects of globalization on the material of the American film "North Country" (2005). The appeal of the authors to the material of modern cinema is not accidental. It is due to the fact that the widespread use of electronic technology, which is an integral component of the globalization process, makes modern man thinking mainly visual. «For this type of thinking, the perception of abstract- conceptual forms is very difficult » (Dobronravov & Torburg, 2016, p. 74). Under these conditions, cinema, as the most popular and popular art form, becomes an indispensable tool in the process of understanding current social problems and finding ways to solve them. Images created by representatives of artistic creativity, in contrast to abstract concepts and theories that scientists appeal, are directed not only to intellect, but, first of all, to the emotional sphere of human life. Works of art, and today, above all, cinema, not only form a definite vision of problems, but also tune in to a certain way of their practical solution. The famous American film critic Roger Ebert and TV about the film «North Country», said: «North Country» – this is one of those films that put you out of yourself, makes you feel very strong, because they dramatically show what you've heard about, that it exists, but you've never seen it in your real life » (North Country (film)).

Increased interest in movies that are in the spotlight of the media and communications, especially those that are nominated for various film awards and rewards, and the more they get. The film «North Country» has been nominated for several prestigious awards, including the prize «Oscar» in two nominations, as well as received the award «Las Vegas Film Critics Society» for Best Supporting Actress (North Country (film)). The film is based on real events that occurred in the US in the 70s - 80s of the XX century. The prototype of the main character of the film, Josie Eames, was an employee of the Ewlett mine in Minnesota, Louis Jenson (Northern Country, 2005), who has filed a class action suit against her mining company, accusing her male colleagues of sexually harassing women in the workplace. Jenson managed to win the trial. Her case became the first precedent in the United States when a claim of sexual harassment (Jenson v. Eveleth Taconite Co) was satisfied. Among other things, the film gives us a convincing answer to the question why the first trial in the US claim for sexual harassment of women by men of their colleagues

had been filed by women-miners. Only women who are in very difficult life circumstances are settled by workers into mines, but they are not desperate, and therefore are strong and ready to stand up for themselves. Now, not every man is ready to engage in such a severe and life-threatening labor.

Central to the film is the problem of women's oppression in the mining association. It should be noted that in US law, unlike Russia, there is no ban on women's work as working mines .Nevertheless, women's work has been widely used in underground work in Russia until 1966, when it was possible to perform Resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers and the Trade Unions, adopted in 1957, « On measures for female labour replacement in underground work in mining and construction of underground structures ». However, in other production sectors in our country, a lot of women are still employed in heavy physical labour.

There is no doubt that the miners face the same life problems as representatives of other spheres of labor activity. However, due to the special conditions of their work, one of the most difficult and dangerous in the world, both for health and for life, the nature of social relations and relations in the mining environment is of paramount importance. All sorts of discord and oppression within the mining groups make their work too risky and psychologically unbearable. Miner's work involves strong cohesion, the ability to rely on a partner, the constant readiness of all workers and specialists who are currently in a mine or a career to come to the aid of each other.

3. Research Questions

The film shows how unfolding globalization enhances dissociation of working class and leads to an increase in tension between the sexes. Describing the economic situation in the mining industry of the time, the manager of the mine, in which the main character worked, said: « Our fellow citizens have chosen a president who allowed the foreigners to fill the market with cheap steel. Everywhere there is a reduction, the mines were closed one by one». In fact, this economic situation is a manifestation of the globalization process: «Globalization - a process in which the nation states and their sovereignty are intertwined in a web of transnational actors and are subject to their power capabilities, their orientation and identity» (Beck 2001, p.26). Globalization in the economy leads to a reduction in national production, resulting in the reduction of jobs and increased competition between workers. Men who worked at the mine, under the threat of losing their jobs, tried to squeeze women out of their jobs, using traditional ideas about the place of women in society.

According to these ideas, the true purpose of a woman is housekeeping, caring for her husband and raising children. Therefore, in this mining town, where the mine was located, women did not have any professional skills and therefore with great difficulty could get well-paid jobs. As it was rightly noted by a prominent defender of the rights of women and the French writer S. de Beauvoir: «....even within the working class men tried to slow down the release of the women because they saw in them dangerous rivals» (Beauvoir, 2018, p. 21).

The traditional setting of consciousness of the inhabitants of the mining town on the domination of men over women did not match the decision of Josie to get a job at the mine. Her father sharply condemned such an intention of his daughter, since, by virtue of his mining profession, he was largely forced to reckon with his fellow miners. He feared that in case of his daughter's assistance, they would no longer provide

him with adequate support in the workplace, which is vital in mining work. That's why he moved away from Josie, stating that the adult daughter should not live in the parental home. The mother of Josie supported the position of the father - « Your job - to raise children, and your father - to work in the mine. If you go there to work, it will be a shame for him». In addition, her immediate superior announced in advance the difficult conditions of the work ahead and stressed that women have no place in the mine: « The mine - hell, dirt everywhere, it is worth a terrible roar. You will carry heavy loads and do a lot of things that a woman cannot do. But lawmakers did everything without me». But all this did not stop the young woman, who made a bold decision to raise her two children without help. In addition, having a strong character, Josie left her husband, who used physical violence. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that in the conditions of the economic downturn he could not get a job and support his family.

It is indicative that the whole culture of a typical mining town was aimed at asserting male domination over women. Free time of its inhabitants was distributed between the church, hunting, hockey and a bar. These cultural phenomena were mainly aimed at meeting the specific needs and men's support for employment, mostly male miners. Thus, the church preserved the unity of traditions and moral standards based on them, being the main spiritual center for miners and their families. It replaced almost all other cultural institutions. And as a major space for everyday communication and rest of the miners was the bar. They had no strength left for a more complicated cultural life: mining work completely deprived them of it. Discussion of common problems and each other in a bar contributed to meeting their urgent need for solidarity, which is vital for miners to cope with their hard and dangerous work. « If the worker was not involved in drinking, he was regarded as an outsider » (Mackie & Pattullo, 1982, p. 283). Practically necessary solidarity made the miners stop any attempts to think and act contrary to the majority of their colleagues.

The formation of solidarity of miners, as well as consolidating and honing the qualities of character necessary for their work in the mine, such as collectivism, endurance, quickness of reaction, endurance, were favored by such popular activities among the inhabitants of the town as hunting and hockey. In addition, since almost all the men of the town worked at the mine, hockey was a model structure of future professional activities for local boys. While playing hockey, they underwent serious moral, psychological and physical training for future work at the mine.

Women working in the mine clearly denied the opinion of the superiority of men over women. Coping with their responsibilities, they are in practice demonstrated their equality with men. The film convincingly shows how, against the background of the active entry of women into the traditionally male profession, social and psychological stereotypes in the perception of the sex as economic subjects are destroyed. «The global crisis acquires a new nature - an anthropological one, and its origins must be founded at the anthropological level, in the processes occurring with man. These processes are now becoming a crucial role in the global phenomena in the world situation and the dynamics, since they assumed the character of rapid and radical» (Khoruzhy, 2003, p. 38).

Men, not wanting to put up with such a social reality, subjected their fellow women to humiliation and harassment. As one of the workers accurately noted, describing the position of women in the mine: «Here you never know what to expect». Some of the men were even on such clearly criminal acts against women as sexual harassment. « In fact, sexual harassment is the opposite of desire. It is aimed at creating

a feeling in a working woman that she has no place here, that she is a stranger here, because this work is a man's business... [...] Sexual harassment in the workplace is a transformed desire to return women to «their» place» (Kimmel, 2006, p. 305,306). In addition, the mines have very favorable conditions for this kind of action - there are a lot of isolated and remote places. Harassment at the women's mine by men caused disconnection not only between different sexes, but also between men themselves: «Men's ability to establish favorable relations with colleagues is undermined by sexual harassment » (Kimmel, 2006, p. 309).

Josie, like all women working with her, first put up with insulting remarks and actions from her fellow men. Her situation is aggravated by the fact that it has become a constant target for provocations by her former school friend, who worked with her in the same team. The fact is that he once cowardly betrayed Josie, leaving her in trouble. Josie faced a difficult life choice: either to put up with physical and psychological violence in order not to lose his job and the ability to provide for her children, or to reverse this situation, risking losing her job and therefore hope for a better life.

Initially, she was trying to counteract the specific offenders at the level of interpersonal relations, but these attempts were fruitless. The fact is that the hostile attitude of men towards their female colleagues was supported by the administration and the owners of the mine. Thus, they prevented the workers from uniting in order to strengthen their rule over them. The male workers, fighting against the illusory enemies of their interests - women, because of this, did not see the real cause of their problems - the owners and the administration of enterprises. Female workers were subject to additional pressure and discrimination from owners and administration of enterprises. Thus, taking advantage of the current situation, the management of the mine, when recruiting, forced women to undergo a pregnancy test, and in the workplace did not even care about such simple things as portable toilets, which are necessary for women due to their physical structure. As one of the leaders and theorists of the left-wing movement in the West, Aleca Papariga, pointed out: « The roots of the female problem lie in the class exploitative system itself and not in the relations between the two sexes» (Papariga, 1988, p. 14).

To break the situation at the mine, Josie submits a claim to the owners of the company in court, accusing men of sexual harassment against women. She tries to explain to both her father and all the other miners why she decided to sue the company at a trade union meeting in hope that one of her colleagues would support her. The miners refused to listen to the woman, insulting her in every way: « This latent tradition of male fraternity permeates the entire history of the trade union » (Mackie & Pattullo, 1982, p. 282). This contemptuous attitude pushed Josie's father to speak out in her defense. In his speech, the father carried out the inversion, using the principle of solidarity as the highest value in the miner's minds— as a result of this, everything that was directed against Josie began to work for her. The father convinced the audience to feel his heartache and to imagine you in his place. In this situation, gender determination of Josie's father's speech played a decisive role: his words were perceived by the male audience, because he appealed not to the feelings of the insulted wives and daughters but to the feelings of their fathers and husbands. After his speech, the miners began to sympathize with Josie.

A favorable outcome of the trial is largely influenced by the lawyer Josie. He has not developed a career in New York, and he had to return to his native town, where he was subjected to ridicule and contempt attacked by men working at the mine. They considered him a weakling and a loser. He, like Josie, had

nothing to lose, but a successful lawsuit could save his professional reputation. Having experience in resolving conflicts between workers and the administration of their enterprises, he first warned a young woman: « The trial will be even worse than at the mine ». The mine owners, relying on all their economic and administrative resources, used all the means at their disposal to slander a young woman. For evidence against Josie, they even searched for her school teacher. However, in the course of further judicial investigation the falsity of his testimony was revealed. Moreover, it turned out that he had raped Josie when she was a schoolgirl, meanly using her naivety and respect for her teaching career.

The lawyer advised Josie to enlist the support of other female employees of the company, since only the class action claim had a chance of success. If only Josie makes a complaint, the company's lawyer will easily write them off on her distorted perception of the actions of male colleagues. Attempt of Josie was unsuccessful. Female workers, initially afraid of being fired, put up with their humiliated position, covering their offenders. Moreover, they opposed Josie, supporting the position of the administration with an official letter to the court. At trial, the lawyer has chosen the only right tactic to protect his ward in the current situation - he appealed to the miner's solidarity through tradition that is, pointing out that the miners are united by those qualities that are originally attributed to «real men». However, the real unification of the miners, to a greater extent, was based on the herd instinct than on conscious solidarity. The lawyer, who himself came out of the mining environment and was well acquainted with her, but lived a lot in New York, a major economic and cultural center, managed to raise the level of miners' consciousness from a simple sense of community to an understanding of the need for universal solidarity of workers, regardless of their gender. As Aleca Papariga rightly noted: «It is a mistake to assume that the women's question concerns only a part of the population - only women. In fact, the [...] women's issue is nationwide, like many other problems: the development of education, health, environmental protection, etc...» (Papariga, 1988, p. 69).

As a result, the miners - both women and men - have joined the claim of Joe. Mining company, in spite of all her efforts, lost the case and was forced to not only pay huge compensation to the main character, but also significantly improve the working conditions of women miners. The court's decision showed that the objective prerequisites for fundamental changes in the relations of the sexes in production had matured. New values and standards of behavior enter into life that business owners can no longer ignore.

4. Purpose of the Study

Conceptualization of artistic reconstruction of causes and means of women oppression at the miners in the context of the unfolding globalization and the definition of ways to overcome this kind of social relations.

5. Research Methods

The dialectical method; description; analysis; synthesis; comparison; generalization; induction; abstraction.

6. Findings

The working conditions of miners require a high degree of solidarity. In reality, on the contrary, the workers are significantly divided, which is further enhanced by the processes of globalization.

7. Conclusion

Thus, due to the intensification of the globalization process, national production is declining, which leads to the closure of enterprises and increased exploitation of workers. The preservation of traditional views on the role of the sexes as economic entities gives rise to a tough confrontation between them and is supported by the owners and the administration of enterprises, which strengthens their domination and prevents the workers from uniting in the struggle to defend their interests. Such a situation undermines the main value underlying in mining labour — the value of solidarity. Nevertheless, any significant change in the position of workers is possible only with the intervention of intellectuals in the solution of their problems, whose life experience and outlook is not limited to the narrow social practice of the mining environment, and whose spiritual needs resonate with the aspirations of workers.

References

- Aesthetics of the Renaissance* (1981). Moscow: Art.
- Attali, J. (2008). *Karl Marx: world spirit*. Moscow: Young Guard.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (2018). Second floor. *Facts and myths*, I. St Petersburg: Azbuka.
- Beck, U. (2001). *What is globalization? The mistakes of globalism are the answers to globalization*. Moscow: Progress-Tradition.
- Bulgakov, S. N. (1912). *Philosophy of the economy. Part 1. The world as a household*. M., path.
- Buryanov, O. V. (1996). *Social adaptation of miners in the process of formation of market relations* (Dissertation for Candidate of economy). Retrieved: <https://www.rsl.ru/>.
- Dobronravov, S. V., Torburg, M. R. (2016). The concept of «The death of the subject» in modern cinema on the example of the film A. G. «Innaritu Berdman». *Historical, philosophical, political and legal sciences, cultural studies and art history. Theory and Practice Questions*, 6-2 (68), 774 – 77.
- Engelmeyer, P. K. (1912 - 1913). *Philosophy of technology. Vols. 1 - 4*. Moscow.
- Jenson v. Eveleth Taconite Co., 130 F.3d 1287 (8th Cir. 1997) Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenson_v._Eveleth_Taconite_Co
- Kapp, E., Coonov, G., Nuare, L., Espinas, A. (1925). *The role of tools in human development*. Leningrad: Priboy.
- Khoruzhy, S. S. (2003). The man and his three distant destinies. New anthropology based on ancient experience. *Philosophy Questions*, 1, 32 – 44.
- Kimmel, M. (2006). *Gender Society*. Moscow: Rossmen.
- Mackie, L., Pattullo, P. (1982). *Women at work*. Moscow: Progress.
- Martin, G.-P., Schumann, X. (2001). *The trap of globalization: an attack on prosperity and democracy*. Moscow: Alpina.
- Marx, K., Engels, F. (1955). *Writings. Second edition*, 4.
- Northern Country* (September, 2005). Niki Caro (Director)
- Pandul, I. S., Zvirevich, V. V. (2008). *History and philosophy of geodesy and mine surveying*. St Petersburg: Polytechnic.
- Papariga, A. (1988). *For the liberation of women*. Moscow: Progress.
- Pokrovsky, N. (2004). *In the mirror of globalization. Twilight Globalization*. Moscow: AST Yermak.
- Zhigunov, L. E. (2000). *Solidarity behavior as a characteristic of the political subjectivity of Russian miners*. (Dissertation for Doctor of sociology). Novocherkassk. Retrieved: <https://www.rsl.ru/>