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“THE UKRAINIAN WOMEN’S UNION” IN RIVNE (1926 – 1938): STRUCTURE, PUBLIC ACTIVITIES, RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Abstract. The purpose of the research. The article highlights the emergence, forms of activity, and circumstances of the women’s organization “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” winding up with its centre in Rivne and its branches in the territory of Volyn Voivodeship. It has been determined that the women’s organization represented the socio-political and socio-cultural practices of women in Western Volyn. **The methodology of the research** is based on historical cultural, chronological methods, as well as methods of analysis and systematization, which made it possible to consider the conditions for the women’s organization emergence, its relations with the Polish authorities, forms of work and significance to the national self-awareness of the local Ukrainian population. The method of prosopography has been applied in order to find out the names of the women’s organization members. **The scientific novelty** of the article consists in the fact that the archival documents and interwar periodicals were found and researched, which made it possible to elucidate the peculiarities of the programme principles, forms

of work, relations with the Polish authorities of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne, and to find out the names of the Ukrainian women activists. **The Conclusions.** In the first half of the 1920s activation of the women’s movement in Western Volyn was associated with the women’s section emergence at povits “Prosvita”, and later on with the women’s organization functioning – “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne and its branches, the founders of which were the local Ukrainian women and political emigrants of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. As a result of the Polish authorities ban on the Galician-Volyn women’s organization establishment, “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne extended its influence only to Volyn Voivodeship, establishing a number of departments. “The Ukrainian Womens’ Union” in Rivne was aimed at the national activity, the organization kept in touch with “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Galicia, which led to persecution by the Polish authorities. Under conditions of the “Volhynia Experiment” brought in by Henryk Józewski and the idea of the “Sokal border” in opposition to “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne, a pro-government women’s organization “The Ukrainian Women’s Union of Public Work” was founded in Lutsk as its centre. The situation, internal contradictions, as well as the passivity of a part of women, led to the final winding up of The Ukrainian Women’s Union.

Key words: women’s movement, “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne, education, church, charity, Volyn, Galicia, the Second Polish Republic.

“СОЮЗ УКРАЇНОК” У РІВНОМУ (1926 – 1938): СТРУКТУРА, ГРОМАДСЬКА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ, ВІДНОСИНИ З ВЛАДОЮ

Анотація. Мета дослідження. У статті висвітлено появу, форми діяльності, обставини закриття жіночої організації “Союз українок” з центром у Рівному та його філій на території Волинського воєводства. Доведено, що товариство репрезентувало громадсько-політичні та соціокультурні практики жіноцтва Західної Волині. **Методологія дослідження** базується на історико-культурному, хронологічному методах, а також методах аналізу і систематизації, що дало можливість розглянути умови появи жіночої організації, її взаємини з польською владою, форми роботи та значення для національної самосвідомості місцевого українського населення. Для з’ясування імен діячок товариства корисним був метод просографії. **Наукова новизна** статті полягає у тому, що віднайдено й досліджено архівні документи, міжвоєнну періодику, які уможливили показати особливості програмних засад, форми роботи, взаємини з польською владою “Союзу українок” з центром у Рівному, з’ясувати імена українських жінок-активісток. **Висновки.** Активізація жіночого руху у Західній Волині у першій половині 1920-х рр. була пов’язана з появою жіночих секцій при повітових “Просвітах”, а згодом з функціонуванням власне жіночого товариства – “Союзу українок” з центром у Рівному та його філій, до заснування яких долучились місцеві українки й політичні емігрантки УНР. Унаслідок заборони польської влади на створення галицько-волинського жіночого об’єднання, “Союз українок” у Рівному поширював вплив лише на Волинське воєводство, заснувавши низку відділів. Національно орієнтована робота “Союзу українок” у Рівному, контакти із “Союзом українок” у Галичині призвели до переслідувань з боку польської влади. В умовах “волинського експерименту” Генрика Юзевського та ідеї “сокальського кордону” на противагу “Союзу українок” у Рівному виникла проурядова жіноча організація “Союз жінок українок громадської праці” з центром у Луцьку. Така ситуація, внутрішні суперечності, а також пасивність частини жіноцтва стали причиною остаточного закриття товариства.

Ключові слова: жіночий рух, “Союз українок” у Рівному, освіта, церква, благодійність, Волинь, Галичина, Друга Річ Посполита.

The Problem Statement. The interwar period opened up new opportunities for the women’s movement development, although the level of political self-realization of women in Volyn Voivodeship was low. Women consolidated in the women’s branches, which were founded in povits “Prosvita” societies in the first half of the 1920s. Despite the work in reading rooms and drama groups, the above-mentioned branches did not develop independent activities, which was connected with both everyday difficulties and pressure by the Polish

authorities. The Ukrainian women's issues, such as raising an educational and cultural level, spreading the ideas of the national cause, taking care and upbringing of children, actualized the emergence of "The Ukrainian Women's Union" organization with its centre in Rivne and its numerous branches.

The purpose of the article is to analyse the activities of "The Ukrainian Women's Union" in Rivne and its branches on the territory of Volyn Voivodeship through the prism of a personal factor and relations with the Polish authorities under the conditions of the "Volhynia Experiment" of the Voivode Józewski.

The Review of Publications and Researches. There were considered the formation and functioning of the Western Ukrainian women's movement, its implementation in the socio-political processes of the interwar period, the cooperation of women with political parties and public organizations, the contribution to the parliamentarism development and the Ukrainian society consolidation, the ideas of feminism in the works written by the following scholars: M. Diadiuk (Diadiuk, 2011; Diadiuk, 2017), T. Raievych (Raievych, 2001), O. Malanchuk-Rybak (Malanchuk-Rybak, 2006), B. Savchuk (Savchuk, 1998), I. Levchuk (Levchuk, 2018) and the others. However, the above-mentioned scholars focused on the gender movement primarily in Galicia, while the organizational activities of women in interwar Volyn remain covered insufficiently.

The articles written by A. Shvab and L. Shvab about Olena Levchanivska and her family (Shvab & Shvab, 2019), the work by R. Davydiuk about one of the leaders of the "The Ukrainian Women's Union" in Rivne Paraskeviia Bahrynivska became a useful source for writing the article (Davydiuk, 2014). The life of Maria Volosevych, Head of the branch of "The Ukrainian Women's Union" in Kremenets, was elucidated in the articles written by V. Manzurenko (Manzurenko, 2013), Ya. Marchenko and R. Davydiuk (Marchenko & Davydiuk, 2023). The women's participation in the theatrical and musical activities of interwar Volyn could be found in the articles written by A. Zhyvyuk and R. Davydiuk (Zhyvyuk & Davydiuk, 2019; Zhyvyuk & Davydiuk, 2020), an everyday problem of women-prisoners in the prisons of the Second Polish Republic was considered by O. Razyhraiev (Razyhraiev, 2020).

The relevance of the scientific article is also explained by the fact that there is confusion with the names of women's organizations that functioned in Volyn, in particular, "The Ukrainian Women's Union" in Rivne is called "The Ukrainian Women's Union in Volyn", while the pro-government "The Ukrainian Women's Union of Public Work" appeared in the documents under the abbreviated name with the centre in Lutsk. The source base of the scientific article consisted mainly of the archival documents stored in the State Archives of Volyn and Rivne regions (Ukraine) and the State Archives of Brest region (Belarus), as well as materials of interwar periodicals.

The Results of the Research. The intensification of the Ukrainian women's movement under the conditions of the Second Polish Republic was influenced by the public organizations development, political parties, as well as parliamentary elections and related civic activism. In interwar Volyn Olena Levchanivska was the only female senator representing the Ukrainians elected in the Parliamentary elections of 1922, who, after joining the Ukrainian Parliamentary Club, worked in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, in the international women's organization "The League of Peace and Freedom", carried out active educational, cultural and educational, charitable work, in particular as a member of the women's section of Lutsk "Prosvita". After completing her parliamentary mandate, O. Levchanivska focused on the educational work in her native village of Lyniv. The following figures worked in the women's

sections of “Prosvita”: Halyna Zhurba, Oleksandra Chernova (Zhyvotko), Hanna Karpynska (Karpinska) and the others.

The public work in Galicia was a role model to the Ukrainian women in Volyn, where the society “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” was founded at the Congress in Lviv on December 22–23, 1921, convened on the initiative of the women’s group Anna Barvinok the Ukrainian Pedagogical Society. There were 387 delegates from Galicia, Bukovyna, Volyn, Naddnipyryashchyna, as well as from Vienna, Prague, Warsaw, and Tarnow, who came to the Congress (Savchuk, 1998, p. 100). The activists stood for the unity of the women’s organization unanimously, objectively determined by their common interests at the forum. However, the Polish administration gave permission for the union to work only in Galicia, banning the Galician-Volyn women’s union. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, there was a drastic need to create one’s own society in Volyn, which evolved on the basis of the Committee to help poor children at Rivne Ukrainian private gymnasium (State Archive of Volyn Region (SAVR), f. 46, d. 9, c. 4218, p. 36).

According to the permission of Rivne elders under No. 75749/26, the constituent assembly of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne was held on December 5, 1926 (State Archive of Rivne Region (SARR), f. 3, d. 1, c. 1, p. 1). In 1926, the Main Board and the supervisory board of the society were headed by Hanna Karpynska (Zhinochyi visnyk, 1927, 4 hrudnia, p. 4), the wife of the Head of Rivne “Prosvita”, the Ukrainian revolution participant, a lawyer Oleksandr Karpynsky. Stanislava Tomkovich was the Head of the women’s organization the next year (Rivenchanky pratsiuiut, 1927, 24 chervnia, p. 4) under the patronage of Maria Bulba (SARR, f. 30, d. 18, c. 1275, p. 2) (both figures were political emigrants, natives of Kyiv region). At that time, in Rivne there were also the following members of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” Board Olena Kentrzhynska, a native of Podillia, the wife of the enlightener Anton Kentrzhynsky, and Paraskeviia Bahrynivska, who came from Kharkiv region. P. Bahrynivska gained experience in organizational work during the years of the first Russian revolution (she distributed leaflets, proclamations, spoke at rallies, for which she was arrested by the tsarist authorities). From the end of 1917, she worked as a husbandry manager at the Ministry for Justice of the Government of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (SARR, f. P-2771, d. 2, c. 2768, p. 14). She emigrated to Poland and lived in Warsaw with her husband Mykola Bahrynivsky, a lawyer, Minister of the Ukrainian People’s Republic government after the defeat of the revolution. In 1926, the couple moved to Rivne (Davydiuk, 2014, pp. 6–8).

“The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne extended its influence over the territory of Volyn Voivodeship and functioned according to the statute approved by the Voivode on July 11, 1927. There were the Chairman, three deputies, and eight members in the main Board of the organization, which was located in Rivne. The representatives of the Board chose from the members the heads of sections, the secretary, the treasurer, and the referents of the branches. The Board meetings were convened and conducted by the Chairman, her Deputy or the oldest member of the Board (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 1).

There functioned 4 sections in “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne: religious humanitarian section, educational section, economic commercial section, labour industrial section in order to achieve the set goals (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1, p. 2). On the basis of regulations established by the Main Board, the work of the sections was directed to the spread of education among urban and rural population; opening a network of reading rooms, libraries; organization of theatrical performances, concerts, evening parties; publication of magazines; creation of

medical centres; organization of economic and industrial unions; providing a material and moral support to society members in case of unemployment or illness; creation of branches and groups in cities and villages of Volyn Voivodeship. The financial basis of the organization consisted of contributions, voluntary donations, legacies, assistance, income from parties, concerts, carnivals, performances (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 1). The financial condition of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” improved after it received the property of Rivne “Prosvita”, which was banned by the Polish authorities. The women’s organization and Rivne Ukrainian private gymnasium became the property of the educational library and property worth PLN 20,652 (Bukhalo, 1994, p. 29). The society, a vocational school (bursa) for students of a private Ukrainian gymnasium and a library were located in Narodny Dim (People’s House). In general, the women’s organization had a good library, its own residence in Rivne for meetings and academies.

At the beginning of the work of Women’s Union in Rivne, its branches emerged in Zdolbuniv, Kovel (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9, c. 3937, p. 4), Kostopil, Kremenets, Volodymyr, Turiysk (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9, c. 4218, p. 36), Matsiyiv, Pochayiv (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 105). In addition, the Union Women opened the reading rooms, founded choirs and theatre groups, and “zakhoronky” (kindergartens) for children in Rivne, Oleksandria, and Velyka Liubasha in Kostopil region (Ukrainets, 1929, 2 zhovtnia, p. 5). Each community, with the permission of the Board, could form social groups, however, on the condition that at least 10 local Ukrainian women expressed such a desire (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 1).

In March of 1934, in “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” there were 166 members with its centre in Rivne, its departments were active in Kovel, Volodymyr, Matsiyiv, Kremenets, Pochayiv, Pidluzhne, Mylostov, Danychev, Samostrily, Zdolbuniv, Mezhyricha (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, pp. 16–17), Basiv Kut (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 63), the group functioned in Turiysk, Shaynim, Okunin, Berezhetsi, the libraries worked in Spasiv, Zdovbytsi (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, pp. 71, 105). In 1938, the organization united 479 people, had influence in Kostopil, Kovel, Rivne, Volodymyr, and Zdolbuniv povit. During ten years of work, the women’s union founded 17 reading rooms (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, pp. 1–2).

Kovel branch of Rivne headquarters of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” was founded by the women’s organizational meeting on December 11, 1927. The following members of the temporary Board were elected: Matsiuk – the Chairman, Kolendova and Koss – the Deputies, M. Bakhovets-Nedolia – the Secretary and the Treasurer. At the meeting, the plan for the celebration of the writer O. Kobylanska was discussed and the goal was set to join all events organized by other Ukrainian organizations (O. K., 1927, 20 hrudnia, p. 3). Subsequently, Kovel branch of the women’s organization was headed by Oleksandra (Lesia) Pidhirska (a wife of Samiilo Pidhirsky, the Ukrainian Central Council member, a lawyer, an ambassador), her Deputy was Yelyzaveta Tarasevych, the Secretary – Nataliya Zybenko (a daughter of Ambassador Mykola Pyrohov, a wife of the cooperator, an engineer Oleksandr Zybenko) (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 97). In 1937, on the initiative of O. Pidhirska there was held a meeting dedicated to the memory of the Ukrainian insurgents, who died near Bazar (U Polshchi (1937, 26 hrudnia, pp. 28–29). On May 25, 1938, she presented an essay devoted to the life and work of Symon Petliura. The present women decided to reread and discuss the works dedicated to him during the week in memory of the Chief Otaman (Richnytsia smerty, 1938, 26 chervnia, p. 9). According to the reports of Volyn Voivodeship Government, dated March 12, 1938, it was recorded that Kovel branch had influence on a significant part of the intelligentsia, numbering 72 members (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 72).

Since 1929, Volodymyr branch of the women’s society was headed by Nina Richynska, the wife of Arsen Richynsky, the founder of Volodymyr “Prosvita”, a doctor, the organizer of the Ukrainian Church Congress in Lutsk. Mother’s Day was organized owing to the efforts made by the administration, at which a choir performed, a conductor was A. Richynsky, and a speech was delivered by O. Levchanivsky, the enlightener (State Archives of Brest Region (SABR), f. 1, d. 9, c. 654, p. 5). In 1938, there were 44 members, who belonged to the branch (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 75).

Olha Ohorodnyk (a wife of Oleksandr Ohorodnyk, a public figure, an ambassador to the Diet of the 5th convocation (1938 – 1939)) worked in Zdolbuniv centre (SARR, f. 156, d. 2, c. 311, p. 22), a doctor Iryna Prisievska (SARR, f. P-2771, d. 2, c. 3662, p. 16), later on it was headed by Oleksandra Baidak (a wife of Ivan Baidak, the UNR Army sotnyk) (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 31).

Maria Cherkavska headed Kremenets branch of the women’s society initially (the wife of Mykhailo Cherkavsky, Volyn provincial Commissar for education of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, an enlightener, a senator of the first convocation) founded on March 13, 1929, later on the leadership passed to Maria Volosevych (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 45) (a wife of Oleksandr Volosevych, the lieutenant colonel of the UNR Army) (Marchenko & Davydiuk, 2023, p. 51, 57). M. Volosevych revived the work of the branch, she had experience in revolutionary and cultural and educational activities, as a delegate of the First Military Congress, an assistant to the general secretary of education I. Steshenka, an employee of the cultural and educational department of the headquarters of the Active Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (Manzurenko, 2013, pp. 299–301). Kremenets branch had its own residence, a library (about 600 books) and a reading room (Zakryly filiiu Soiuzu Ukrainok u Kremiansi, 1938, 12 sichnia, p. 4).

The Head of the branch in Kostopil was elected a doctor, an employee of the military hospital under the Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, Hanna Roschynska, who tried to spread the work of the society to the entire county. The activist of the branch organized Shevchenko Days, started women’s tailoring and sewing courses, activated cultural and educational life, and supported the Ukrainization of the Orthodox Church in Poland. The active public work of the spouses Hanna and Peter Roschynsky became the basis for their persecution by the Polish police and their dismissal from the position of doctors. In 1938, the Roschynsky were forced to leave Kostopil and move to Kremenets, where Hanna’s relatives lived (Rudyk, 1953, pp. 59–60).

Charity was an important part of women’s life: taking care of children, helping them pay for education, arranging free lunches. On May 8, 1927, women from the Soviet Union came up with the idea of a material support for students and holding collections for the benefit of this educational institution at a conference in the Rivne Ukrainian private gymnasium. “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne initiated the work of the canteen, Christmas tree in the Ukrainian gymnasium, the collection of donations for the Plast home in Lviv (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1, pp. 3–4).

The society helped the Ukrainian emigrants, who experienced significant financial difficulties: there was the lack of shoes, clothes, and other essential items. On February 4, 1927, the meeting of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne decided, considering the a difficult situation of the families of women interned in Kalisha camp, to collect and send various things for them. It was decided to organize sewing training for women, and the funds collected by the Klevan group raised to 5 zl that passed on to the children of Nadiya

Vrotnovska at the Board meeting on December 5, 1934 (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 13). It should be mentioned that after the death of Kostiantyn Vrotnovsky-Syvoshapka, a member of the Central Ukrainian Council, Head of the Military Veterinary Department of the Ukrainian General Military Secretariat, a colonel of the UNR Army in Rivne on April 2, 1929, his wife was left with four minor children – Hordiy, Tetiana, Olha and Bohdan.

The members of the women's society helped with the topical problems of life in the region. In April of 1933, they joined the work of the temporary Committee in order to help flood and hail victims in Polissia, donating the collected funds to compensate for a material damage caused by natural disasters. The activists of the organization helped female prisoners, sending Easter food gifts to Rivne prison (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, pp. 4, 8).

The activists conducted lectures on various issues, prepared business courses, and organized concerts. It became traditional for women to hold a Christmas tree events with gifts and sweets for children, vechornytsi (traditional gatherings with songs, rituals) on St. Andrew's Day, St. Nicholas's Day, and handing out gifts to children. There were held holidays dedicated to Mother's Day, the "academy" in honour of T. Shevchenko, other Ukrainian writers, and commemoration of important historical events systematically. On December 15, 1936, there were held events on the occasion of the Ukrainian writer's death, Vasyl Stefanyk owing to the initiative of Zdolbuniv branch of the women's society. P. Bahrynivska prepared a summary and made a speech dedicated to his work, noting that V. Stefanyk was one of the best connoisseurs of the Ukrainian peasant soul. There were read the excerpts from V. Stefanyk's works at the gathering, each of which was explained (Zdolbuniv – Stefanykovi, 1937, 1 sichnia, p. 10). Owing to the efforts of the above-mentioned branch, a service was held in St. Katerynivska Church in Zdolbuniv on the occasion of Mykhailo Hrushevsky's death on December 2, 1934.

The women of the union wrote a letter to the Sejmik as they acknowledged the importance of cooperative work: "The cooperatives fight against laziness, because they force people to take part in the meetings, gatherings where people give pieces of advice, calculate, send letters to the world...The cooperatives are the good to the whole and the good to the individual" (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 32). The members of the society focused on the educational work: "We need to distribute books through various readings, performances and "book holidays", we need to breathe life into our library, we need to make every effort so that our reading rooms in the villages could fulfill their tasks properly" (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 2, p. 29).

The opening of kindergartens was a crucial aspect of the women's organization activities. There were three things, which seemed to be necessary in order to make the above-mentioned happen: desire of parents, availability of funds and selection of specialists. In June of 1927, a kindergarten at Narodny Dim (the People's House) opened in Rivne, and there were 22 children enrolled in it (Rivenchanky pratsiuiut, 1927, 24 chervnia, p. 4). Women could not handle the work of the kindergarten during the year, hence, with the help of the authorities, they established summer temporary kindergartens. Yelyzaveta Zinchenko, a native of Poltava region, a wife of a teacher and artist Petro Zinchenko, worked as a kindergarten teacher in Rivne (Davydiuk, 2016, p. 445).

There was organized a Ukrainian kindergarten for 80 pupils (both local children and children of emigrants) in Kovel by the efforts of various Ukrainian societies, including the branch of "The Ukrainian Women's Union" in 1937. Children spent time and study in the parish kindergarten when the weather was fine, and children were in the guardhouse at the church or in the premises of "The Ukrainian Women's Union" when the weather was gloomy.

Children were served free breakfasts and lunches, and brought up in the Ukrainian spirit. At the end of the summer, on the occasion of the closure of the institution, children held a party with a play, songs, dances, recitations and various entertainments (U dytiachomu sadku v Kovli, 1938, 10 lypnia, p. 22).

Despite the success and achievements of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne and its branches, the work of the organization was complicated by internal difficulties, contradictions, and differences in political sympathies: some of the centres were inclined to the nationalist views, some sympathized with the socialist ideas (SARR, f. 33, d. 4, c. 69, p. 284). The first internal crisis of the organization arose at the beginning of the 1930s, when the idea of self-liquidation of the union appeared and the leadership was re-elected at the extraordinary general meeting on October 31, 1931. There were two candidates, who applied for the position of Head of the Board: Ivanna Skrypnyk (a wife of the UNR activist Ambassador Stepan Skrypnyk) and Paraskeviia Bahrynivska (a wife of the UNR activist Mykola Bahrynivsky). The general meeting gave preference to P. Bahrynivska, who undertook not only to preserve the organization, but also to intensify its work (Davydiuk, 2016, p. 446). There were the following members of the Board: Kentrzhynska, Roshchynska, Kulyi, Bulba, Zinchenko, as well as there were the following members of the audit commission: Ishchuk, Vrotnovska, Tomkovych (A. V., 1931, 15 lystopada, p. 4). P. Bahrynivska was elected again as the Head of the Board at the general meeting of the society on December 2, 1934. However, the society declined gradually, its work slowed down.

We should make an assumption regarding the “fueling” of the internal contradictions in the society, due to the formed group by P. Pevny at the time, which was close to the Voivode, Henryk Józewski, there was launched the initiative on the creation of a pro-government women’s organization, probably planning to do it by transforming “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne. Owing to the influence of the “Volhynia Experiment”, two currents emerged in the women’s environment at the beginning of the 1930s: the pro-government one, whose representatives focused on unconditional cooperation with the Polish administration, and the national democratic one, whose members tried to distance themselves from such cooperation and continue keeping in touch with the Ukrainian women from Galicia. The representatives of the first current were mainly the wives of the figures of the VUO, regional party of the VUO, the representatives of the second current, in particular the Head of the Union P. Bahrynivska, supported the UNDO programme and contacts with the Galician women (SARR, f. 30, d. 18, c. 1274, p. 6).

As a result of failure regarding “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” transformation into a pro-government institution with its centre in Rivne, another organization emerged in contrast to it, which was called “The Ukrainian Women’s Union of Public Work” in Lutsk with the abbreviated name UWV (The Ukrainian Women’s Union of Volyn) in 1932 (Statut, 1932, 15 serpnia, pp. 5–7). The name of the new organization was consonant with the Polish women’s organization “Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet”, which emerged in order to support the policy of J. Piłsudski in Warsaw in 1928 (SABR, f. 1, d. 10, c. 150, p. 4). The organization formed in Lutsk, which initially operated as a women’s section under the Council of the VUO (Zhinocha sektiia Rady VUO, 1933, 16 kvitnia, p. 3), was headed by Vira Maslova, a native of Vinnytsia, the wife of the VUO member, Ambassador Mykola Maslov. Yuliya, the wife of the Governor Józewski, supported the women’s organization in Lutsk in every possible way (Nekroloh, 1939, 28 travnia, p. 3).

The contradictions between the two women’s groups only increased over time. “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne established contacts with the women’s section of “Silsky

Hospodar” in Lutsk, but in every possible way bypassed communications with the pro-government “The Ukrainian Women’s Union of Public Work” in the voivodeship centre. The organization with its centre in Rivne continued communication with women’s organizations of Eastern Galicia for mutual assistance and sharing experience. On December 2, 1934, the annual meeting in Rivne was attended by representatives from Lviv, in particular, Senator O. Kysilevska. P. Bahrynivska from Rivne, O. Pidhirska from Kovel, M. Volosevych from Kremenets represented “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne at the women’s Congress in Stanislaviv (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 29). The Head office of the women’s organization in Rivne appealed to “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Lviv with a request to send an instructor in cutting and sewing, to the “Sich” society in the USA – to help with donations. Organizationally, the women’s organisation with its centre in Rivne was significantly inferior to the Galician “Ukrainian Women’s Union”: “Volyn women have just woken up, but they are ready to walk side by side with you under your ideological leadership,” – wrote P. Bahrynivska (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1, pp. 5–6).

Due to such work of the women’s organization, especially contacts with the Galician society, its activists were under pressure of the Polish authorities, because they did not fit into the formula of the “Sokal Border”. Women had to work under the supervision of the police and starost, undergo inspections and listen to threats to ban the organization. In 1933, in Volodymyr the starostvo forbade the local branch of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” to celebrate T. Shevchenko’s anniversary, to organize performances of the drama circle, O. Tsynkalovsky was forbidden to deliver speech on the topic “The Ukrainian Nobility of the 16th – 17th centuries” (V tenetakh “ukrainofilstva”, 1933, 1 lypnia, p. 3).

The starostvo sent a notice about the liquidation of Zdolbuniv branch of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” on November 10, 1936. The authorities explained that according to the law, the number of female members of the branch could not be less than ten. Since six women did not pay contributions in 1936, they were expelled from the organization automatically. On November 23, 1936, the Board appealed to Volyn Voivodeship with a protest, stressing out that, first of all, in the branch there were 20 members, and second of all, according to the statute, only the Board could revoke membership in the community. Persecution of members of other branches continued: on December 30, 1937, the Board of the branch of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Kremenets received a letter in which the starostvo demanded to quit their activities. However, women were able to protest the above-mentioned decision (Zakryly filiiu Soiuzu Ukrainok u Kremiansi, 1938, 12 sichnia, p. 4).

P. Bahrynivska prepared an appeal to the Ukrainian parliamentarians with a request to protect the women’s organization from the onslaught of the Polish authorities due to the complication of the situation in February of 1937. However, the Main Board rejected the offer, explaining that during the celebration of the 10th anniversary of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” it is not necessary “to exacerbate the already strained relations with the local authorities” (SARR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1, pp. 6–7). Despite the loyalty of the Board of the women’s union, the Polish administration forbade the creation of new branches, organizing courses, holding events and, finally, announced preparations for the final closure of the society.

“The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne and its branches and groups were banned after another inspection at the end of May of 1938. The last audit, carried out simultaneously in the premises of the headquarters, in the branches and a private residence of the Head of the organization P. Bahrynivska lasted all night. The official reasons for the closure were the following: lack of cash books, balanced budgets, which made it difficult to control

the authorities; the presence of minors in the members list of the union; belonging to the society of women, who were arrested in the past for participating in illegal organizations; cooperation and ideological ties with the Galician women’s society (Rozviazyaly Volynskiy Soiuz Ukrainok, 1938, 18 chervnia, p. 7).

The Main Board of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne did not accept this state of affairs and turned to Volyn Voivodeship Administration to appeal to the Ministry for Internal Affairs to revoke the decree, issued by Rivne povit starosta regarding winding up the organization on June 8, 1938 (SAVR, f. 46, d. 9-a, c. 447, p. 42). Although there was no official response to the members of the Ukrainian Women’s Union.

It was obvious that the authorities had no intention of resolving the issue in favour of the Ukrainian women’s organization. P. Bahrynivska, under the pressure of circumstances, refused to lead the organisation, which complicated the situation. The efforts of other members of the Main Board, in particular Antonina Horokhovych, to defend the rights of the women’s organization were not successful.

The Conclusions. The prohibition of the Polish authorities to extend the activities of the Galician “Ukrainian Women’s Union” to the territory of Volyn Voivodeship prompted women from Volyn to establish a similar organization with a similar name in Rivne, under which a number of branches emerged in the towns of the region. Political emigrants of the Ukrainian People’s Republic joined the activities of the women’s society actively, who, along with local Ukrainian women, intensified the society operating, filled it with a new content, spread the Ukrainian education and culture, engaged in charity, protection of the Orthodox Church, founded libraries, theatre groups, etc.

Under the conditions of the “Volhynia Experiment” of Voivode Henryk Józewski, the Polish authorities began to restrict, later on banned the activities of “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” with its centre in Rivne and its branches, as they had previously banned “Prosvita”, “Silsky Hospodar”, the Ukrainian cooperatives of Galician origin. These prohibitions fit perfectly into the tactics of implementing the idea of the “Sokal Border”, the purpose of which was to prevent the activities of those organizations that maintained contacts with the Ukrainian associations of Galicia. Instead, the Ukrainian pro-government institutions were formed in order to fill the created vacuum, with the voivodeship administration support. In Lutsk, the wives of pro-government Ukrainian activists initiated the formation of a new women’s organization “The Ukrainian Women’s Union of Public Work”, which spread the idea of the Ukrainian-Polish cooperation and was supposed to substitute “The Ukrainian Women’s Union” in Rivne.

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