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**POLISH PRISONS ON UKRAINIAN LANDS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD:
A NEW STUDY (peer-review of the book: Razyhrayev O. V. The World behind Bars.
Penitentiary System in Volyn and Galicia in 1918 – 1939: monograph.
Drohobych: Kolo, 2023. 688 p.)**

**ПОЛЬСЬКІ В'ЯЗНИЦІ НА УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ЗЕМЛЯХ У МІЖВОЄННИЙ
ПЕРІОД: НОВЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ (рецензія на книгу: Разиграєв О. В.
Світ за ґратами. Пенітенціарна система на Волині та в Галичині
у 1918 – 1939 роках: монографія. Дрогобич: Коло, 2023. 688 с.)**

In the autumn of 2023, Drohobych publishing house “Kolo” with the assistance of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk published the monograph by Oleh Razyhrayev, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of Lesia Ukrainka Volyn National University Oleh Razyhrayev “The World Behind Bars. Penitentiary System in Volyn and Galicia in 1918 – 1939”.

The peer-reviewed monograph focuses on the current issues of domestic and foreign historical science – the past of the penitentiary system in the lands of Volyn and Galicia within the borders of interwar Poland. The structure of the monograph is logical and well-founded. The study consists of a list of abbreviations, extensive introductory notes, four

chapters, conclusions, bibliography, lists of tables and illustrations, name index, as well as an extended summary in Polish.

In the introductory remarks, the author notes that his main research focus was on such aspects as “covering the genesis and organization of the penitentiary system in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; characteristics of penal institutions, their personnel, as well as the stay of prisoners in penitentiary institutions of the Second Commonwealth of Nations; study of the problems of the formation of the criminal enforcement system in Volyn and Galicia; elucidation of the organization and personnel of the penitentiary system in these areas; tracking the dynamics of the number of prisoners in Volyn and Halychyna, as well as their conditions of detention, the level of nutrition and medical care, work activities, opportunities to fulfill cultural, educational and religious needs; consideration of protest forms by prisoners – hunger strikes, riots and escapes; analysis of the informal environments of prisoners, as well as the stay of prisoners from Volyn and Halychyna in prisons in other regions of the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; clarifying the activities of public and political organizations regarding the support of prisoners in Volyn and Galicia and protection of their rights” (p. 12).

Oleh Razyhraiev’s monograph is of an interdisciplinary nature and is written on the margins of regional history, social history, and legal history. In introductory Introduction, the author also refers to the conceptual and categorical apparatus of the monograph and details the terms “penitentiary system”, “prison” and “prisoner” (pp. 20–25). In the same part of the book, the issues of historiography (pp. 25–47) and source base (pp. 47–55) are discussed.

When doing the research, Oleh Razygrayev analysed manuscript sources from the funds of a number of archives and libraries in Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. The archival institutions of Ukraine, where sources from the history of the interwar penitentiary system of Volyn and Galicia, discovered and analysed by the author of this monograph, are stored, include the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv, Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine, Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine and Ukrainian Women, Central State Audio-Visual and Electronic Archive, Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, the state archives of Volyn, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne, and Ternopil regions. The author also used materials from the archive of the State Institution “Lviv Penitentiary No. 19” (pp. 47–49). O. Razyhrayev also involved materials from archival institutions in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus, which highlight both national processes related to the functioning of the penitentiary system, as well as certain regional features of it. In particular, the Volyn historian processed the collections contained in the Archive of New Acts in Warsaw, Central Military Archive, National Archive in Kraków, National Digital Archive, as well as in the state archives in Warsaw, Rzeszów, Zamość, Kalisz, Katowice, Kielce, Lublin, Przemyśl and Częstochowa, materials from the manuscripts departments of the libraries of the University of Warsaw, the Catholic University of Ivan Paul II in Lublin, the scientific library of the Polish Academy of Arts and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków, as well as documents of the Sejm Library in Warsaw. O. Razyhrayev discovered and analysed an extremely valuable corpus of sources in the funds of the state archives of Brest and Grodno regions of the Republic of Belarus, as well as in the collections of the Central State Archives of Lithuania (pp. 50–52).

The first part of the monograph – “From Wronki to Ostroh: Penitentiary System in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” – sheds light on the genesis and organization of penitentiary system in interwar Poland, characterizes the penal institutions and their

personnel, reveals the general aspects of the stay of prisoners in penitentiary institutions. The author notes that in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the penitentiary system formation took place with state-building processes in the country and formation of its borders simultaneously (p. 59). Difficult material conditions and disparity of a legislative framework, which functioned in the lands that belonged to the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German empires until November of 1918, and later became part of Poland, were an obstacle to a proper functioning of the criminal enforcement service (p. 71).

From the monograph by O. Razyhryayev, we learn that in interwar Poland the prisons were divided into three classes. The largest prisons included the “Holy Cross” prison in Kielce, the “Lukishky” prison in Vilnius, the “Mokotów” and “Paviak” prisons in Warsaw, prisons in the cities of Koronowo, Wronki, Rawycz, etc. Many penitentiary institutions were located in humid rooms unsuitable for such needs and in need of repair. The staff of the penitentiary system consisted of both relevant employees of the Ministry of Justice and other governing institutions, as well as prison personnel. The prison staff also included medical workers, teachers and clergy (p. 101). In the same part of the book, the author highlights the general aspects of the stay of persons in prisons in Poland (pp. 137–189).

In the second part of the monograph – “In the new state. Prisons in Volyn and Galicia” – Oleg Razigraev analyzes the formation of the penitentiary system in the above-mentioned areas, highlights the structure and organization of prisons, and also presents a collective portrait of prison workers. During 1918 – 1923, the formation of the penitentiary system continued in Volyn and Galicia. The author notes that this process had its own regional features associated with unsuccessful attempts to unify the regulatory and legal bases of prison operations, a difficult financial situation, complex (re)evacuation processes and problems with the exchange of prisoners.

From Oleg Razygraev’s book, we learn that there were prisons of various classes in Volyn and Galicia, which mostly had a criminal-investigative nature. Volyn prisons, given the different structure of the penitentiary system in the region, were numerically significantly inferior to Galician prisons. An architectural feature of most Galician prisons was their location in the same complex as court premises. Prisons were often housed in former sacral or other unsuitable premises in need of repair. Among the largest prisons of the first class in the region, the author singles out prisons in Drohobych, Lviv (“Bryhydky”) and Lutsk. Class II included prisons in Zolochiv, Kovel, Kremenets, Kolomyia, Przemyśl, Rivne, Sambor, Syanok, Stanislavov, Stryi, Ternopil, and Chortkiv. Volodymyrsk, Dubnensk and Ostrozk prisons belonged to the III class and were the smallest penitentiary institutions in the region (p. 211).

Oleg Razigraev rightly notes that the absolute majority of employees of the penitentiary system in Volyn and Halychyna were Roman Catholic Poles (p. 264). Employees of penitentiary institutions had experience of military and law enforcement service. Throughout the interwar period, they complained about the difficult material situation. Prison officers were obliged to improve their professional qualifications. During the performance of their professional duties, they often violated discipline, which led to the imposition of appropriate sanctions (p. 294).

In the third part – “Ideological” and “common”: the regulated daily life of prisoners” – the author turns to the history of everyday life and reveals individual elements of the daily life of persons deprived of their liberty. Oleg Razigraev classifies prisoners according to various criteria: gender, age, according to articles of the criminal code, etc. The world economic crisis

of 1929 – 1935 (which provoked an increase in criminality), increased pressure on political opponents and the strengthening of the authoritarian regime in Poland further exacerbated the issue of overcrowding in penitentiaries. In the 1930s, almost all prisons in the study region were overcrowded, and most prisoners expressed dissatisfaction with housing and food conditions (p. 362).

In the same part of the book, the author raises the issue of medical care and work activities of prisoners. Usually sick prisoners were treated in the prison hospital or outpatient clinic. Typhus, tuberculosis, venereal and other infectious diseases posed a serious threat to the lives and health of prisoners of penitentiary institutions in Volyn and Halychyna (pp. 370–373). Convicts actively worked in various production workshops, and were also involved in agricultural work. Oleg Razigraev notes that staying in penitentiary institutions gave prisoners the opportunity to master literacy and acquire basic knowledge in prison educational institutions (p. 388). Oleg Razigraev notes that staying in penitentiary institutions gave prisoners the opportunity to master literacy and acquire basic knowledge in prison educational institutions (p. 388). Usually each prison had a chapel or place of worship (p. 403).

The pages of the reviewed monograph also highlight the issue of violation of discipline by prisoners, in particular, the author singles out hunger strikes, riots and escapes of convicts. Starvation was characteristic mostly of political prisoners and was a frequent phenomenon in Galician and Volyn prisons. Riots and escapes were characteristic of all categories of prisoners. Such actions led to the imposition of disciplinary sanctions on prisoners (pp. 408–409).

An extremely important element of the book under review is the analysis of informal communities of prisoners. Oleg Razigraev notes that while in penitentiary institutions, criminal and political prisoners created their own groups (“communities”, “communes”, “communities”) that had their own rules and hierarchy. The leaders of these structures acted as mediators between the prisoners and the prison administration. Political prisoners (communists and Ukrainian nationalists dominated among them in Volyn and Galicia) tried to continue their activities and maintain contacts with organizational centers on the loose in various ways (pp. 439–440). Prisoners who came from different areas of Volyn and Halychyna, for various reasons, often served their sentences outside their native region (p. 476).

In the last, fourth part – “Not to be left without help: support of prisoners and protection of their rights by public and political organizations” – Oleg Razigraev analyzed the activity of the public and political sectors regarding the care of prisoners. Here, the reader will find information about the activities of numerous prisoner aid organizations “Patronat”, which provided moral and material support to prisoners and members of their families. The author notes that the assistance provided by these organizations was important and necessary for persons deprived of their liberty. However, it provided a small part of the prisoners’ needs (p. 521).

In the same part of the book, the activities of the “International Organization for Aid to Fighters of the Revolution” – a Bolshevik structure that looked after communist political prisoners – are covered (p. 521). The author did not ignore the “Inter-Party Secretariat of the Struggle for the Amnesty of Political Prisoners”. This political organization was created in the Polish parliament by communist political groups and carried out activities aimed at freeing political prisoners (p. 554). O. Razigraev devoted a lot of space to researching the activities of the state-wide human rights organization “League for the Protection of Human

and Citizen Rights” in Volyn and Galicia, the functioning of the Galician “Committee for Assistance to Ukrainian Political Prisoners”, the pro-communist “Committee for Assistance to Political Prisoners in Eastern Galicia” (later – the “Regional Committee for Assistance to the Revolutionary Movement in Eastern Galicia”), as well as other manifestations of the public sector’s care over prisoners. From the pages of the last part of O. Razygraev’s monograph, we learn that help for political prisoners also came from some politicians, lawyers, and individual caring persons (pp. 590–591).

The reviewed monograph is completed by thorough conclusions. The author convincingly proves that “the functioning of the penitentiary system in the territories of interwar Volyn and Halychyna is an inseparable part and an important phenomenon of domestic and foreign history, and its research – a component of such modern sub-disciplinary areas of socio-humanitarian studies as regional history, social history and history of law. The solution of the scientific problem to which this book is devoted is also important in a theoretical and practical sense, since, on the one hand, it equips modern researchers of the modern history of Volyn and Halychyna with new archival material, and on the other hand, it can be useful in the modern activity of criminal executive service of Ukraine” (p. 598).

It should be added that the presented work is well illustrated, which significantly facilitates its perception. At the end of the book, the reader will find lists of tables and illustrations, an index, and, of course, a detailed bibliography.

Concluding the review of O. Razygraev’s monograph, we note that the reviewed book expands the worldview horizons of the historical study of the interwar development of Volyn and Halychyna in the regional and national context, and we hope it will certainly find its reader in Ukraine and beyond.

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