

RIVNE "PROSVITA" IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *In the article the pre-conditions of origin, creation and basic stages of development of society „Prosvita” in the Rivne region in the context of history transformations are explored. The integral picture of its cultural and educational activity, role and value in public-political and social-cultural life of the region are shown. It is founded out that the national consciousness of the past and present generations of Ukrainians was formed on the basis of moral, ethical, pedagogical, political, social and cultural factors. At all times enlighteners took care of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the nation, fought for the independence of the Ukrainian people and were voluntarily engaged in cultural and educational activities, founded Ukrainian schools, opened reading houses, arranged concerts and performances, organized commemoration events dedicated to the memory of prominent Ukrainian figures, printed books, newspapers, magazines and opened educational libraries. Association Prosvita also took part in the creation and expansion of other public organizations, where the main objective was the rise of national consciousness. Not without reason at the present stage of particular topicality is the problem of formation of identity of Ukrainian nation*

Keywords: *society „Prosvita”, public organization, national-cultural motion, Ukrainian intelligentsia, patriotic elite, independence of the state.*

1. Introduction

“In order to become an independent state, every nation must ensure that this society has gradually matured feeling their national dignity and the common need for the existence of the nation, and, therefore, national masses must reach a particular educational level. If you want to have worthy life in the international community, it is indispensable to hold together.”[1]. Thereby, on 8 December 1868, first enlighteners brought up this idea in their general meeting in Lviv, where the best representatives of Ukrainian intelligentsia united, according to Andrew Sichynskyi and Joseph Zayachkivskyi, with a view to “developing folk enlightenment in moral and political realms by publishing practical books, brochures in the language spoken by people”[2; 3]. These words are still relevant today, since gaining independence, Ukrainian nation should unite around national idea and alleviate economic recession and decline in Ukrainian politics and culture.

As R.M. Harat rightly notes, dealing with these issues, *Prosvita* has had great achievements and has gained considerable experience that society should use in the new historical situation, as success of today's national revival and state creation largely depend on the fact whether we can analyze and use our own historical achievements on the basis of completely new methodology, free from any ideological clichés. [4]

2. Materials and methods

This issue has been brought to light in scientific literature and has been dealt with for more than a century. Analysis of national historiography shows that there is a growing body of scientific literature owing to the long-term efforts of scientists. Among them there are monographs by

I. Belei, M. Lozynskyi, S. Perskyi, M. Vozniak who were involved in the work of *Prosvita*.

In the twentieth century different tendencies of *Prosvita* are reflected in the works of local and foreign scientists, such as S. Shakh, A. Kachor, S. Volynets, K. Bartoshyvch, V. Doroshenko and others.

Works by Y. Patsula [5] M. Gon [6] B. Savchuk [7] and others were dedicated to activity of Rivne “Prosvita”.

However, the origin and development of *Prosvita* in Rivne region have been not enough investigated in scientific publications and this has contributed to the topicality of this study.

The objective of this research paper is to analyze the activity of institution *Prosvita* in Rivne region in the historical context of the development and its role in shaping of the cultural environment of region.

3. Results

In the early 20th century cultural centers of *Prosvita* were established in central, eastern and southern areas of modern Ukraine and in 1917 in Volyn region.

In 1921, after the signing of the peace treaty of Ryha, Kholmshchyna, Pidliashia, Western Volyn, Western Woodlands, Galicia became a part of the Polish state which was restored in 1919. The territories of modern Rivne and Volyn regions and also Kremenets area of Ternopil region constituted Volyn province with its center in Lutsk and territory of Rivne region was divided into four districts - Dubno, Kostopil, Rivne and Ostroh, and in 1925 Zdolbunov district was created.

As Tkhor V. I. mentions: “After nearly 150-year pause Ukrainians of Galicia and Volyn lived in restored territories of Poland. During this period significant political, social,

economic and cultural differences appeared between them and this affected development of Poland.” [8, p. 87].

Ukrainian population experienced discriminatory harassment by the Polish administration policy. Thus, on 21 May 1921, Volyn governor Jan Kzhanovskyy issued a directive to ban Ukrainian language in governmental and public institutions [9, c. 117].

In response to national oppression and discriminatory policy concerning Ukrainian people, patriots among Ukrainian elite created social organizations. Y. Polishchuk rightly notes: “Activity at this time is most clearly embodied in cultural and educational work and unity around it. It was Late Ukrainian Renaissance in Volyn. Only now, during the Polish occupation, farmers took notice of fighting for Ukraine and its heroes, such as Petliura, Hrushevskyy, Konovalts; only now they are aware of the missed opportunity to create Ukrainian state” and developing this point of view he asserts that “despite the administrative harassment, in 1920’s Ukrainians launched a powerful national and cultural movement. A whole bunch of Ukrainian social organizations popped up in Rivne.” Their foremost initiators and activists were former master sergeants of Ukrainian National Army (UNA) and representatives of the Galician intelligentsia [9, c. 118].

The biggest public organization in Rivne district was *Prosvita* which dates back to 1917 but was officially registered “on 7 June 1920 in the eldership of Rivne region” [1, p. 10]. The organizer was its lawyer Theodore Sumnevych.

The main goal of *Prosvita* was spreading of education and strengthening of national consciousness. Thus it was stated in the statute of organization: “The main objective of organization *Prosvita* is to refine cultural and national development of the Ukrainian people in Rivne and hymns ...” [1, p. 11].

In Rivne *Prosvita* founded Ukrainian schools, opened the houses for reading, arranged leisure of young people at expense of institution and membership fees from other citizens; it also printed books, newspapers, magazines and opened educational libraries in all towns and villages.

For successful functioning of reading houses and libraries it was necessary to establish the book fund which would provide readers with books and stir up their interest. For several years of library’s existence the association could be proud of its collections which were donated not only by *Prosvita* but also by other citizens who were solicitous about the development of book publishing industry in the region. In their catalogs there were hundreds of books published in Lviv, Stanislav, Peremyshl, Rohatyn, Zhovkva, Colomyia, and more than 200 books in Ukrainian language were published in Ukrainian publishing house Leipzig-Kyiv in 1920.

Thousands of books were put in print by foreign publishers in Vienna, Prague, Geneva, Krakow and Warsaw. Among them there are books that should be noted, such as *Fatherland*, *New Era*, *Common Library*, *Montenegro*, *For School and Home*, *Alma Mater*. In that time not only certain books were published, but entire libraries – *Interesting Adventures*, *Study My Brothers*, *Library of Lemkivshchyna*, *Library of Native Home*, *Knowledge* [1].

Readers of the educational libraries were able to look through the books by T. Shevchenko, L. Ukrainka, M. Kotsyubynskyy, P. Myrnyi, P. Chubynskyy, N. Kostomarov, D. Doroshenko, I. Krypyakevych, I. Borshchak, O. Ohloblin, M. Korduba, M. Shashkevych, S. Rudanskyi and many other writers and scientists. Books about Rivne region and its history, books written by professor I. Ohienko (metropolitan Ilarion) about Ostroh Bible, Ostroh and Derman monastery were in demand [1, p. 13].

Enlighteners paid due attention to organization of studying process in study groups which eliminated illiteracy; they were particularly active in autumn and winter.

The greatest achievement of association *Prosvita* was establishment of Ukrainian private gymnasium in Rivne in 1923 which “was known throughout the Volyn region because Ukrainian private gymnasiums at that time were situated only in Lutsk and Kremyanka” [10, p. 156]. Its first director was Theodore Pekarskyi.

Prosvita also harnessed creation and expansion of other Ukrainian organizations. Thus in Rivne it supported the establishment of the Union of Ukrainian Youth institution *Plast*, task of which was to raise national consciousness.

Cultural and educational activities of youth institution were versatile. Boys and girls “spent hours reading historical and political literature, carried into practice local history and ethnographic work, learning the types of folk art, made up songs about their organization, recorded Ukrainian folk songs” [11, p. 186-187]. As in many public and national organizations of 1920-1930’s, theatrical art was developed by *Plast*. Thereby, co-working with the Union of Ukrainians they put on the stage dramatic scenes and plays mostly by Ukrainian playwrights covering historical and everyday topics. They performed in Rivne and went to the villages and towns of Rivne region [11, p. 187].

Despite the oppression of Polish administration, *Prosvita* tried to organize performances of touring theaters, concerts of visiting Ukrainian choirs, memory evenings of prominent Ukrainian figures. Thus, on 11 March 1930 *Prosvita* arranged an event dedicated to Great Kobzar held in local theater owed by Zafran. “In the program of Shevchenko evening one could even hear the words of the songs with the lyrics written by Shevchenko and performed by Rivne choir school, high school orchestra; singers-soloists and reciters also performed. But at the end of the concert the Polish government banned the singing of the anthem *Ukraine Is Still Alive* and forced to perform the Polish national anthem. Hall was indignant ... and unanimously sang Ukrainian anthem” [12, p. 39-41]. The Polish authorities have punished all activists and members of the Shevchenko evening. Therefore, *Prosvita* had to cease its activity, but this arose a number of companies, such as Ukrainian club *Native House*, Ukrainian literary and artistic institution named after Lesya Ukrainka, club *Ukrainian School*; Union of Ukrainians and Ukrainian Cooperatives were working actively [1, p. 126].

It should be mentioned that in 1930 active social activities in Rivne were carried out by the nephew of Simon Petliura, Stepan Skrypnyck who lived and worked in Rivne before the World War II. He was a member of the liberation

in 1917-1920 (sergeant in the UNA army), was appointed as an ambassador to the Sejm, was elected as a member of the Rivne City Council, was the organizer and active participant of the above-mentioned organizations, such as *Native House* and Institution named after Lesia Ukrainka. After the war Stepan Skrypnyck emigrated, obtained the rank of Metropolitan and later was elected as Patriarch of Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church with the residence in the Ganges Brook (USA) [9, p. 126]. Looking ahead, it must be mentioned that after Ukraine gained independence and inhibition of Ukrainian Autocephalous Church was canceled, Archbishop returned to Ukraine, was elected as the first Patriarch of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and received the church name Mstyslav.

Here and there art exhibitions were organized. Thus in 1937 in Rivne there was a traveling art exhibition of Ukrainian art institution *Calm* from Warsaw. In addition to original art work, the fact that among twenty authors of the exhibition were mostly people of Volyn extraction deserves due attention. The exhibition presented their works and then unknown artist Neil Khasevych became a famous painter of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army after a short period of time [9, p. 141].

Thus despite the oppression by the Polish government, *Prosvita* played a significant role in the cultural and spiritual life of the Volyn Woodlands, introducing the Ukrainian language, the elimination of illiteracy of the population, the opening of Ukrainian schools, the rise of cultural and educational level of the nation with the help of the best Ukrainian classical examples.

The best representatives of Ukrainian intellectuals were ready for sacrifice for the sake of national and cultural patrimony, raising the cultural and educational level of the population.

Hereby, in the interwar period, during the times of manorial Poland, public institutions, which were established in the territory of Rivne and Volyn (some figures), Galicia and Pidlashia, made a significant contribution to the rise of national consciousness of Ukrainian people, preservation and study of folk culture of the region.

September of 1939 became another stage of expectations and trials for Rivne region. Hoping to be free from the Polish government and politics, the arrival of the Soviet army, as evidenced by the Soviet propaganda, "this liberation campaign, so those in poverty by Poland and lived in hardship, believed in the truth of these words ... Others were skeptical about the promotion of the propaganda, knowing the hypocrisy of Stalinist ideology, cautiously evaluated changes in the government and anxiously waited for its next steps" [13, p. 86].

With the advent of the new government control over all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life was established. In urban areas repression of Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish cultural and political figures began.

Ukrainian national social, cultural and scientific institutions which worked since the Polish era were liquidated. Libraries and reading rooms, periodical magazines of *Prosvita* ceased their activity [8, c. 94]. The most active members were subjected to repression and were forced to

emigrate. In education, science, art a policy of russification and sovietization was conducted.

The debacle of *Prosvita* in Rivne was accomplished in 1939 by officials of the NKVD. In the same year active members of Rivne organizations *Prosvita* and *Plast* Stepan Semeniuk, Theodosii Dovgaluk were arrested and deported to concentration camps. And all the books that were elaborately collected by members of *Prosvita* were ruthlessly destroyed.

Apart from these, there were changes in the field of culture and education. 17 schools were opened on the basis of previously existing hotels. In March 9, 1940 the first institution of higher education began to function in Rivne, Pedagogical Institute, where the training of students was conducted at three Departments: History, Ukrainian Language and Literature, Physics and Mathematics. Extension Institute for Teachers, Music School, Theatre of Music and Drama, Philharmonic Hall, three libraries in Rivne, Museums of Regional Ethnography in Rivne, Dubno and Ostrog, House of Folk Art begun to function. Qualified and ideologically trained staff in these facilities was mostly recruited from the Soviet Ukraine [9, p. 144]. It was also discovered that there were 3 Houses of Culture, 105 clubs, 106 reading rooms, 32 libraries in the region [8, p. 94].

In 1941, after the occupation of Rivne by Nazi invaders, public organizations resumed their work. *Prosvita* in Rivne, which put all its efforts in development of rural amateur performances, restoration of elementary school with native language of teaching, spreading of Ukrainian newspapers and books, declared its activity.

The ranks of organization were replenished with new members. Nadiia Ishchuk - high school teacher, Ulas Samchuk - writer, Ivan Karnaukhov - public figure, etc. were among them. Administration of Hitler established a severe control over the activities of the organization.

In 1941 Rivne becomes a prominent center of Ukrainian Press and Typography. That is, on 1 September 1941 when the newspaper *Volyn* was published, editor in chief of which was by then already famous writer of Derman, Ulas Samchuk; Stepan Skrypnyck was the founder of the magazine, graphics were provided by Nil Hasevych (who graduated from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts), artistic page was prepared by the director of Rivne Ukrainian theater Anatolii Demo-Dovhopilskyi. Olena Teliha and Oleg Olzhych were co-working with *Volyn* also. [9, p. 157].

The main topics highlighted in the newspaper were literary, cultural, artistic, historical and ethnographical issues. *Volyn* became widespread and was the subject of discussion not only in Ukraine but also among Ukrainian figures in Prague and Warsaw [9, p. 158].

Along with *Volyn* two periodicals also appeared - magazine *Ukrainskyi hliborob* and children's magazine *Orlenia*. By forces of publishing house a new edition of the novel *Maria* by Ulas Samchuk was released.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War educational movement assumes wide scope. Hence, in May 31st, 1942 commemorating of Taras Shevchenko was held in the cinema *Skelia*. Great concert was performed by choir under the

direction of J. Tsehmiystruk. Citizens of Rivne were able to listen to the art of playing the bandura by artists of Kyiv Choir of Bandurists of Taras Shevchenko for three days. And in June 28th, 1942 commemorating of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the classic Ukrainian Mykola Lysenko was held, where songs performed by choir sounded. At the same time, with the help of the efforts of *Prosvita* and the Union of Ukrainian Women a major exhibition of Ukrainian art, where was exhibited a large collection of embroideries, carpets, ceramics, whittler products from different regions of Ukraine – Volyn, Polissia, Galicia, Poltava, Chernihiv, was organized [1, p. 45].

All these phenomena were temporary. As it was said by Y. Polishchuk, "... in the autumn of 1942 Germans abruptly changed their policy and severely banned and liquidated sprouts of ... culture. The functioning of schools was discontinued, actions of *Prosvita* began to be pursued and restricted. Several personnel cleanups were made in the newspaper *Volyn*" [9, p. 164].

In 1943 the activity of *Prosvita* died away. The best representatives of this organization became victims of repressions and the part of members who managed to escape repressions of occupation regime structures (polish, fascist, soviet) were fighting in the ranks of OUN and UPA as the most national-conscious citizens for 40-50 years.

A new stage of revival of social life of Ukrainians, which began in the late 1980's and early 1990's, is closely connected with the institution *Prosvita*. Since 27 September 1988 in Rivne the first centre of the Association of Ukrainian language named after Taras Shevchenko was created; it was the first restored association *Prosvita* in Ukraine headed by Vasyl Chervoniy. Activity of institution aimed "... the preservation and development of national culture and traditions of Ukrainian people and shaping of national consciousness" [1].

In early 1989 such associations appeared almost in all institutions and enterprises of the region. In October 14, 1989 in Rivne House of Culture held first regional constituent conference of the Taras Shevchenko Association of Ukrainian language, where the head was elected scholar philologist Borys Stepanydyn. During the first year of its activity the association held its first regional celebration of the native language, Allukrainian Berestechko's heroes Day, celebration of Shevchenko days, organizing book exhibitions of Shevchenko literature, exhibitions of rare *Kobzar* editions, organized trips with concerts of cossack's and rifle songs to the remotest villages of Woodlands.

Since the early 90-ies of XX century the process of national revival of the Rivne region has began. Gradually resumed their work branches of association *Prosvita* in parts of the region: Dubno, Kostopil, Sarny Zdolbuniv Dubrovysia and Klevan, Ostroh, Zarichne, Volodymyrets, etc.

The local intelligentsia occupied, as before, the prominent role in the revival of *Prosvita* in the Rivne region, the most active and the most conscientious people including politicians, doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests, poets – J. Patsula., B. Stepanyshyn, Ye. Shmorhun, S. Melnychuk, P. Yov, K. Shulzhuk, A. Voloshchuk,

M. Wheat, M. Pokrovsky, P. Kraliuk, Yu. Velihurskyi, M. Fedoryshyn and many others.

In 1989, was initiated the festival of Ukrainian language and literature in the village Peresopnytsya of Rivne region, where the first book in Ukrainian language was written - *Peresopnytsia Gospel*, and since that times this festival has been held annually on 22 May. It should be mentioned that a significant role in promotion of Ukrainian First book belongs to M. Fedoryshyn (currently the chairman of the Rivne Regional Association of Allukrainian Association *Prosvita* Shevchenko), which issued booklets *Peresopnytsya Chronicles*, *Ukrainian Pershoknyha*, books *Peresopnytska Rus*, *Peresopnytska Pershoknyha* [1].

Among all the achievements of members of *Prosvita* there are such events as the annual celebration of Shevchenko days, since January 1993 launched the popular festival *Epiphany* which became a good tradition for Rivne inhabitants, a nationwide song festival *Rebellious Nights* which was held in Rivne on 13-14 October 1997 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Since 1995, was launched the annual Slavic folklore festival *Carol* which involved artistic groups from foreign countries: Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Belarus and Moldova.

Between 1989-2008 years with the assistance of association *Prosvita* were published more than 100 books. Among the most interesting are the publications of historical themes: *The Famishment of 1932-33. in Ukraine* by O. Voloshchuk, *Peresopnytsya* by S. Terskyi, *Volyn - My Pain, My Hope, The Spring of Sorrow* by P. Velesyk, *Paths of Trouble* by S. Kyriakh, *Derman Saint Trinity Monastery* by G. Bukhalo. Many poetry, short stories, essays, tongue twisters, humoresques, essays, and poems and tales for children of primary school age were published.

4. Conclusions

Thus, in the years 1988-2008 association *Prosvita* and its activity was of utmost importance, as it played a major role in the revival and consolidation of Ukrainian language, distribution of Ukrainian books, development of national culture, history, conservation and increase of national and cultural traditions and it also contributed to Ukraine's independence.

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