

UDC 94:327(477+438)«1918/1939»  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863.1/21.167128>

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## ORIGINS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN WESTERN UKRAINE IN 1918–1939

*This article discusses the emergence of the national liberation movement of Western Ukrainians during the interwar period, when several liberation forces emerged, represented both as legal unions and democratic parties, as well as by two illegal political forces. Leading political forces tried to influence this process, which did not lead to the consolidation of the national ideas, but instead lead to further contradictions. The struggle of the Polish national chauvinists and Ukrainian patriotic forces did not allow Ukrainians to defend the sovereignty of their state, since this was affected by the military-political situation in the region. The development of the Ukrainian national liberation movement was perceived as anti-state activity by the Polish society, and the unresolved political, economic, cultural, educational, and social problems – as an attempt to “steal” these lands. The Polish community considered the “Ukrainian question” through the prism of its own struggle for state independence, and the consistent assimilation policy of the Polish authorities, the actual lack of unity of Ukrainian political forces pushed part of the Ukrainian youth to the use of more radical forms of struggle. The prevalence of national interests over individual ones was proclaimed, the supreme goal of the struggle was asserted by the achievement of state independence.*

**Key words:** nationalism, liberation, struggle.

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## РОЗВИТОК НАЦІОНАЛЬНО-ВИЗВОЛЬНОГО РУХУ В ЗАХІДНІЙ УКРАЇНІ В 1918–1939 РОКАХ

*У статті розглядається поява національно-визвольного руху західних українців у міжвоєнний період, коли виникли декілька визвольних сил, що представляли як правові об'єднання, так і демократичні партії, а також дві нелегальні політичні сили. Провідні політичні сили намагалися вплинути на цей процес, що привело не до консолідації національних ідей, а до подальших протиріч. Боротьба польських націонал-шовіністів та українських патріотичних сил не дала змогу українцям захищати суверенітет своєї держави, оскільки на це вплинула військово-політична ситуація в регіоні. Розвиток українського національно-визвольного руху сприймався як анти-державна діяльність польського суспільства, а невирішені політичні, економічні, культурні, освітні й соціальні проблеми – як спроба «вкрасти» ці землі. Польська громада розглянула «українське питання» крізь призму власної боротьби за державну незалежність та послідовну політику асиміляції польської влади, фактична відсутність єдності українських політичних сил підштовхнула частину української молоді до використання більш радикальних форм боротьби. Проголошено переважання національних інтересів над індивідуальними, як найвища мета боротьби було затверджене досягнення державної незалежності.*

**Ключові слова:** націоналізм, визволення, боротьба.

**Introduction.** The relevance of the topic of research in the stated chronological boundaries is that, despite a large number of published sources and scientific literature, there are many gaps in its study. In particular, there is a need to find out how specific forms and methods of counteracting state assimilation and the preservation of national identity appeared in Ukrainian society.

The main results of research in this area belong to Western Ukrainian researchers, in particular M. Kugutyak (Kugutyak, 1993), O. Krasivsky (Krasivsky, 2000), M. Lytvyn and K. Naumenko (Lytvyn,

Naumenko, 1995), V. Marchuk (Marchuk, 2004) and many other domestic researchers (Pylypenko, Bilan, 2018a) who, with the use of a broad source base, in a comprehensive way highlighted the state-political, cultural and educational, socio-economic, spiritual life of Western Ukrainians.

A separate place in the study of leading political forces in the struggle for Ukrainian statehood was occupied by L. Zashkilnyak (Zashkilnyak, 2005), V. Khodak (Khodak, 2005), S. Vidyansky (Vidyansky, 2003), M. Mandryk (Mandryk, 2006), and others. The research of scientists accumulated the best

traditions of both domestic and foreign historical science.

**The purpose of the work** is to analyze the components of the course of the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people in the period 1918–1939.

**Main part.** In the 1920's, the ideological face of the Ukrainian liberation movement was still rather vague, so at this time it is impossible to talk about nationalist ideology, but only about the formation of a nationalist outlook. In the 20–30's, Western-Ukrainian society witnessed radicalization of the national liberation movement with the use of terrorist acts (Mandryk, 2006).

Gradually, the most prominent factor in the social and political life of Western Ukraine was Ukrainian nationalism, whose birth is associated with a radical position in the struggle for Ukraine's state independence of the Ukrainian Military Organization (UMO), which in the future served as an "army in the underground". The UMO was a military patriotic, not a nationalist organization: it aimed to liberate Ukrainian lands from invaders by military means. Corresponding was its organizational structure – like the army. According to its organizers, the main task of the UMO was to prepare a nationwide uprising of the Ukrainian people against the invaders.

The nature of the UMO's activity, which positioned itself as a supra-partisanship secret non-mass military organization, whose main task was to continue the armed struggle with the occupier, did not contribute to the development of ideology. A certain role here was played by the disappointment of the military with all sorts of political programs and ideological platforms. Sufficient was the presence of a member of the organization's desire to fight for the liberation of Ukraine.

Starting from the spring of 1922, activists of the UMO began to carry out acts of sabotage in Galicia, burned bread storages, conducted armed attacks on gendarmes, blew up trains and bridges (Kugutyak, 1993). In the 1920's, the UMO organized several assassinations of state officials.

The ideological platform of the liberation movement in this period was formed outside the clear organizational framework – at the level of personal outlook. The focus on the development of certain psychological features also determined the specifics of the ideological works of that time – most of them, filled with emotions, rather resemble religious sermons than political documents (Pylypenko, 2018).

In 1923–1927 there were significant changes in the social and political movement of Western Ukraine. Political parties reflected three orientations that dom-

inated the then Polish society: pro-Soviet, pro-Polish, and self-determinant.

The most influential political association of Ukrainians was the Ukrainian National-Democratic Union (UNDU), the most massive legal Ukrainian party, formed in Lviv on July 11, 1925, with the Ukrainian People's Labor Party with all its factions, the Ukrainian National Work Party and the National a group of Ukrainian Parliamentary Representations with their associates from Volyn, Kholmshchyna, Polissya and Pidljashya. The head of the union was D. Levytsky, and from 1935 – V. Wise.

The association was based on Ukraine's self-determination without the use of terrorist methods. An agreement was reached between UNDU and the Polish government, where UNDU refused to fight for the autonomy of the Western Ukraine (Krasivsky, 2000). At first, some of the members of the party relied on the peaceful evolution of the Ukrainian SSR to a national state, which was the result of a compromise between Soviet forces and supporters of the "orientation to their own forces". Until 1927, the UNDU considered the Ukrainian SSR as a sovereign state, which eventually would become completely independent, however, the struggle against the "national-deflection" in the Communist Party of Ukraine, the repression against the intelligentsia, and forced collectivization became an obstacle. From the late 20's, UNDU took hostile positions regarding the Soviet regime and laid the foundations for its overthrow through a revolutionary way. In the 1930's, the UNDU believed that the Ukrainian state would emerge from war due to the intervention of the Western powers. According to the leaders of UNDU, Western Ukraine should have become the base for the liberation of the Transdnestrian Ukraine from the power of Bolshevik Moscow. The search for a compromise with the Polish government on the anti-Soviet platform began. In 1932, the leadership of UNDU decided to temporarily refuse from the slogans of independence, replacing them at the request of the national-territorial autonomy for all Ukrainian lands in the Polish state. The anti-Ukrainian position of the Sejm leadership finally convinced Ukrainian parliamentarians of the futility of further attempts to settle themselves with the Polish circles. UNDU became an opposition to the Polish government. This led to the collapse of the UNDU and other legal parties.

The successive assimilation policies of Polish authorities, the lack of unity of Ukrainian political forces pushed part of the youth to the use of more radical forms of struggle (Pylypenko, Bilan, 2018b). In January 1929, an Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was created in Vinnytsia. Its leader became

E. Konovalts, and the main ideologist for a long time was D. Dontsov. On the eve of the Second World OUN had around 20 thousand members. Using tactics of terror and government sabotage, defining itself as a movement, and not as a party, the OUN condemned all the legitimate Ukrainian parties of Galicia as colloquialist. The OUN has committed dozens of state fund expropriations, over 60 attempts and assassinations.

As a matter of fact, among all political parties and organizations operating on the lands of subordinated Poland, it was the OUN's most active influence on the actual course of events and eventually left behind the most significant result in the history. Obviously, this was the response to the demands of the time when it became necessary to unite disparate nationalist organizations into a single structure based on a clear ideology. The OUN, unlike the UMO, from the outset acted as a political organization, and therefore had to ideologically oppose the existing political forces in order to prove its necessity.

OUN members carried out sabotage actions, attacked banks and mail. The political doctrine of the OUN was formulated in its program documents in 1929, and finally – in the program adopted by its Grand Meeting in 1939. The concept of “creative violence and the active minority as a leading force” was an integral part of ideology. The OUN's state concept was based on the assumption that the Ukrainian lands were occupied by Poland and the USSR. Therefore, Ukrainian nationalists did not recognize all those international acts, treaties and agreements, which separated the Ukrainian lands and endorsed Ukrainian statehood. The building of independent Ukraine should end with the complete expulsion of all occupiers from the Ukrainian lands. The first commandment of the OUN called: “You will win the Ukrainian state or you will die in the struggle for it”. The attacks on Polish officials were particularly popular.

Youth, students of higher and secondary educational establishments, were most fond of this movement. They began to unite, to create youth organizations standing on self-styled attitudes. The youth was disappointed in the older generation, which could not stand up to Ukrainian statehood. In addition, it was under constant oppression by the Polish authorities, suffered from unemployment.

The OUN was a subsidiary organization. It issued legal and illegal newspapers and magazines (“National Development”, “Surma”, “Young”), adhered to military methods of leadership, had a rigidly centralized structure. At the same time, the OUN did not refuse to participate in political, economic, cultural and educational associations. It was because

of them that it hoped to lead a massive national-liberation movement.

Accordingly, at this stage, the professionalization of ideologists takes place – in the structure of the OUN one of the leading places – occupies a special ideological reference, a specialized edition “Building the Nation” appears (coming out in 1928), which became a platform for discussion of ideology issues. Since one of the main tasks of the liberation movement was the creation of a powerful consolidated organization as an instrument of the liberation struggle, considerable attention was paid to the education of membership (Pylypenko, 2018). There were a number of specially designed requirements for members of the OUN (Decalogue, 12 attributes, 44 rules), which, in their form and content, somewhat resemble the codes of religious organizations (Khodak, 2005). Incidentally, at this stage, the desire of the ideologues of the OUN to transform the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism into a kind of secular religion has led to an escalation of the OUN's relationship with the church and clerical organizations. In general, at this stage, the OUN leadership recognized the formation and popularization of the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism as one of the priority areas – along with the continuation of armed struggle against the invaders. Ideological and military schools become the basis of membership training. As in the previous period, a significant imprint on ideology left the fashion on authoritarian models of governance, a critical attitude to democratic principles both in ideology and in practice. The world-wide fashion for charismatic leaders was reflected in the Ukrainian leaders (Konovalts, later Bandera), in the creation of the cult of the heroic past.

The final chord for this stage was the split of the OUN in two, which, on the one hand, completed a long conflict within the organization, and on the other hand, it was the beginning of a new stage in the development of the ideological platform of a dynamic youth wing that took shape in 1940 under the leadership of Stepan Bandera.

In addition to the OUN, less radical organizations acted on the territory of Western Ukraine, for example, the pro-Ukrainian political direction, which supported the idea of the unity of the Transcarpathians with the entire Ukrainian people. This course was headed by the leader of the Christian People's Party, the priest Augustine Voloshin, brothers Michael and Yuriy Braschayky. The Ukrainian people used the support of the Galician Intelligentsia. With their help, the centers of “Prosvita”, Scout organization “Plast”, cooperatives, newspapers and magazines were created in the region.

An important link in the “legal sector” activity was the support and development of a network of

Ukrainian public organizations: cultural, educational, economic, youth, sports, etc. their significance in the conditions of Polish occupation is difficult to reassess. Thus, the Society "Prosvita", having rallied about half a million members, supported the activity of readers, published educational materials, conducted a number of courses. The "Union of Ukrainians", uniting 45 thousand Ukrainian women, carried out extensive philanthropy, education and cultural activities.

The "Ridna Shkola", with up to 100 thousand members, in contrast to the polonization of state education, has built up its own network of private Ukrainian schools, which in 1938 accounted for about 40 gymnasiums, lyceums and vocational schools. The youth organizations "Sokil", "Lug" (formerly "Sich"), "Plast" and others, which raised patriotism among their members and aspirations for state independence (Pylypenko, Bilan, 2018a).

The Ukrainian cooperative movement, the essence of which was determined by the slogan "Stand on its own strength", achieved significant results. The largest of the cooperatives – "Butter Union", "Central Bank", "Peoples Trading", and others have deployed their branches throughout Galicia. Co-operation has given impetus to the introduction of new ways of managing among the Ukrainian peasantry, and has created conditions for the centralized sale of agricultural products, including abroad, ending the usurious debts of the Galician village, and contributed to the gradual improvement of the economic situation of its inhabitants. Taking into account 4 000 cooperatives with a total of more than 700 thousand members in Galicia, the Ukrainian cooperative movement successfully competed with Polish, but also became a means of economic self-defense and self-government of the Western Ukrainian society.

An important factor in the liberation movement of the Galician Ukrainians was the Greek Catholic Church, whose national character was finally crystallized due to its head Metropolitan A. Sheptytsky (Marchuk, 2004).

Protecting the interests of the oppressed people, he used his own strength, authority, and personal finances. He built high school, provided material assistance to private schools, was a generous philanthropist and a good connoisseur of Ukrainian art.

Thus, the "legal sector" of the Ukrainian liberation movement essentially covered all areas of national life – from the production of agricultural products to the development of scientific and cultural values.

Thanks to it, they managed to rebuild, first of all, the Halychyna territory, a strong civil society, which turned into a kind of "state in the state". Ukrainians, in spite of the discriminatory policy of the Polish

authorities, managed not only to preserve the previous national conquests, but to some extent to multiply them.

The Polish government's implementation of a militant course aimed at assimilating Ukrainians led to a new breakthrough of the Polish-Ukrainian confrontation in the region (Pylypenko, Bilan, 2018b). The most complete anti-Ukrainian views were formulated in the program of the Volynia governor G. Yuzevsky, whose main provisions were announced at the congress of governors in Lutsk on December 2–3, 1929, and agreed with Y. Pilsudski. An important element of this program was an attempt by the Polish government to artificially separate the ethnic Ukrainian lands in the Second Commonwealth. For this purpose, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a complex of measures was taken to strengthen the artificial boundary, which separated the Volynia from the Galicia. During the first half of the 1930's, as a result of the implementation of government plans, the internal situation in Volynia became more acute, and Polish-Ukrainian relations became more complicated. This was due to the fact that during the specified period in the province the Polish authorities closed all branches of Prosvita, eliminated almost all Ukrainian cooperatives that were subject to the Revision Union of Ukrainian Cooperatives in Lviv, and instead they formed mixed Polish-Ukrainian economic structures subordinated to Warsaw. The activities of most Ukrainian schools were discontinued and the authorities tried to open Polish or mixed (Polish-Ukrainian) schools. As a result of such domestic policy, the Ukrainian majority of Volynia in the mid-1930's was virtually without national education. Another factor that negatively affected the Polish-Ukrainian relations was the government's policy of distributing lands to Polish colonists (Zashkilnyak, 2005).

This activity of the Polish government caused a harsh confrontation between radical Ukrainian political groups. Taking Yuzevsky's direct blame for discrimination against the Ukrainian population of Volyn, members of OUN in the mid-1930's began preparing an assassination attempt on the Volyn governor, which they planned to carry out in 1936. But the plan was not implemented by the members of the organization, as the police arrested many members of the OUN. The case of preparing an assassination attempt on the Volyn governor received a broad resonance.

As the investigation revealed, preparations for an assassination commenced in 1934, and O. Kutz, a student of the Ukrainian grammar school in Lutsk, a member of the county executive office of the OUN, was responsible for its execution. This position of the members of the nationalist underground was dictated

by the fact that the activity of the governors, in their opinion, hurt the Ukrainian population of the region, and its internal policy was directed at the separation of Volyn from Galicia because G. Yuzevsky prohibited the distribution of Ukrainian periodicals, even legally issued in Galicia, to Volynia.

Therefore, part of the right-wing radical-minded Ukrainian politicians planned to use force methods in the struggle against Polish chauvinistic politics, not excluding the acts of political terror against prominent figures of the Polish administration.

**Conclusions.** The national liberation movement of Ukrainians against the policy of the Polish authorities was manifested both in legal and illegal forms of struggle for their rights.

In 1925, Ukrainians in Poland had 12 political parties that represented a very broad political spectrum. Among them, the most influential are:

1) the Ukrainian National Democratic Union (UNDU) is a centrist-oriented party that was oriented towards Ukraine's independence and democratic development;

2) Ukrainian Social-Radical Party (USRP), which sought to combine the principles of democratic socialism with the national revival of Ukraine.

In the economy, the opposition to the official line to inhibition of the development of Ukrain-

ian lands was carried out through a cooperative movement. At this time, the expansion of the functions of cooperatives took place, the cooperative movement began to consider itself as an instrument of self-government and economic self-defense. Obviously, this is precisely why Ukrainian co-operation is intensively developing under severe economic pressure.

The consistent assimilation policy of the Polish authorities, the actual lack of unity of Ukrainian political forces pushed part of the Ukrainian youth to the use of more radical forms of struggle, thus the OUN was created. The prevalence of national interests over individual ones was proclaimed, the supreme goal of the struggle was asserted by the achievement of state independence. Methods of struggle – propaganda, sabotage and terrorist. Not only representatives of the occupation authorities, but also Ukrainians who did not share the ideology and methods of struggle of the OUN, were subjected to terror.

In declaring the need for Polish-Ukrainian understanding and covering behind the slogans of “cohabitation” and “cooperation”, Polish politics practically did everything in order to separate the Ukrainian ethnic territory within Poland and to implement the policy of colonization of Western Ukrainian lands.

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