

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ  
ДРОГОБИЦЬКИЙ ДЕРЖАВНИЙ ПЕДАГОГІЧНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ  
ІМЕНІ ІВАНА ФРАНКА  
ДРОГОБИЦЬКИЙ ОСЕРЕДОК УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ІСТОРИЧНОГО  
ТОВАРИСТВА ІМЕНІ МИХАЙЛА ГРУШЕВСЬКОГО  
ІНСТИТУТ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-СХІДНОЇ ЄВРОПИ  
(Дрогобицька філія)  
ДРОГОБИЦЬКИЙ ОСЕРЕДОК НАУКОВОГО ТОВАРИСТВА  
ІМЕНІ ШЕВЧЕНКА

# ДРОГОБИЦЬКИЙ КРАЄЗНАВЧИЙ ЗБІРНИК

Засновано 1994 року

Спеціальний випуск III

Дрогобич  
П'освіт  
2017

УДК 908 (477.83) (082)  
ББК 63,3 (4 УКР)  
Д 75

*Рекомендовано до друку вченою радою  
Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка  
(протокол № 6 від 21 березня 2017 року)*

Збірник зареєстровано Державним комітетом інформаційної політики, телебачення та радіомовлення України. Свідоцтво сер. КВ, № 5063 від 23.04.2001 р.

Наказом МОН України збірник перереєстровано і включено до Переліків наукових видань, в яких можуть публікуватися результати дисертаційних робіт на здобуття наукових ступенів доктора і кандидата наук з історичних наук (Наказ № 374 МОН України від 13.03.2017 р.).

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Дрогобицький краєзнавчий збірник / Гол. ред. Л. Тимошенко, упоряд. і наук. ред.  
Д 75 М. Галів, В. Льницький, В. Футала. – Спецвипуск III. – Дрогобич: Посвіт, 2017. –  
450 с.

ISBN 978-617-7235-56-8

Спеціальний випуск III “Дрогобицького краєзнавчого збірника” репрезентований матеріалами, статтями, повідомленнями, рецензіями Всеукраїнської наукової конференції “Дрогобич і Дрогобиччина в історичній ретроспективі (XIX – початок XXI ст.)” (Дрогобич, 21 квітня 2017 р.).

D 75 Drohobych Regional Studies / Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University.  
– Special Vol. III. – Drohobych: Posvit, 2017. – 450 p.

ISBN 978-617-7235-56-8

The special volume III of “Drohobych Regional Studies” represents materials, articles, reports and reviews of the All-Ukrainian scientific conference “Drohobych and the Drohobych Land In Historical Retrospective (the XIX – beginning of the XX century)” (Drohobych, April 21, 2017).

УДК 908 (477.83) (082)  
ББК 63,3 (4 УКР)

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ISBN 978-617-7235-56-8

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## THE “PROSVITA” SOCIETY’S ACTIVITIES IN DROHOBYCH LAND DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD OF THE XX CENTURY

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The progress of the independent state of Ukraine at the present stage is innately connected with the previous stages of historical development of the Ukrainian people which objective research plays a considerable role in the national historiography. The interwar period, in which the activities of the “Prosvita” society in eastern Galicia (Halychyna) was a most remarkable compound, makes up a very important point in the consideration of its role in the national-cultural movement and suggests informative and practical tasks for researchers.

The “Prosvita” society’s role in the national history can hardly be overestimated, as the “Prosvita” (“Enlightenment”) units, albeit in quite unfavorable political, social and economic conditions, formed a basis of moral tempering of the Ukrainian being, so, they made up an important factor to play in the formation and establishment of the national consciousness, struggle for realisation of the people’s national aspirations, and practical embodiment of the ideas of sovereignty and statehood.

The restoration of the “Prosvita” society’s functioning in the interwar period was felt as an objective requirement and a natural display of the national development, the historical and cultural progress of the nation, which became an ideological pivot and a social development motive power of the Ukrainian case, that would be impossible without the society’s activities.

A special role belongs to the “Prosvita” society as what concerns the cultural and educational movement in the interwar was period. Providing harmonious and an all-around development of the Ukrainian matter, it assisted the formation of national elite with the state-formation thinking and substantiation of the nonviolent foundations of the national state creation. Properly considered, the society’s functioning was directed on the preservation of the national unity of the people in contrast of the assimilating policy conducted by the regime’s power and the political structures absolutely hostile to the society’s activities.

Under the conditions of Polish government’s certain discrimination, in interwar period the “Prosvita” society managed not only to restore its function, but also to develop an active educational work in the region. It played a foreground and leading part in eastern Galicia’s (Halychyna’s) cultural and educational life and was an enough influential force which with its branched out network of centers covered almost all the counties (povity).

On July, 8<sup>th</sup>, 1924 the members of the society appealed to the governor with a petition to create in Drohobych the “Prosvita” society’s branches. Its members who put their signatures on this document are known to be Volodymyr Chapelskyi, Victor Patslavskyi, Father Theodore Popel, Stefan Sasyk, Mykola Bairak, Stanislav Kmitkovskyi, Ivan Blashkevych, Julian Drozdovskyi, Volodymyr Ilnytskyi, Mykhailo Terletskyi, Volodymyr Dydynsky, Lazar Pan’kiv (all were Drohobychers); Olena Susiuk (from the village of Uniatychi); Father Ivan Valiukh (from the town of Truskavets); Father Ivan Lishnians’kyi (the town of Boryslav); Father Ivan Shevchyk (the village of Bolekhivtsi); Father Mykola Ivantsiv; Father Dmytro (the village of Hubychi); Jats Oleksovskyi; Levyts’kyi. The aforementioned names appear as

founders of the “Prosvita” centres in Drohobych district<sup>1</sup>. Despite the counteraction of the Polish occupational power, before 1939 68 reading rooms of the “Prosvita” functioned in Drohobych land, four of them in the town of Drohobych<sup>2</sup>.

In the interwar period the “Prosvita” society was in opposition to the power, though in its nonviolent form. The variety of the “Prosvita’s” activity centres manifested itself in carrying out such artistic performances as the concerts dedicated to poet Taras Shevchenko, to the Ukrainian folksong, celebrities in honour of writers Ivan Franko and Lesia Ukrainka, hetman Ivan Mazepa, Mother’s Day, spring concerts, festivals etc. The concert life’s chronology of the “Prosvita” centres found publication in the society’s organ “The Bulletin” that was edited during the activation of the “Prosvita” society in Drohobych land (1933–1939). The considered activation of the “Prosvita” society was demonstrated in the way of organization of the assembly dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the society’s branch (1934) that turned out to become a holiday of the Ukrainian song, on which allegedly 11 choirs and over 400 individual singers took part. The holiday was a good evidence of the growth of cultural and artistic life, particularly, of the choral art in the district. The repertoire policy of the “Prosvita” choral centres concentrated on the creativity of Ukraine’s musical composers. It demonstrated the elevation of the status of Ukrainian song, braking up of the denationalisation processes and testified to the heroic activity of art and cultural workers even under stateless conditions<sup>3</sup>.

In particular, the celebratory gathering on the occasion of the 10 anniversary of death of Symon Petliura was organized by Drohobych branch of the “Prosvita” on June, 7, 1936 which was opened by its chairman S. Vytvytskyi. D. Burko read the report on the life and deeds of S. Petliura and student M. Humennyi recited the verse “You, the nation, do you hear?”<sup>4</sup>.

The county committee composed of the persons in charge of the commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ivan Franko’s death announced the Ukrainian dwellers of the Drohobych land that on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936 in Drohobych the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of I. Franko’s death would be celebrated. The agenda included a celebratory meeting and a solemn procession from Narodnyi Dim (The People’s House) to the gymnasium where a commemorative plaque was to be unveiled<sup>5</sup>.

Actually, organization of celebrities in the interwar period required considerable moral efforts and material means, that was why special anniversary committees were created for that purpose and many other Ukrainian institutions assisted the “Prosvita” society in coordination of actions, designing the general plan of celebration an anniversary which was of all-national character<sup>6</sup>.

The active work of the “Prosvita” centres brought in the appearance of new collective bodies by such cultural-public and sport societies as the Ridna Shkola educational society, Silskyi Hospodar agricultural society, Association of Ukrainian Women, the Plast scouting association, the Sokil society, the Sich self-defense organization, etc. Each of them had its choir and some had amateur theatrical clubs and string orchestras<sup>7</sup>.

The “Prosvita’s” branch in Drohobych informed the district libraries that they should rent their reading rooms out only to those wandering theatres which had the branch’ permission, because an unknown theatre “Riznoridnosti” (“Miscellanea”) was touring the county then and some libraries leased their rooms to it<sup>8</sup>.

Another important deed in the functioning of the “Prosvita” society was providing financial support to the Ukrainian community. Collecting endowment funds for pecuniary aid was also carried out by separate educational and economic institutions. For example, on April 30, 1932 band “Perebendia’s” charity performance in the “Prosvita” library in Lviv resulted in collecting 70 zlotys for the needs of the Hutsul region and for Ukrainian political prisoners, having sent victuals worth 150 zlotys to twenty two prisoners in Drohobych’ jail<sup>9</sup>.

In 1935 the "Prosvita's" branch in Drohobych collected from 80 communities 709.49 zlotys, however, it did not present in time the data on receiving funds from 17 persons. In 1937 the Drohobych branch gifted 1135,38 zlotys<sup>10</sup>.

Eventually, money played a dominant role in the "Prosvita" society's functioning. It was not seldom that some branches returned the calendars edited by the "Prosvita" despite the reduction of their price to 4 zlotys. In particular, the branch in Drohobych returned 17 copies<sup>11</sup>. On October 11, 1929 consumer co-operative "Narodna Torhivlia" ("National Trade") addressed the "Prosvita" with a petition to send calendars to it in 1930 at the price of 3 zlotys per copy, with the profit of 25 % on each. All in all, the "National Trade" received 305 calendars for realisation, of which the branch in Drohobych received 10 copies<sup>12</sup>.

From time to time the "Prosvita" was provoked to involve in certain political actions against its statutory law. In particular, such provocations were frequent in 1926–1931, when the communist activity was stirred up. The "Sel'rob" tried to gain management of libraries and to direct their basic work on social struggle. However, the society's members were representatives of different parties and people of different political orientations, which fact brought about a certain negative tinge in the functioning of the "Prosvita". M. Halushchynskyi so referred to this fact in his article "At the Crossroads": "Whoever is but in general acquainted with the present educational movement, sees, how speakers and education representatives carry on a difficult struggle amongst adult population for what the content of educational work should concern.

The essential features of this contest result from political discrimination which grows amid our citizens.

This unhealthy phenomenon impacts also the cultural life outside of education process. In recent time certain circles make appeals for "class education" as antidotal to the "noble", "bourgeois", or "petty bourgeois" education.

Even if we accepted the fact that there really are great class differences among us and that we have a ground for class struggle, we would yet have to consider this problem: what it is more important for us in such a state and in the conditions under which we live, – class consciousness or national consciousness for the safety of the nation and for elevating it onto a certain cultural stage? And what if such class differences do not take place at all and if, actually, there exists only one class, namely, that of peasantry, mercilessly exploited and oppressed socially because it is ethnically distinct from the dominating nation and all the classes within this nation, then no intranational class-political struggle will have any slightest justification whatsoever<sup>13</sup>.

So, when in December 1922 the chairman of Drohobych branch of the "Prosvita" society V. Chapelskyi held a meeting at which lawyer R. Skybinskyi (1886–1966) was recommended for the post of the society's chairman, a complaint from some Drohobychers was received by the central administrative board of the society in Lviv reporting that the meeting was "one-sided", because the majority of those who took part in it belonged to the Ukrainian social-democratic party, a member of which R. Skybinskyi had been since 1909. Nevertheless, at the repeated meeting in January, 1923 the participants voted for R. Skybinskyi for the second time, – allegedly, because he had again tried to gather into the reading room the majority of "his people". R. Skybinskyi, however, took care of the restoration of reading rooms and of the "Prosvita" society's economic condition, but he evidently tried to use it in his party's interests. In particular, on his initiative that the assembly in commemoration of Ivan Franko in Drohobych ended in singing of the "International" and, also, it was not without R. Skybinskyi's "connivance" that during a celebration in honour of Ivan Franko in his native village of Nahuievychi on May 31, 1936 the communists created a "red-banner uproar"<sup>14</sup>.

According to M. Halushchynskyi's opinion, the "Prosvita" society should be "not merely a sentiment of the past; actually, we need the "Prosvita", but not as the organizer of casino and club life; we need the "Prosvita", though not as a foot-bridge for various party and partisan ambitions..." but, by far, as "... the self-education of all those who by their own lives and deeds crave to create the history of their people, and their people itself to make historical..."<sup>15</sup>.

In M. Hulei's view, the library as an especially national establishment should bring up fair and conscious citizens who, first of all, would recognize themselves as the Ukrainians, and already then see themselves as the UND members (the Ukrainian national democrats), radicals, or socialists<sup>16</sup>. And M. Halushchynskyi underlined that the "Sel'rob" and communistic movement did not purpose so much to create its own institutions, but rather to take possession of those already in existence, and, therefore, it must by no means be admitted any possible access to the national establishments, moreover, it had whenever possible to be eliminated altogether<sup>17</sup>. In Hulei's opinion, it is the duty of the "Prosvita" society to destroy at any cost every attempt of distribution in its libraries of the "Sel'rob" and bolshevic propagation or any other party influence, even to liquidate the reading rooms as such<sup>18</sup>.

On June 23, 1930 the Drohobych county council informed the library affiliation in Nahuievychi on the discrepancy of its actions with the statute, because on February 23 of the same year in its reading room the local "Sel'rob-Unity" held a meeting at which they chose their party committee which members included also two workers of the library. The "Sel'rob-Unity", having organised a group of 300 persons, blocked the road with carts and did not allow the export of wood from the suburbs of Sambir gmina. On March 7, 1930 about 30 persons from Nahuievychi attacked the carts. In accordance with the decision of the gmina's chief, the library's property was transferred to the central administrative board of the society<sup>19</sup>.

On May, 28 1936 in the village of Nahuievychi the festive assembly took place on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ivan Franko's death. The organizer of this all-national holiday was the unpopular and structurally weak Ukrainian social-democratic party, which was then headed by a 53-year-old lawyer Lev Hankevych... The wooden scene and a tribune were constructed on the very place where there was once the house in which Ivan Franko was born and grew up. The people, who did not stop arriving from everywhere, expressed their indignation about the red flag of the "Working community" from Drohobych above the portrait of the great national poet. The communistic symbolics was also seen here and there in the crowd...

However, it was not yet the end of communistic excesses on that day of May. The majority of those "workers" who had already felt taste for blood in Nahuievychi, came back to a small town of Skole and decided to continue the orgy. To begin with they first moved to the local "Prosvita" society library and started to smash its windows, and – being under an obvious influence of alcohol – to destroy everything that was close to hand. Then they turned to injure other Ukrainian establishments and, eventually, scattered away like evil spirits at dawn...<sup>20</sup>.

Nevertheless, despite the like actions of various political groups and the Polish power, the "Prosvita" society managed to organise its work, engaging conscious patriots-Ukrainians on the participation in the society.

<sup>1</sup> Чава І. С. Українські громадські товариства та організації Дрогобиччини міжвоєнного періоду / І. С. Чава // Гуманітарний журнал. – 2014. – № 1–2. – С. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Шалата М. Століття Дрогобицької "Просвіти" / М. Шалата // Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність. – Випуск 19. – 2010. – С. 291.

<sup>3</sup> Булка Ю. Музична культура Західної України // Історія української музики. В 6-ти т. / Ю. Булка. – Т. 4. – К.: Наукова думка, 1992. – С. 545.

<sup>4</sup> Святочні сходини з нагоди 10-ліття смерті С. Петлюри в Дрогобичі // Бюлетин Філії Товариства "Просвіта" в Дрогобичі для Читалень "Просвіти" міста й повіту Дрогобича. На правах рукопису. – Рік IV. – Ч. 8–11. – Дрогобич, 1936. – С. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Львів (далі – ЦДІАЛ України). – Ф. 348. – Оп. 1. – Спр. 86. – Арк. 7, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Зуляк І. С. Діяльність "Просвіти" у Західній Україні в міжвоєнний період (1919–1939) / І. С. Зуляк. – Тернопіль: "Воля", 2005. – С. 437.

<sup>7</sup> Папура І. І. Вплив громадських та просвітницьких товариств на культурно-мистецьке життя Дрогобиччини першої половини ХХ століття / І. І. Папура // Наукові записки Рівненського державного гуманітарного університету. – Том II. – Випуск 18. – 2012 – С. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Бюлетин Філії Товариства "Просвіта" в Дрогобичі для Читалень "Просвіти" міста й повіту Дрогобича. На правах рукопису. – Рік IV. – Ч. 5. – Дрогобич, 1936. – С. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Збірка голодній Гуцульщині // Гарт. Часопис гуртка молоді "Перебендя" при читальні "Просвіти" на городській дільниці. Бюлетин філії "Просвіти" ім. Т. Шевченка у Львові. – Ч. I. – Р. I. – Львів, 15 травня 1932. – С. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Бюлетин Філії Товариства "Просвіта" в Дрогобичі для читалень "Просвіти" міста й села повіту Дрогобич за місяць січень. – Рік IV. – Ч. 1. – Дрогобич, 1936. – С. 3.

<sup>11</sup> ЦДІАЛ України. – Ф. 348. – Оп. 1. – Спр. 476. – Арк. 9.

<sup>12</sup> ЦДІАЛ України. – Ф. 348. – Оп. 1. – Спр. 476. – Арк. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Галушинський М. На роздорожжі / М. Галушинський // Діло. – 15 квітня 1928. – С. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Шалата М. Століття Дрогобицької "Просвіти"... – С. 290.

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## **Ivan ZULIAK.**

### **The "Prosvita" Society's Activities in Drohobych Land During the Interwar Period of the XX Century.**

The article analyzes the activities of the "Prosvita" in Drohobych land in the interwar period of the XX century, focusing on the counteraction on behalf of the Polish authorities and local political structures that tried to undermine and devalue the society's work amid wide circle of Ukrainians.

## **Іван ЗУЛЯК.**

### **Діяльність "Просвіти" на Дрогобиччині в міжвоєнний період ХХ ст.**

У статті аналізується діяльність "Просвіти" на Дрогобиччині у міжвоєнний період ХХ ст., основна увагу звертається на протидію польської влади і місцеві політичні структури, які намагалися звести нанівець і знецінити працю інституції серед широкого загалу українства.