

Ukrainian Cultural-educational Life in Lemkovina from the End of the 19th Century to the 1930s

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Hertsyuk, D. – Myshchyshyn, I. (2016). Ukrainian Cultural-educational Life in Lemkovina from the End of the 19th Centuries to the 1930s. Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal 8/1, 77–87.

Thus, national self-awareness of the Lemkos was combined with the cultural-national elation of the whole Ukrainian nation. The destructive political influences could not destroy the Lemkos and their national originality. Some communities in the Diasporas and in cultural associations (founded in the independent Ukraine) still cherish historical memory, art, and cultural values of Lemkovina.

The biggest west ethnographic group of the Ukrainian was the Lemkos, which played an important role in the history of the formation of the Ukrainian ethnos. In spite of unfavorable social-political conditions from the end of 19th to the beginning of 20th century, there were numerous processes of national revival. Public associations and famous figures became the guides of national awareness and the initiators of cultural-educational work. The most active in the sphere of revival in Lemkovina were the following associations: 'Prosvita', 'Native School', 'Rural Master', 'Ukrainian revisionary union', 'commission of Lemkos', etc. Thanks to their active work, educational institutions of different levels, help funds, educational nuclea, museums and art centers were founded; periodicals were published and expanded, 'strolling libraries' were set up.

Difficult historical and socio-cultural conditions and in particular the purposeful destructive political influences in 1940s could not destroy the Lemkos and their national originality.

Key words: *Lemkovina; national upbringing; cultural-educational life; ethnic self-awareness; national-cultural assimilation*

The *Lemkos* are the furthest western ethnographical group of the Ukrainians, inhabiting both slopes of West Carpathians (Beskids) between the rivers San and Poprad. They made a great contribution to the diversity of Ukrainian ethnicity. Scientists believe that the East-Slavic tribe of White Croats, who settled this territory in the 6th–7th centuries, were the ancient ancestors of the *Lemkos*. At the end of the 10th century the West Carpathians were territorially united with the Kievan Rus' and then it belonged to the Galician and Galician-Volhynian principality. This

territory was under the power of other countries during over a long period of time: from the beginning of the 14th century – was under Poland's control, then after the first partition of Poland in 1771 it was under Austria's control, and then from 1918 again within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The politics of these countries were directed at the assimilation and denationalization of the indigenous population.

The distant location of the region, the absence of Ukrainian towns and national intelligentsia resulted in a weak national-cultural connection between Lemkovina and other ethnic Ukrainian lands, especially with Galicia. It rendered the distribution of progressive social-political thought inconvenient. The dominant social current in the turn of 19th – a 20th century was Moscow filiation, the ideology of which was based on the conception of the history of Galician and Sub-Carpathian Rus' as a part of Russian history and local Rusyns as a part of 'All Russian' nation.¹ The existence of a separate Ukrainian nation was questioned, the Ukrainian literary language was treated inimically, the use of the national language during religious services was not allowed, and the Greek-Catholic church was blamed. After losing its influence in the main centres of Galicia, the representatives of this conservative camp, especially orthodox priests, began their activity in Lemkovina. Russophiles concentrated on building up a network of credit unions as well as reading halls societies named after M. Kachkovskij which included more than one hundred members before the beginning of the World War I in 300 villages in Lemkovina.² Nevertheless, in spite of unfavourable social-political conditions, Ukrainian national life in Lemkovina did not cease. In the turn of 19th a 20th century active processes of national revival of the Ukrainian identity, which developed at that time on the West-Ukrainian lands, especially in Galicia, had a connection with the Lemkovina region. Having made some educational-cultural achievements progressive Ukrainian intelligentsia of Galicia assumed the aim to give all the possible assistance to the Ukrainians in Lemkovina.

The union 'Prosvita' (in Lviv) was the first public organisation which strove for national awareness of the *Lemkos*. However, it took some time for the results of this effort to be seen. At the end of 1892 (quarter of a century after the association's establishment) in a big village in Lemkovina and with the help of a native priest Vasyl Lavrivskij the first reading hall of 'Prosvita' was established in counterbalance to the Russophiles' reading halls.³

¹ Андрусак, М. (1935). *Нариси з історії галицького москвофільства*. Львів, р. 25.

² Мицьо, К. (1979). Лемківщина в роках 1918–1919. *Ін Лемківщина 1*. Нью-Йорк, рр. 4–5.

³ Красовський, І. (2010). Діяльність "Прогвіти" на Лемківщині. *Ін Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність 19*. Львів, р. 322.

The union 'Prosvita' activated its cultural-educational work among the Ukrainian *Lemkos* at the beginning of 20th century. That was because of the fact that there were searches of local enthusiasts and leaders of public life. Organizing actions reached a success in 1902, when the first branch of 'Prosvita' was established in Nowy Sącz. Petro Linynskij and Vasyl Yavorskyj were its first famous public-cultural figures. They both were the graduating students of the Lviv University, where they studied law, later they held different administrative posts in judicial and financial agencies of Galicia; they were chosen as ambassadors to the Parliament of Galicia and the Viennese parliament. In 1890s because of the conflicts with governmental circles they were transferred to the districts of Lemkovina, where they began a great cultural-educational work.⁴ V. Yavorskyj became the head of the new branch and was at that position to the end of his life. The members-founders of this cultural-educational nucleus were teachers. This branch of 'Prosvita' was successful from the beginning, because in two years it had 118 members.

On August 15, 1906 the general conference of this organizations branch and the reading hall of 'Prosvita' took place in Nowy Sącz. The newspaper 'Dilo' called this event 'a big and majestic celebration for the whole Lemkovina'. It published a big note about the run of that national-cultural event.⁵ The importance of that event is the participation of the famous cultural-educational figures, such as I. Bryk, A. Chajkivskij, O. Kolessa, I. Rakovskij, Z. Kuzel, F. Vovk, etc. in the session of a delegation of representatives from the association 'Prosvita'.

From the report it may be inferred that in spite of the 'unfavourable conditions' the activity of this organizations branch was 'earnest and bride'. The opening of a theological seminary was a special merit of the educational nucleus in Nowy Sącz, where more than 50 pupils lived. Six pupils were completely deprived of payment, the others had major privileges. V. Yavorskyj gave a patron's help in the maintenance of this establishment. He also submitted half of the income from the publication of his brochure 'Ukrainian deal in European lightening' (The collection of articles of European scientists and politicians about the Russian-Ukrainian question, published in Vienna in 1905).⁶ The all local intelligentsia and workers were attracted to the active cultural-educational work in this branch. They organized theatrical performances, supervised

⁴ Діячі науки і культури Лемківщини; <http://lemko.org/history/krasovskiy/diyache/6.html>

⁵ Загальні Збори філії й читальні "Просвіта" в Новім Санчі. (1906): In *Діло* 168, p. 3.

⁶ Загайкевич, Б. (1961). Освіта і школи в Перемишлі. In *Перемишль – Західний Бастіон України*. Нью-Йорк, p. 239.

the building of churches, and organised courses for the illiterate. Among the further priorities of this branch's activities was the necessity for the bride attraction of the peasants in Lemkovina and the local clergy to the work. Other positive developments in the sphere of national awareness were the appearance of the political educational-scientific and economical weekly paper 'Pidgirskij Dzvin' at the beginning of the 20th century in 1902 in Nowy Sącz (the first Ukrainian newspaper in Lemkovina), the establishment of new branches of 'Prosvita' in Sanok and Jaslo as well as the branches of 'Sil'skyj Hospodar' and 'Lemkivskij bank' in Sanoc and Nowy Sącz.

The First World War deepened the polarization of *Lemkos* into the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian groups. This division was confirmed by the establishment of two republics in 1918: the Komancza Republic strove for the addition to the West Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), and the Lemko-Rusyn Republic – for the addition to Russia. The liquidation of these political organisations by the Polish forces resulted in anti-Polish moods among the *Lemkos*, their ideological connection with the people of Galicia, and greater support of the Rusyns of the Carpathian region for the Ukrainian national idea.⁷

However, the difficult war years favored the consolidation of Ukrainian national ideas in the consciousness of *Lemkos*. This was influenced by the relationships of *Lemkos* with Ukrainian fighters and soldiers of the Austrian and Russian armies, military service of *Lemkos*, their participation in the legion Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (USS) and Ukrainian Galician Army (UHA), and particularly the continuing the Russian enthrallment of the Ukraine⁸. Moreover, after the decline of ZUNR a number of Ukrainian intelligentsia, mostly from the eastern regions of Galicia, appeared in Lemkovina. They became teachers and started to renew different organisations from before 1914. Young Greek-Catholic priests also arrived in Lemkovina and they actively worked in the sphere of national revival.

Cultural-educational activity of 'Prosvita' (in Lemkovina) was particularly prominent in 1920s. In 1923 there were almost 30 organizations. From over ten to some tens of members might be counted in one reading hall. Teachers or Greek-Catholic priests were their leaders⁹. *Lemkos* delegated their representatives to all congresses which

⁷ Бучацький, В. (1959). *Лемківщина. Історично-побутова розвідка*. Торонто; <http://www.lemko.org/books/buczackyj/index.html>

⁸ Мицьо, К. (1979). Лемківщина в роках 1918–1919. In *Лемківщина 1*. Нью-Йорк, р. 4–5.

⁹ Шафран, П. (2004). Український національний рух на Лемківщині після першої світової війни. In *Лемківщина 2*, р. 7–12.

took place in Lviv with the aim to join actively all cultural-educational initiatives and to develop the work of public societies and cooperative movements in their region. At the same time the association 'Prosvita' in Lviv tried in every possible way to support the national-selfless movement of *Lemkos*. In 1906 a special expedition of the Schevchenko Scientific Society from Lviv visited Lemkovina with the aim to learn more about the history, ethnography, anthropology and folklore of *Lemkos*. The famous Ukrainian scientist F. Kolessa worked in Lemkovina from 1911 to 1913. He wrote down more than 800 songs of *Lemkos* in 18 villages which were published in a separate collected volume.¹⁰

With the aim of combining the work of public societies and organisations in the sphere of national revival of *Lemkos* the official people of the association 'Prosvita' organised the first conference concerning Lemkovina in Sanok in 1926.

Fifteen representatives of local and central economical and cultural-educational Ukrainian organisations of Galicia raised a question about the foundation of the organisational centre in Sanok with the aim to coordinate the work of all organisations in Lemkovina. For instance, Revisionary Union of Ukrainian Cooperative Societies had to coordinate all the work and provide the organisations with necessary literature; the union 'Rural Master' had to provide agronomical help in Lemkovina, organize farming courses; 'Public commerce' and 'Centrosojuz' were responsible for creating a warehouse of goods for Ukrainian cooperatives and shops; "Maslosoyuz" had to be responsible for the opening of dairies and production centres of dairy products; 'Centrobank' and the union 'Dnister' had an obligation to provide credit in Lemkovina; the union 'Native School' was responsible for opening schools, theological seminaries, sewing courses as well as training teachers in Lemkovina.¹¹

The second conference on the problems of Lemkovina, which took place in December, 1932 in Lviv, confirmed the great intentions of 'Prosvita' to continue the purposeful and systematic work in different spheres of cultural-educational and economic life of Lemkovina. The result of the conference was the adoption of an extensive resolution sent to the Central Economical and Cultural-Educational, Ukrainian deputys in the Polish lower house of parliament. It was stated there that the 'cause

¹⁰ "Просвіта" на Лемківщині в ХІХ–ХХ ст.; <http://lemky.com/history/zagalne/151-prosvta-na-lemkivshhini>

¹¹ Вавричин, М. (2010). Архів Лемківської комісії товариства "Просвіта". In *Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність* 19, p. 632.

of Lemkovina is the cause of the whole Ukraine' and that only 'immediate and attentive help of the whole Ukrainian nation will save Lemkovina'.¹²

The commission for Lemkos became the executive organ for the organisation of this work at the Main Department of the association 'Prosvita', while the committees in the districts were local working organs. The personal complement of commissions was confirmed. It included the following famous figures: N. Dzerovych, I. Bryk, I. Hyzha, A. Havrylko, V. Zubrytskyj, S. Mahalyas, V. Brylynskyj, V. Kobiv, etc. They sent letters and addresses to many cultural-educational institutions, financial organisations, Ukrainian parties, youth companies, editorial offices of the Ukrainian newspapers, publishing houses and bookshops with a pressing demand to help the Lemkovina. These letters had a bride response among peoples.

Throughout the year 1933 eighteen new reading halls of 'Prosvita' were established; the union 'Rural Master' organized its nucleus, delegated instructors; cooperative societies were founded, which united 6300 people. The action of collecting books (initiated by the commission for Lemkos) under the slogan 'Book for the West' was particularly successful. As a result, the *Lemkos* of the Carpathians received some periodicals such as 'Sunday', 'Aim', 'Rural Master', 'The World of a Child', 'Bell' free of charge. Fourteen strolling libraries (the price of each was 25 000 zlotys) were sent to Lemkovina.¹³ The newspaper 'Matter' in 1933 suggested to the Lemkivska commission the circulation of the works of S. Belej, O. Konyskyj, and M. Voznjak. The publisher 'National Cause' published 50 books with the aim of the distribution of Ukrainian books in Lemkovina. The association 'Rural master' was the most productive one in this area. It provided 3114 books of rural-economical content and 1100 calendars for the needs of national awareness of the local people.¹⁴

In 1932 the publisher V. Tyktor started to print the periodical 'Our Lemko' financed by 'Prosvita'. In the first article of the newspaper 'To our readers' the following hope is expressed: 'this magazine will arrive in every village of Lemkovina, under each roof of Lemkovina, to every reading hall and cooperative, everywhere, where there is a native word... it will be our hearty tutor, sincere defender, clever adviser'.¹⁵ The magazine, which was being published up to 1939, was one of the most

¹² Ibidem, p. 632.

¹³ Люзняка, М. (1999). Поширення української книги Товариством "Просвіта" на Лемківщині у 30-х рр. XX ст. In *Вісник Львівського університету. Серія історична* 34, p. 492.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 492.

¹⁵ До наших читачів. (1934): In *Наш лемко* 1, p. 2.

important periodicals and it made a great contribution to the national awareness of Lemkovina.

With the help of the commission for Lemkos, connections with the *Lemkos* abroad were established. For this aim, the officials person of 'Prosvita' gave to the student M. Dudra, who was moving to the USA, the mandate to work for the sake of 'Prosvita' and the commission for Lemkos. This work had positive results – the *Lemkos* – emigrants in the USA formed the 'Organisation of the Protection of Lemkovina' (OOL) and started to publish the periodical 'The Bell of Lemkovina'. In June, 1936 there were 26 departments of OOL and nearly 750 thousand zlotys were collected for the help for Lemkovina; 'a strolling library' of Lemkovina was bought¹⁶. Thanks to this help, the youth of Lemkovina had a possibility to reside and to study in Ukrainian schools outside their native land, to acquire new knowledge and experience of useful public work. For instance, 14 capable pupils from the families of the *Lemkos* in 1933 studied in gymnasium in Przemyśl, three pupils acquired practical skills in the professional school of Cogregation of St. Basil in Lviv, 8 pupils – *Lemkos* received disposable help in gymnasium in Yavoriv.¹⁷

The pupils of Ukrainian nationality who studied in the gymnasium of Sanok, (it was the only Polish-speaking school) also received help. There was one hour per week for studying Ukrainian language and literature in all their forms as well as two hours of religion, where the Greek-Catholic catechism was taught. However, pupils of the *Lemkos* wanted to get more well-grounded education, to master their native language and history perfectly and that is why they set up a self-education circle. It became the nucleus of national education and an environment of the formation of intellectual elite. Pupils compiled a library, prepared thematic reports and discussed national issues. Discussions, which were arising in the process of discussing speeches, caused the conditions for the consolidation of beliefs, formation of national ideals, and gathering of the youth.¹⁸

The notable centre of conservation and development of the culture of Lemkovina was the ethnographic museum in Sanok, founded in 1930 in an ancient stone castle. The opening of the museum was a great impulse for the investigation of material and spiritual culture of the *Lemkos*, which kept very ancient forms.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Нарис історії "Просвіти"* (1993). Львів-Краків-Париж, р. 59.

¹⁷ Щербя, Г. (2000). Розвиток освіти в Північній Лемківщині ХУІІ-ХХ ст. In *Визвольний шлях*, рр. 37–41.

¹⁸ Стебнович, Я. (1938). Студенський кружок в Сяноці. In *Наш Лемко* 13, р. 11.

¹⁹ Добрянська, І. (1972). Про матеріальну і духовну культуру лемків. In *Лемківський календар*, р. 81.

The museum association 'Lemkovina' was founded in 1931 with the aim of the development of a museum project in Sanok. The work of the union had a historic character and a character of regional ethnography. The members of the society investigated the history and culture of the villages of Lemkovina and gathered exhibits. The research work of F. Kokovskiy 'History of the cultural movement in Lemkovina' was also published with the help of the association. Within three years of the museum's existence 4065 models of national art and monuments of the past of Lemkovina were collected. Among them there were valuable icons, flint axes and, books.

Different collections were registered in the museum: 292 books, 74 icons, 90 documents of the Ukrainian national republic, 1442 of ancient documents, 351 items of numismatics, 127 embroidered shirts, 100 painted Easter eggs, 30 medals, 30 Ukrainian notes. Improvised scientific library of the museum was enriched with valuable presents from the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lviv, a Ukrainian institution in Warsaw and the editorial office 'Chronicle of Guelder Rose'.²⁰

One of the important events in the cultural life of Lemkovina were the tours of the Ukrainian national theatre. One performance which took place in a rural locality on a workday attracted an audience of 300. For the reason that there was not a suitable building in Sjanok where all spectators could find a place, the new idea arose to build a Ukrainian national house.²¹ At the same time it was decided to set up the 'Ukrainian National Theatre' under the leadership of P. Karabinevych for the reason of high interest of people in art and the absence of theatres in this region. All amateur circles and choirs were invited to collaborate. It was planned to make it possible to hire costumes and decorations which could be used by amateurs, as well as to organise courses for stage-directors that could raise the artistic level of actors and the staging of plays.²²

The association 'Native school' in Sanok played a particular role in the processes of national-cultural revival in Lemkovina. The circle of this association was founded in 1926 through the initiative of V. Chajkivskiy (professor of local gymnasium). Its first members were S. Mentsinskij, S. Vengrynovych, V. Konstantynovych, B. Shuljakevych, V. Mykula, S. Tsar, etc. The circle of 'Native school' in Sanok had a status of a district and it became the tutorial body for all other circles of this association. It managed all tasks concerning the development of Ukrainian schools and national upbringing of the youth in Lemkovina.

²⁰ Лемківський музей в Сяноці розростається. (1934): In *Наш лемко* 11, p. 1.

²¹ Вражіння з театральної подорожі по Лемківщині. (1935): In *Наш Лемко* 4, p. 5.

²² До українського громадянства Лемківщини. (1935): In *Наш Лемко* 16, p. 2.

One of the important educational initiatives of the circles of 'Native school' in Lemkovina was the foundation of kindergartens working for the national cause. There were children from age 4 to 14. These kindergartens organized their work during school holidays when parents worked in fields. Their aim was to add new knowledge and to educate children on national matters, because it was not made by state school for obvious reasons.

The appeals for the opening kindergartens in every village appeared from time to time in periodicals. The weight of such activity was emphasized as well as its creative character. 'If there were kindergartens in each village, then our people would be regenerated in some years, they would become a nation that does not have to rely on any help, and no one would write our history, but we would become its creators'.²³

Since the local poverty captiously treated such Ukrainian initiations, the district circle of 'Native school' in Sanok had to meet a number of demands (selection of qualified teachers, finding suitable buildings, etc.) in order to receive the permission to open kindergartens. For conducting lessons different buildings were used, for instance reading halls, public institutions, churches, even the houses of the authorities.

Children in kindergartens were supplied with nourishment and medical service. The local committees of guardianship over kindergartens worked on this. They gathered money and organized special funds. Payment was made by children's relatives, members of cultural-educational associations. The *Lemkos* who emigrated to the USA also contributed. For this purpose informational papers were published (there were 600 copies of such papers in 1932) with proclamation about the support of this important national action. The work of kindergartens ended after summer. A big celebration for the whole Ukrainian community was organized. Children sang songs, danced, recited poems and in such a way confirmed their love for the Ukrainian history and culture.

A lot of effort was made to prepare suitable staff for the work in kindergartens. The female pedagogues who had special certificates of teachers' seminaries were attracted to the work. The circle of 'Native school' in Sanok in 1936 organized a special course for teachers with the aim of broadening the knowledge of kindergarten teachers. They could enrich themselves here in theoretical facts and practical skills of working with children. There were 20 Ukrainian kindergartens in Lemkovina in 1936, where almost 500 children.²⁴

²³ «Гать будуймо!» (1934): In *Наш лемко* 7, p. 6.

²⁴ Ванчицький, С. (1969). Лемківщина – самоцвіт України. Огляд українського суспільного життя на Лемкіщині 1918–1944. In *Лемківський календар на Божий 1969 рік*. Торонто, p. 51.

The activists of 'Native school' also took care of primary schools. The condition of Ukrainian schools was actively discussed at the meetings of the circles of 'Native school' and at special meetings. Professor M. Halushchynskyy, who was the director of the union 'Native school', visited Lemkovina in 1936. This event caused the conducting of many meetings of community in Sanok, other Ukrainian local communities of Lemkovina.

Taking into consideration the unsatisfactory state of education and upbringing of Ukrainian children, the absence of schools in some places, the lack of teachers, etc. with the help of the district circle of 'Native school' Ukrainian private schools were founded in two villages of Lemkovina. Such teachers as P. Ikalovych, P. Sterpak, O. Chaban began their work here. They 'directed their work in the direction of the national upbringing of the youth'.²⁵ These schools existed for a short time, since the Polish government found reasons (the lack of suitable buildings, foundation of a state school) to make their actions impossible. However, the very fact of the schools' foundation emphasized the desire of the Ukrainians in Lemkovina to have native schools.

The circle of 'Native School' in Sanok together with other associations, for instance with the branch of 'Rural Master', also initiated the conducting of educational courses for the youth in villages. From 1935 to 1938 a chain of 6-weeks-courses was organized. They combined obtaining practical skills, particularly skills of knitting (sweaters, caps, mittens), with the information from Ukrainian history, literature, preparation for theatre performances, ETA.²⁶

The foundation of the library for the youth and adults in Sanok by the circle of 'Native school' was an important action for cherishing the national spirit. In 1935 the circle took care of 23 libraries, one of which was stationary, while the others were 'strolling'. The last ones were an interesting phenomenon in the history of Lemkos culture. They were small wooden boxes, full of books. When the books from the box were read, the community received a different box. As a result these 'boxes of knowledge' were travelling in Lemkovina. In general there were 1738 books. On the basis of libraries there were readings on economical Themis.²⁷

The process of cultural-educational revival and formation of national identity in Lemkovina was subject to severe politics of national discrimination, which were originated during 1930s. The aim of the state

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 50.

²⁶ Господарський курс трикотарства. (1936): In *Наш лемко* 5, pp. 4–5.

²⁷ Сяніцька хроніка. (1935): In *Наш лемко* 23, p. 8.

action in Lemkovina was to separate the *Lemkos* from any outside influences and to put them under the influence of Polish culture which would ultimately result in their national assimilation. For the weakening of Ukrainian society a number of associations and committees was founded, the activity of which was directed for the polonization of the Ukrainian nation, and the politics of western Ukrainian Rusophiles was also supported. For this purpose the influence of the church was used. In 1934 Apostols administration for Lemkovina was founded, which became a nucleus of russification²⁸. All of these measures were directed for the weakening of influence of Ukrainian cultural-educational and economic institutions in Lemkovina.

In spite of the fact that that the *Lemkos* started their Ukrainian national revival (which grew in strenght there very slowly under the influence of different anti-national moods) later than other ethnic groups, it may be claimed about the increasing Ukrainian national influences among them.

²⁸ Прах, Б. (2014). Апостольська адміністрація Лемківщини: соціокультурні передумови і канонічне підґрунтя. In *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія»*. Серія Історична 22, pp. 260–275.