

THE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIAN YOUTH MOVEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA (1920-1940)¹

В статье анализируются аспекты общественной деятельности крупнейших русских молодежных движений в межвоенной Латвии. Разные стороны культурной и общественной жизни русского населения описываются в контексте принадлежности к ареалу Зарубежной России. Общественные традиции, заложенные во время Российской империи, способствовали тому, что в Латвийской Республике образовалась плодотворная почва для успешного развития русских общественных начинаний. Среди множества русских общественных организаций, особое место занимали такие международные молодежные движения как: Скаутизм, Сокольство, а также Русское студенческое православное единение. Анализируя деятельность русских молодежных движений, автор заостряет внимание на общественной работе организаций, выходящей за рамки их внутренней деятельности, а также затрагивает различные аспекты политических событий и их влияние на деятельность организаций.

Ключевые слова: Латвийская Республика, Зарубежная Россия, русское национальное меньшинство, Скаутизм, Сокольство, РСПЕ, русские молодежные движения

Since the first days of the independent Republic of Latvia, Russians were the largest ethnic minority in the multicultural space of the country. Despite this, the written historiography of the interwar Russian community in Latvia is not as extensive as it could have been when taking into account the population of the minority². During the Soviet period, historical researches of the exact problematics were very tendentious, thus a deep critical analysis should be conducted when looking at this topic today. In the 1990s, new historiographical traditions appeared, which was reflected in the works of Latvian scholars. The first larger historical and social research of the interwar Russian community was carried out in the monographs of sociologist Vladislavs Volkovs³ and his colleague Ilga Apine⁴. In 2000, fundamental historical research by Tatjana Fejgmane was published⁵. Soon the publications by the historians Alexandr Gavrilin, Leo Dribins, Svetlana Kovalchuk, Boris Ravdin, Jury Abizov and other scholars were published⁶. Russian youth movements,

¹ This article has been prepared within the framework of the project "Interaction between the individual, the society and the state in process of the history of Latvia: conflicting values and formation of shared values during historical turning points". Project No. VPP-IZM-2018/1-0018.

² Dribins 2009. 109. lpp.

³ Volkovs 1996.

⁴ Volkovs, Apine 2007.

⁵ Фейгмане 2000.

⁶ Гаврилин 2015; Дрибинс 2007; Ковальчук 2016; Балтийско-русский сборник 2007; Абызов 1991; Абызов 2006. Publications in newspaper *Daugava* and others.

as a specific social phenomenon, were depicted only on the surface and in a narrow way, while focusing the main attention on other aspects of the Russian community, or its social manifestations. The history of the Сокол (Sokol) movement and the Russian Scout movement in Latvia was studied by Andrejs Gusachenko, and were depicted in his Master thesis and in the following publications⁷. Considering the third largest youth movement of the described period – Русское студенческое православное единение (Russkoye studencheskoye pravoslavnoye edinenie)⁸ is depicted well enough in a publication issued by the participant of the movement – Boris Plyuhanov in 1993. The work is based on his own recollections, publications of the organization and other sources, thus is the largest publication regarding the topic⁹.

The aim of this article is to analyze the social activities of the largest Russian youth movements in interwar Latvia: the Russian Scout movement, Sokol, the Unity of the Orthodox Russian Students. The base of research consists of documents of the Latvian State Historical Archive; publications of the organizations, Russian and Latvian interwar periodicals; recollections.

The geographical position of Latvia defined the factor of the Russian emigration, which appeared in fluctuating way, depending on the political, social and religious collisions with Russia. One of the first such waves of political and religious emigration reached the region in the 14-15th cc., when refugees from Novgorod and Pskov arrived in the region of Latvia¹⁰. Nevertheless, the largest flow of Russian emigration in the Early Modern Period reached Latvia by the end of the 17th c., after the Great Schism in the Russian Orthodox Church, when thousands of so-called Old believers used the opportunity to emigrate with the threat of repressions back home.

The results of the Northern War and the final partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 led to the territory of modern Latvia to become a part of the Russian Empire. Despite this, the actual Russian presence in the region was rather weak, and the indigenous Russian population was mostly represented by peasants, or Old believers¹¹. Although the official Governor and his secretariat quite often consisted of Russians (assigned from the Capital), the real rulers of the region were the Baltic Germans. The situation began to change from the 1860s, in the era of rapid economic development of the Russian Empire. The geographical position of Latvia – large ports (usually non-freezing in winter), recently laid railway and the Western cultural discourse, were the main factors of the economic growth of the Baltic provinces. Industrial growth, abolition of serfdom in Russia and the fol-

⁷ See: Gusačenko 2017; Гусаченко 2016; 2017.

⁸ Onwards: The Unity of The Orthodox Russian Students.

⁹ Плюханов 1993.

¹⁰ Podmazovs 2001. 54.-55. lpp.

¹¹ There was also a little segment of Orthodox Russians: mainly they were craftsmen, negotiators and peasants.

lowing imperial politics of Russification, caused large economic immigration from Russia. The immigrants mainly were workers, the personnel of the newly built factories and its administration, intelligence, clergy and the administration of governmental facilities. Thus, during the 19th c. the Russian population of the region increased by almost 10 times.

Furthermore, since 1840s an ideology of slavophiles became popular among the Russian intelligentsia in Russia and in the Baltic provinces. Aimed to decrease the influence of the Baltic Germans in the region, slavophiles created the positive ideological basis, and supported the development of local Russian cultural life. Since the last third of the 19th c. and for the next decades (until the First World War), dozens of Russian cultural, professional, educational, religious and charity organizations were founded¹².

The First World War and the following events drastically influenced the demographical situation in Latvia. Large mobilization and evacuation of factories, governmental, educational institutions and its personnel caused a huge decrease of the Russian population¹³. In numbers, the Russian population in the modern territory of Latvia decreased from 300,000¹⁴ before the War to 125,746 in the 1920s.¹⁵ In the 1920–1930s the Russian population increased on the account of refugees returning from Russia, the population of the new territories (added to Latvia, according to the Latvian–Soviet Peace Treaty in 1920), as well as Russian emigres – who fled to the Republic of Latvia as the result of the Bolshevik coup d'etat following the Civil War and the Red Terror in their motherland. Considering the results of the population censuses, conducted in 1925, 1930 and 1935, the numbers of the Russian emigrants, owners of the Nansen passport, reached 25,427; 15,643 and 12,444 respectively¹⁶.

Decreasing of the Russian population mainly impacted the economically active and educated population, which was mobilized or evacuated to Russia. The large number of them did not return. Thus the interwar Russian population mainly consisted of indigenous people – economically low active peasants who lived in the region for centuries¹⁷. Furthermore, more than half of them were Old believers. In the aspect of education, Russians took first place as the lowest educated population. Such situation was caused by the negative “heritage” of the Russian Empire, when the Old believers were discriminated for centuries, by limited educational opportunities¹⁸.

Despite the situation, the Russian community expressed itself in a fulfilled cultural life. Since Imperial times, a Russian Theatre was up and run-

¹² Фейгмане 2000. С. 173.

¹³ Гаврилин 2015. С. 234–235.

¹⁴ Otrā tautas skaitīšana Latvijā 1925. 68. lpp.

¹⁵ Гаврилин 2015. С. 234–235.

¹⁶ Ceturtā tautas skaitīšana 1936. 31. lpp.

¹⁷ Гусаченко 2018. С. 74–79.

¹⁸ Гаврилин 2015. С. 234–235.

ning in Riga, where prominent international stars of Russian emigration performed, among them: Fyodor Shalyapin, Alexander Vertinsky, Nikolay Barabanov, Mariya Vedrinskaya, the famous Don Cossack Choir, directed by Sergey Zharov and others. For a decade, the Latvian National Opera was directed by Pyotr Melnikov, who arrived in Latvia in 1922. Since the mid-1920s another Russian immigrant – “prime ballet dancer” Alexandra Fyodorova directed her own ballet studio. Riga was often visited by famous Russian philosophers, writers, historians and politicians such as Ivan Ilyin, Ivan Bunin, Ivan Shmelev, Nikolay Berdyaev, Pavel Milyukov, Alexander Kizzeveter. Latvia also became the second motherland for Russian academic emigrants, most of them worked as professors at the University of Latvia: Vasily Sinaisky, Boris and Robert Vippers, also professors Kallistrat Zhakov, Vladimir Kossinsky, Konstantin Arabazhin, academic painters Nikolay Bogdanov-Belsky, Sergey Vinogradov, Konstantin Visotsky and others¹⁹. Russian emigres founded publishing houses, two of them (Саламандра (Salamandra) and Компания Максима Дидьковского (Kompaniya Maxima Didkovskogo) were well known within the whole international area of “Russia abroad”²⁰. During the interwar period, Russian emigres founded dozens of periodicals, but the most successful and long-term was “Сегодня” (Segodnya) – a highly professional and democratically oriented newspaper, the largest Russian periodical in Latvia, well-known in the “Russia abroad”²¹.

Thus, Russian intellectuals and entrepreneurs were the most active of this relatively large, but low educated and political indifferent Russian community. But not all of them stayed in Latvia. Quite often emigres lived in Latvia for a short time and soon went abroad to Paris, Berlin, Belgrade, etc. Regarding the mental aspects, distinguishing the large spectre of Russian emigres in the 1920s (and even the 1930s), they believed in soon collapse of the Bolshevik regime in Russia, thus in emigration they lived in a so-called “stand by” mode, dreaming to return immediately after the fall of the hostile regime. This factor negatively influenced their integration into the Russian community in Latvia – emigres ignored the possibilities of naturalization and behaved apathetically towards the political and cultural life of local Russians.

Naturalization laws in interwar Latvia were highly favorable towards the emigres and under the Law on Citizenship, Latvian citizenship could be obtained by people born in Latvia (or whose family had lived in Latvia until 1914), or who had lived in Latvia for five years since 1919²². Thus, starting from the second half of the 1920s, a lot of Russian emigres obtained Latvian citizenship, but were not assimilated and kept their national traditions and

¹⁹ Плюханов 1993. С. 62.

²⁰ See: Huntington 1930.

²¹ Анохин 1998. С. 53–59.

²² Фейгмане 2000. С. 63.

identification²³. To avoid assimilation and preserve national traditions, a large number of cultural and public organizations were founded. In general, these were cultural, professional, social, educational, youth, sport, charity and religious organizations, around 150 organizations in total during the interwar period.²⁴ Comparing to other European countries where large numbers of Russians lived, in Latvia the Russian community had well rooted historical traditions of public organizations before the World War which became good soil for similar activities within the Republic of Latvia. Thus, during the interwar period, some previous organizations were restored, but much more were founded, a lot of them were related to organizations and movements in the “Russia abroad”. Youth movements were the spectacular manifestations of Russian public organizations. During the interwar period, three large youth movements were established in the Republic of Latvia: the Sokol movement, Scout movement and the Unity of the Orthodox Russian Students²⁵. Besides the main objectives concerning the peculiarities of each movement, all of them largely participated in the fields of social activities and quite frequently cooperated with one another to achieve certain aims.

The first youth movement in Latvia²⁶ was the Scout movement, which was founded by the veteran of the Boer War – Lieutenant-General Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell in 1907. Soon the movement expanded worldwide, and appeared in the Russian Empire. Thus in 1918, the Russian Scout movement numbered about 88,000 participants²⁷. The results of the Russian defensive in 1915, and the approaching frontline to Riga, led to many Latvian schools and pupils being evacuated to the territory of modern Estonia and Russia. Some of them were relocated to Tartu, where they met the pupils from other regions and got familiarized with the Scout movement. Soon, several Scout troops were founded under the jurisdiction of the Scout centre in Petrograd²⁸. In 1917, Scouts exported the idea of Scouting to Latvia by creating Latvian and Russian units in Cēsis and Riga. Despite the dreadful and depressing situation in 1917, the Scout movement gained much interest not only among the potential participants, but also in the perception of the military commandment of the 12th Russian Imperial army. A lot of Scouts became

²³ Гаврилин 2015. С. 234–235.

²⁴ Ibid. С. 250.

²⁵ It need to be noticed that the participants of so-called “students organizations” were not students (except fellowships and fraternities which were founded by the High school students), but often youth and interested people of all ages. Such unusual classification was continued from the time of Russian Empire. Thus, the Union of the Orthodox Russian Students was classified not as a student, but as a youth movement. More information: Плюханов 1993. С. 63–64.

²⁶ Russian and Latvian youth movement.

²⁷ Полчанинов 2009. С. 4–13.

²⁸ Маяк 1933. С. 4–5.

volunteers and assisted at the front line as runners, as well as nurse assistants at hospitals and hospital trains, with some of them even awarded with military awards. In the USSR, the Scout movement was banned in 1923, but despite this the movement continued to develop and expanded in the “Russia abroad”.

Scouts participated in the Latvian War of Independence (1918–1920) in the military formations of the Latvian Provisional Government against the Bolsheviks²⁹. During the interwar period, all the Scout units in Latvia were united under the jurisdiction of the Latvian Scouts and Guides Central Organization (Latvijas skautu un gaidu centrālā organizācija, LSCO), directed by General Kārlis Goppers, participant of the anti-Bolshevik rebellion in Yaroslavl, and a former general of the Komuch army. In the middle of 1930s, President of Latvia Kārlis Ulmanis became the honorary president of LSCO. By the end of 1939 the organization reached a peak membership number of 8,872³⁰. During the interwar period, about 25 Russian Scout troops were founded, around 10-15 units with approximately 300-400 members worked at the same time. Troops were founded in Riga, Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Liepāja and in other cities and towns where the concentration of Russian population was rather dense³¹. The aim of the movement was to raise the young people in a national spirit, supporting their physical, mental and spiritual development, with a focus on the outdoors and survival skills.³² Furthermore, Scouts were engaged in a large spectrum of social activities. Thus, Scouts frequently cooperated with local police, patrolled and kept order at large public events, assisted in rescue operations. Scouts also frequently helped firefighters by assisting during firefighting operations. For example, in the late 1930s, the LSCO issued a decree, which obliged all Scouts to establish contacts with local firefighting departments and obtain firefighting training³³. Scouts also got familiarized with first aid, which was highly useful during the summer time, when Scouts usually kept watch at crowded beaches and other swimming places. The newspapers quite often praised the quick response and bravery of the Scouts, who saved the lives of many careless swimmers. Such acts were appreciated and lifesavers usually were awarded by the local administrations³⁴.

Russian Scouts were the first Russian organization to start a long-term project – restoring and maintaining abandoned cemeteries, where soldiers of

²⁹ Kletnieks 1960. 20.-23. lpp.

³⁰ LVVA. 2415.f., 1.a., 82.l., 75.lp.

³¹ Русский ежегодник 1940. С. 69–71.

³² Маяк № 2 1933. С. 8–9.

³³ Сегодня 30.09.1938. С. 6.

³⁴ LVVA. 2415.f., 1.apr., 135.l., 22.lp. In winter, when the outside temperature dropped to -25 C, the municipal administration in cooperation with police and Scouts organized search and rescue units, which patrolled the city parks, woke up homeless people who fell asleep and forwarded them to shelters. – Сегодня 12.01.1926. С. 6.

the Russian army were buried. Such burials were located near Riga, where the heavy battles took place. These cemeteries quite often were in a neglected condition, without any marks of identification or even crosses. “Сегодня” reported: “Small Russian Scout troops have been the first to decide to act instead of talking. They are acting on their own initiative, without any support and directions from the outside. Scouts restored cemetery, which have been abandoned and forgotten for a long time. They have restored identification marks, placed the burials in appropriate order and made wooden crosses. In such a way, they proved that youth organizations can be much more responsive and kind-hearted, compared to the social organizations which are tasked to take care of such burials”³⁵. Such activities started in 1926 and soon attracted the attention of the governmental organization – the Brethren Cemetery Committee. The Committee took over the initiative and in 1931 erected the monument in the Brethren Cemetery restored in Babīte³⁶. In Latgale (east part of Latvia, where about 75% of all Russians lived) Russian Scouts assisted Sunday school directors. The priest of the Russian Orthodox church in the name of Protection of the Holy Virgin in Demene (a village nearby Daugavpils), father Gennady Komorovsky said: “Scouts are the closest assistants of the priest in all affairs related to the moral education of the new generation”³⁷.

Russian Scoutmasters (leaders of the Scout troops) took part in meetings of the organizing committee of the annual event “The Days of the Russian Culture”. The festival was organized under the jurisdiction of the “Russian educational organization” in all Latvian cities and towns where notable number of Russians lived. The festival was the largest public manifestation of the Russian community in Latvia³⁸. In Riga, the festival’s events mainly took place at Miera Dārzs (a large park in the Moscow suburb, a historical Russian district), where performances of choirs and folk dance ensembles, spectacles and plays, exhibitions and folk markets were organized. Some of these amusements were organized by the Russian Scout troops³⁹. As has been mentioned above, Russian Scout units were under the jurisdiction of the LSCO, thus they took part in all annual national celebrations along with the Latvian Scouts, such as Latvian Independence Day, Lacplesis Day⁴⁰, the opening of the Monument of Freedom, processions and other government manifestations.

³⁵ Сегодня 03.08.1926. С. 6.

³⁶ Сегодня 17.08.1931. С. 4

³⁷ Сегодня 28.10.1926. С. 2. During Orthodox celebrations in Riga, churches were overcrowded and sometimes some of the church goers even fainted. Scouts assisted to the administration of the largest Orthodox church in Riga, the Nativity of Christ Orthodox Cathedral, providing the first aid and further care for such persons. – Сегодня 22.04.1930. С. 5.

³⁸ More information: Фейгмане 2000. С. 186–190.

³⁹ LVVA, 2415.f., 1.a., 82.l., 44.lp

⁴⁰ Memorial day (November 11) celebrated the victory over the West Russian Volunteer Army – a joint Russian-German volunteer force led by the warlord Pavel Bermond-Avalov – at the Battle of Riga in 1919 during the Latvian War of Independence.

The members of Scout and Guide⁴¹ troops were 13-16-year-old youths. Since these troops cannot exist without financial support from the outside, sometimes lack of such support led to the closing of the units. This problem was essential in the case of the Russian Scouts - Russians were the poorest minority in the country and this factor impacted the financial situation of the Scout troops. Another problem was a relatively poor informational spectre and propaganda – Russian Scout troops did not issue flyers or magazines for the promotion of the movement, and did not arrange promotional campaigns, thus the lack of such public activities slowed down the development of the Russian Scouting movement in Latvia. At the same time, Latvian Scouts and Scouts of large Latvian minorities (as Jew, German and Polish Scouts) received wide financial, informational and other support by social organizations of each community⁴². These problems were realized by the part of active Russian community and in 1931 the “Friends of Russian Scouts and Guides” was founded⁴³. Members of the board were the Scoutmasters of the leading Russian Scout units, public persons, Russian entrepreneurs and others. The organization arranged entertainment events, spectacles, plays, lotteries, and performances of popular musicians, bands and singers. All income, as well as the member fees, was directed to the needs of Russian Scouts. Furthermore, the Friends issued the newspaper “Маяк” (Mayak) – an informational periodical aimed at promoting the movement. The newspaper depicted the life of the Russian Scouts, Scouting ideology and history, and provided insights into peculiarities of the Scouting movement in other countries etc.⁴⁴

The most popular Russian youth movement was Sokol, an exclusively Slavic youth movement, which was founded in Prague in the Czech region of the Austrian Empire in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš and Jindřich Fügner. In fact, it was a hidden manifestation of the national identity and separatist trends of the Czech nation in the Empire of the Habsburgs⁴⁵. The aim of the organization was the education and training of the new physically strong and educated, nationally oriented generation. For physical training, special Sokol gymnastics by Miroslav Tyrš was even invented. The educational spectre was conducted by lectures and group discussions⁴⁶. At the beginning of the 20th c., the movement spread in all Slavic countries as well as in the Russian Empire. During the First World War, Sokols were volunteers in the Russian army and joined the White movement during the Civil War. As Russian Sokols were against Bolshevism, a lot of members were arrested, while a large number of Sokols emigrated abroad. In 1920 the first organization of Russian Sokols was

⁴¹ Guides – female scouts, acted in troops of Russian guides.

⁴² Сегодня 25.02.1929. С. 5.

⁴³ LVVA, 5911.f., 1.a., 1.l., 1.лр.

⁴⁴ For additional information: Маяк 1933–1934.

⁴⁵ Nolte 2003. P. 40–41.

⁴⁶ Краевой союз русского сокольства в Югославии 1935. С. 6–7; 44–49.

founded in then Czechoslovakia (in Prague), then in the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (in Belgrade) and in other countries where Russian emigres lived. In Soviet Russia, the Sokol movement was banned in 1923.

In exile the movement was directed by former officers of the White armies. Thus, the movement had a strong anti-Bolshevik orientation and the ideology of revanchism mixed with the original basis of the Slavic Sokol movement. The training and education of the youth were aimed to create a new nation (in fact a new generation of the White movement), who will participate in an intervention against the Bolsheviks and will be involved in the resurrection of Russia after the fall of the Bolshevik regime⁴⁷.

The first Sokol organization in Latvia was founded in 1928 in Daugavpils. Two years later another organization was founded in Riga. Thus the Sokol movement in Latvia developed in two centers, and around 10 branches, in the jurisdiction of the central organizations, with about 1,000 members at the peak of the activity in total⁴⁸. Sokol was a Slavic movement, and in Latvia was represented exclusively by Russian organizations, and during the first half of 1930s acted under the jurisdiction of the centers in Belgrade and Prague. Only slavs were allowed to participate as active members, potential members of other nations could participate as passive members, with limited rights, such as being forbidden voting rights, participation board meetings etc.⁴⁹ The average age of the Sokols was between 16-18 years.

The movement in Latvia was directed by well-known public figures, deputies of city councils, writers, teachers, journalists and former white officers. In addition to the trainings and internal lectures, Sokols organized public evenings, where the demonstrations of the gymnastic exercises and acrobatic tricks, were followed by performances of prominent actors, singers, choirs. Sokols organized the lectures of local and famous international Russian philosophers, writers, politics and clergy such as Ivan Ilyin, Ivan Shmelev, Vladimir Ilyin, Hieromonk John (Shahovskoy) and others⁵⁰.

In the same way as Russian Scouts, Sokols took care of abandoned cemeteries, where Russian soldiers were buried. Thus, within two years, the Sokols of the Daugavpils chapter restored over 1,000 (sic!) graves at an almost abandoned First World War cemetery and replaced more than 50 crosses⁵¹. In 1931, the same organization took part in a monument opening, which was dedicated in honor of fallen soldiers⁵².

The Sokols of Riga focused their attention on taking care of cemeteries in Dubulti and Ikšķīle – towns nearby Riga, where bloody battles in 1915–

⁴⁷ Ibid. C. 189.

⁴⁸ Gusačenko 2017. 146; 148–150. Lpp.

⁴⁹ LVVA, 3285.f., 1.a., 2.l., 13.lp.

⁵⁰ Gusačenko 2017. 65, 71, 79, 104. lpp.

⁵¹ Гимнастическое общество “Русский Сокол” в Двинске 1933. С. 10.

⁵² Latvijas Kareivis 1931. 3. lpp.

1917 took place. The front line went through Ikšķile, and, as a result, almost all buildings were ruined, including the Orthodox Church of Archistratage Michael. In the 1930s, a new project of the church renewal was developed by the architect of the Holy Sinode Vladimir Shervinsky. But the local parish was not able to collect the necessary funding. The Russian society, as well as Sokols, helped them in the raising of donations in Riga and in 1936 the building of the church was concluded. In 1935, on the initiative of the Sokols, the same architect developed the project of the monument in the name of the soldiers buried at the cemetery in Ikšķile. For this purpose, the Sokols initiated a donation drive, but one which did not get large support within society, and thus the project was “frozen”⁵³. In 1931 the Sokols of Riga received a proposal from the Russian Charity Organization to take over the full care of the Orthodox church in the name of the icon Mother of God “Joy of all who sorrow” in Riga. The proposal was unanimously accepted and the Sokols provided the firewood for the church, arranged the cleaning of the spaces, sang in the church choir and even helped the priest during the liturgy in the altar⁵⁴.

As most popular Russian youth organizations, Sokols took part in the popular “Days of Russian Culture” in all cities and towns where the branches were located⁵⁵. After the liturgy (as the event opening) and the official parade of Russian public organizations, the Sokols arranged acrobatic demonstrations, performed spectacles, sang in choirs, arranged kiosks in the Russian folk style, and even invited the circus artists to take part in the celebration with a trained bear⁵⁶. Furthermore, Sokols participated in charity markets, where “Russian stands” decorated in the folk style were usually set-up to sell national food and drink, which was accompanied by folk dance and singing performances. All the income was directed for the purpose of charity.⁵⁷

In accordance with the peace treaty with Soviet Russia (signed on August 11, 1920) anti-Bolshevik organizations in Latvia were officially forbidden, as they were hostile towards Soviet Russia⁵⁸. Being a movement under jurisdiction of the centers controlled by former Russian White officers, Sokols in Latvia were suspected as “monarchistic” organizations, and were supervised by the Political Police⁵⁹. To avoid closing of their organizations, Sokols

⁵³ Gusačenko 2017. 98.—104. lpp.

⁵⁴ LVVA, 3285.f., 1.a., 3.l., 116.lp.

⁵⁵ Сегодня 15.05.1932. С. 1.

⁵⁶ LVVA, 3285.f., 1.a., 68.l., 50.lp.

⁵⁷ Сегодня вечером 14.04.1937. С. 4.

⁵⁸ Section IV, Article 2 of the peace treaty prohibited the organization and activity of any groups and organizations aiming to overthrow the government of the other party to the treaty. – Miera līgums starp Latviju un Krieviju. <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/spetersburg/sadarbibar-krievijas-federaciju/miera-ligums-starp-latviju-un-krieviju>

⁵⁹ All Russian anti-Bolshevik organizations and people linked with them in Latvia were deemed “Russian monarchists”. But, in fact, ideology of monarchism, aiming to restore monarchical power, was declared only by a few anti-Bolshevik organizations. Even during

tried to act highly loyal towards the government and from the middle of the 1930s quit and denied any connections with the White centers. To verify the loyalty, especially during the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis, Sokols participated in all governmental celebrations and public manifestations and several times visited the Minister of Internal Affairs to approve their apolitical orientation⁶⁰. In reality, the suspicion was reasonable – anti-Bolshevik moods were rather common inside the Sokol fellowships until the liquidation of the organizations in 1940. A large number of Sokols participated in illegal anti-Bolshevik organizations, and were repressed by the Soviet regime.

The third Russian large youth movement in interwar Latvia – the Unity of the Orthodox Russian Students – was, in fact, a branch of the international movement of the Russian Christian Students, spread in European countries where the Russian emigres lived. The main center was in Paris, directed by well-known Russian theologians and philosophers. In Latvia the first organization was founded in 1928 as a result of combining several Russian theological sections, where the people interested in Orthodoxy gathered and discussed theological matters. Within the next several years, 13 sections, which numbered around 100-150 persons each, were founded. Sections worked under the jurisdiction of central organization in Riga and branches in Daugavpils and Rēzekne. The aim of the Unity was “to unify the Christian youth for the good of the Orthodox Church by attracting students”, “to educate the participants to protect the religion and the Church, and participate in missionary activities in conditions of modern materialism and atheism”⁶¹. It is important that the “Orthodox” meaning in the name of the Unity was not an obstacle for membership – any Christian student, graduate or the person who studied in high school could participate in the organization. The Unity organized congresses, conferences, lectures and seminars, where theological, philosophical and pedagogical problems were discussed⁶². As lecturers, local clergy, theologians and historians were attracted, but almost at every conference lectures were conducted by well-known lecturers from “Russia Abroad”. Among them were such prominent persons as Lev Zander, Ivan Logovsky, mother Maria (Skobcova), Lev Liperovsky, Vasily Zenkovsky, Boriss Visheschlavcev and many others.

In the beginning of the 1930s, under the jurisdiction of the center in Riga, a pedagogical bureau was founded, which organized pedagogical courses, directed by Vasily Zenkovsky, representative of the Paris organization in Riga. Under the guidance of Mr. Zenkovsky, a close cooperation between the

the Civil War, the White movement mainly adhered to the so-called “undefined” concept of the future Russian political system. Their general aim was the destruction of Bolshevik dictatorship, but the future Russian political system had to be defined by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. See: Басик и др. 2007.

⁶⁰ LVVA, 3285.f., 1.a., 14.l., 2.lp.

⁶¹ LVVA, 3724.f., 1.a., 7922.l., 107.lp.

⁶² Ibidem.

similar bureaus in Riga and Paris was established. The bureau organized theological and pedagogical seminars in Riga, Daugavpils and Rēzekne, where educational questions and pedagogical problems were discussed. Lecturers shared their experience and knowledge based on the latest pedagogical methods widely used in Europe. The events were supported by the local Orthodox clergy and the municipal administration. In Rēzekne, over 400 persons visited the seminar and the main City Hall was overcrowded. There were similar situations in other cities where the seminars were organized⁶³. For educational purposes, the Unity arranged so-called mobile libraries, which travelled from town to town and were in demand in the countryside⁶⁴.

In 1931, under the supervision of the Unity, the squads of “Витязи” (Vitjazi) and the “Девичьи дружины” (Devich’y družhini) were founded. They were based on the practice of Scouting with the large additional spectre of national and religious education⁶⁵. More than 130 girls and boys, with the average age of 13-14, were a part of the squads. At the same time, the Unity organized a kinder garden for the poor Russians in Riga, based on Sunday school practice⁶⁶. In 1931, a section of icon painting and the free of charge courses of Latvian, English, German and French studies were founded⁶⁷.

The Unity also participated in the Social committee founded in 1929 under jurisdiction of the Holy Synode for the needs of the people of Eastern Latvia, where the threats of famine took place due to the low harvest of that year. The committee collected donations, organized so-called “fast reaction medical squads”, which in general were managed by the Russian students, who distributed the products and other material goods in the regions of risk.

As other Russian organizations, the Unity also participated in the annual “Days of Russian Culture”, by organizing spectacles, plays, choir singing, performances etc.⁶⁸ Lecturers of the organizations, as well as their foreign colleagues, participated in public events, dedicated to Russian writers. For example, remembering the 50th anniversary since the death of Fjodor Dostoyevsky, Lev Zander (the secretary of the Union in the Baltics, and a famous Russian philosopher and writer) took part as a lecturer in the event arranged at the Russian Theatre. Several days later, he was invited by Latvian educational organizations and conducted a lecture at the University of Latvia⁶⁹.

In the fall of 1934, police arranged the sudden search of headquarters of the Unity in Riga. Several persons were arrested and put into detention cells. The official reasoning of the arrests was suspicions in the assassination of

⁶³ Плюханов 1993. С. 106–107.

⁶⁴ Сегодня 17.06.1928. С. 8.

⁶⁵ Сегодня 25.02.1929. С.5.

⁶⁶ LVVA, 3724.f., 1.a., 7922.l., 48.lp.

⁶⁷ Плюханов 1993. С. 76.

⁶⁸ LVVA, 5911.f., 1.a., 3.l., 1.lp.

⁶⁹ Сегодня 05.02.1931. С.8.

Archbishop Jānis (Pommers). The cause was so absurd that police officers themselves confessed this during the interrogations⁷⁰. Soon the case was thrown out, but the Unity was disbanded, with the official reasoning as follows: “Despite its statutes, the Unity of the Orthodox Russian Students behave in a spirit of Russian chauvinism and in a way of Russification. Furthermore, the organization is a branch of the Movement of Christian Russian Students – the organization of Russian emigrants with hidden military context, based in Paris and aimed to recover the “Great, Holy and indivisible Russia”. As stated in the conclusion of the Political Police, the Unity was acting in a hostile way towards the Latvian statehood. It was closed down in December 1934⁷¹.”

The historical context of Latvia was fruitful soil for the social and cultural activities of the Russian community during the interwar period. Despite the quite poor economic situation, as well as low level of education (political indifference), Russians were active in aspects of organized social and cultural manifestations. Among more than 150 Russian organizations, especially active were organizations of international youth movements. The Russian Scout movement, the Sokol movement and The Unity of The Orthodox Russian Students were the three largest Russian youth movements during the interwar era in the Republic of Latvia. As the movements were imported into Latvia and had an international discourse, almost all of them were founded with participation of Russian emigres. In addition to the specific activity of every movement, extra attention to public activities for the good of the society was paid. The movements frequently cooperated in some fields of their activities, but in other aspects of their social work each of them acted in a different, unique way. Depending on the movement, their social investment varied from the maintenance of cemeteries and cooperation with firefighters to the supporting and subsidizing of the churches, as well as organizing educational conferences conducted by famous foreign philosophers of “Russia abroad”.

Despite income from member fees, self-taxation, and rare subsidies, the financial situation of Russian youth movements often was quite poor. This obstacle limited a larger scale of social activities, which were initially planned by the organizations. Nevertheless, when looking at activities aimed for the good of society, the youth movements sometimes were more active than adult Russian organizations, which had much more financial opportunities.

Inner and international political collisions, complicated relationships between the Soviet Union and Kārlis Ulmanis’ authoritarian regime reflected on the Russian youth movements as on the most public organizations in Latvia. Due to political reasons, the Unity of the Orthodox Russian Students was disbanded, the Sokols were forced to cardinaly change their ideological basis and international leadership structure. Despite this, the organizations of the

⁷⁰ ПЛЮХАНОВ 1993. С. 147

⁷¹ LVVA, 3724.f., 1.a., 7922.l., 3.lp.; 48.lp.

Sokol movement and Russian Scout troops continued to exist until the beginning of the Soviet regime in the summer 1940, when the movements were banned, the organizations eliminated and most of the participants repressed.

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Общественная деятельность русских молодежных движений в Латвийской республике в 1920-1940 гг.

The article presents the analysis of social activities of the most popular Russian youth movements in the interwar Latvia. Within the framework of the publication, the cultural and social manifestations of the Russian minority are reflected as a part of the phenomenon of “Russia abroad”. Traditions of social and cultural activities rooted in the memories of the Russian Empire were fertile soil for the same activities during the interwar period. Especially notable were the manifestations of such Russian youth movements as the Russian Scouts, Sokol movement and the Unity of The Russian Orthodox Students. Conducting an analysis of the movements, the author has drawn attention to their work for the good of the society. Conclusions about the aspects of the international and inner political situation which affected the organizations were reached.

Keywords: Republic of Latvia, The history of Russian emigration, Russian ethnical minority, Scouting, Sokol, RSPE, Russian youth movements

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