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THE UNION OF LVIV DEFENDERS AS A PART OF INTERWAR POLAND'S NATIONAL POLICY IN WESTERN UKRAINIAN TERRITORIES

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Союз оборонців Львова (1918–1939) був громадською організацією, що об'єднувала ветеранів польсько-української війни, які воювали на боці Польщі. Створена в контексті післявоєнного облаштування польської держави, ця організація відігравала ключову роль у політичних та ідеологічних процесах міжвоєнного періоду.

Польська держава активно підтримувала Союз оборонців Львова, використовуючи його як інструмент поширення польських патріотичних наративів на західноукраїнських землях. Особлива увага приділялася формуванню лояльності до польської держави серед непольського населення, зокрема українців. Це включало пропаганду героїзму польських вояків, зображення битви за Львів як національного подвигу та утвердження польської культурної гегемонії.

Водночас для значної частини українського населення діяльність Союзу оборонців Львова була неприйнятною. Це було пов'язано з тим, що членами спілки були ветерани, які брали участь у завоюванні Львова польськими військами, що стало одним із ключових епізодів ліквідації Західноукраїнської Народної Республіки (ЗУНР). Українці бачили в цій організації символ польської експансії та засіб легітимізації польської влади на західноукраїнських землях.

Союз оборонців Львова брав участь у численних офіційних заходах, таких як святкування річниць оборони Львова, відкриття пам'ятників та меморіальних дошок, проведення парадів. Усі ці дії мали на меті консолідацію польської ідентичності та звеличення польської армії, що, однак, лише посилювало напруження у стосунках із національними меншинами.

Організація також займалася освітньою діяльністю, підтримувала історичні дослідження, які висвітлювали події польсько-української війни з польської перспективи. Ці ініціативи супроводжувалися маргіналізацією українських наративів та спробами зобразити ЗУНР як нелегітимне державне утворення.

Союз оборонців Львова став важливим елементом національної політики міжвоєнної Польщі на західноукраїнських землях. Спілка виконувала функцію культурного та ідеологічного інструмента, що мав забезпечити інтеграцію українського населення та утвердження польської державної ідентичності. Проте ця політика сприяла поглибленню міжетнічних непорозумінь і посиленню українського національного руху в регіоні, який прагнув відновлення власної державності.

Діяльність Союзу оборонців Львова в міжвоєнний період є прикладом використання ветеранських організацій для досягнення політичних цілей та формування історичної пам'яті, що викликає складні питання щодо державної політики у багатонаціональних регіонах.

Терміни “оборонці” і “оборона” Львова активно використовувалися обома сторонами конфлікту як елемент ідеологічного наративу, що відображав різні історичні інтерпретації подій. З одного боку, українці стверджують, що обороняли столицю Західноукраїнської Народної Республіки від зовнішньої агресії. Для них Львів символізував важливий центр національного відродження, і оборона міста розглядалася як боротьба за державний суверенітет та право на самовизначення.

З іншого боку, поляки вважали, що захищали Львів як невід'ємну частину Польщі від спроб відібрати його на користь ЗУНР. Польська сторона бачила бої за місто як частину процесу відновлення незалежності Польщі після Першої світової війни, підкреслюючи історичний зв'язок Львова з польською культурою та традиціями.

Використання термінів “оборона” і “оборонці” в цьому контексті є не просто описовим, а має глибокий ідеологічний підтекст. Обидві сторони намагалися легітимізувати свої претензії на місто через призму героїзму та патріотизму, закріплюючи ці поняття у колективній пам'яті, тим самим роблячи ці терміни предметом інтерпретаційних конфліктів. Вказані термінологічні розбіжності відображають глибину історичної пам'яті та різницю у сприйнятті минулого, яка формувала тогочасний ідеологічний дискурс навколо подій українсько-польської битви за Львів.

Ключові слова: Львів, Україна, Польща, Союз оборонців Львова, війна, ветерани, національна політика, оборона.

The Union of Lviv Defenders (Full title: The Union of Lviv Defenders since November, 1918) was an organization created to unite participants in the battles in Lviv in November 1918. Its main goal was to maintain friendly relations between veterans, mutual assistance and preserve the memory of the events of those times.

The Union had a central administration in Lviv, and its activities extended to the entire territory of Poland. The main tasks of the Union included cultural and educational work, the organization of commemorative events, the support of national consciousness and military spirit among participants, as well as assistance to veterans and families of the deceased.¹ The organization sought to contribute to the

¹ Statut Związku Obrońców Lwowa z listopada 1918 r. Lwow: Drukarnia Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1921. 3–4. Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://polona.pl/item-view/7dd42100-3afe-4f06-9b2a-c4958fb95b9f?page=3>.

strengthening of patriotism, the dissemination of knowledge about the history of the struggle for Lviv and the education of young people on heroic examples.

Membership in the Union was divided into ordinary, extraordinary and honorary members. Ordinary members were participants in the battles of November 1918 who were not on active military duty. Extraordinary members included those who had fought in battles and remained in military service. Honorary members could be individuals who had made a significant contribution to the activities of the Union². Membership in the organization provided the opportunity to participate in events, receive support in difficult life situations, and join social and/or cultural initiatives.

The organizational structure of the Union included the General Meeting, the Board of Directors, the Audit Commission, and the Arbitration Court. The General Meeting was held annually on November 21, on the anniversary of Polish advance into the center of Lviv. They elected the governing bodies as well as made decisions on the statute, finances, and activities of the Union³. The Board of Directors carried out daily management, coordinated the work of members, and ensured the implementation of the decisions of the General Meeting.

The Union was financed through membership fees, donations, and income from organizing cultural events and publishing activities. It had the right to acquire and alienate property only by decision of the General Meeting.

The activities of the Union contributed to the formation of historical memory, the popularization of heroic (from the Polish point of view) pages of Lviv's history, and the support of the veteran community. Particular attention was paid to working with youth, conducting historical lectures, excursions to battle sites, publishing brochures and books about the events of November 1918. The Union also organized charitable events to raise funds to help veterans and families of the dead, and conducted cultural and educational initiatives aimed at raising national spirit and preserving historical memory.

The participation of prominent Polish figures in the Union of Lviv Defenders played an important role in shaping Polish state policy in the interwar period. Honorary members of this organization were influential figures such as the first Marshal of Poland Józef Piłsudski, Marshal of France and Poland Ferdinand Foch, Bishop Władysław Bandurski, as well as generals Władysław Jędrzejowski and Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski. Participants in the uprising of 1863–1864, including Teofil Bentkowski, Rafał Hirsch, Tomasz Kazecki and others, also belonged to this honorary cohort⁴. The presence of these prominent figures emphasized the importance of the Union of Lviv Defenders for Polish statehood.

After the end of the World War I, the struggle for Lviv became a symbol of Poland's victory over the Soviet threat and the restoration of independence. The participation of prominent political and military leaders in this organization emphasized its importance as a state instrument for the formation of national identity.

For the Polish authorities of the interwar period, the Union of Lviv Defenders symbolized heroism and national unity, but for Ukrainians this organization was associated with the policy of an alien state. The suppression of Ukrainian national aspirations in Western Ukrainian lands created an atmosphere of tension. The Union of Lviv Defenders, as part of the official memory of Polish victories, consolidated Polish dominance in the region, which was perceived by Ukrainians as a symbol of the overthrow of their statehood. The participation of such figures as Józef Piłsudski strengthened the perception of the Union as a state instrument aimed at legitimizing Polish power in Lviv. This contributed to the formation of the policy of cultural and political expansion.

At the same time, the presence of figures such as Bishop Władysław Bandurski testified to the close connection between the state and the Catholic Church, which in interwar Poland played a significant role in strengthening Polish national consciousness. However, this also did not contribute to the success of the state national policy, since the Ukrainian population of Galicia largely professed the Greek Catholic faith. Thus, the participation of prominent Polish figures in the Union of Lviv Defenders not only emphasized its importance for Polish national policy, but also created obstacles to the successful implementation of national policy in Western Ukrainian lands.

² Statut Związku Obrońców Lwowa z listopada 1918 r. Lwow, 4–6.

³ Ibidem, 6–7.

⁴ Sprawozdanie z Działalności Związku Obrońców Lwowa z Listopada 1918 za rok 1938–39. Lwow: Pierwsza drukarnia związkowa Związku Obrońców Lwowa od listopada 1918 r., 1949. 8. Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://polona.pl/item-view/7dd42100-3afe-4f06-9b2a-c4958fb95b9f?page=3>.

Generally, in the 1920s and 1930s, Polish national policy in the Western Ukrainian lands was characterized by ideological and political pressure on minorities, in particular Jews and Ukrainians. For example, since the 1920s, the Polish government introduced mandatory measures that included excluding Jews from the possibility of obtaining state bank loans, working in the public sector, and obtaining business licenses. In the 1930s, certain measures were introduced to restrict the activities of Jewish shops, export firms, as well as restrictions on the admission of Jews to the medical and legal professions, business associations, and universities⁵. Regarding the Ukrainian population, the Polish government refused to grant Ukrainians any form of autonomy, pursuing a policy of cultural restriction⁶. It was in this context that the activities of the Union of Lviv Defenders played an important role.

According to the decision of the General Assembly of the Union of October 21, 1921, the organization emphasized the historical right of Poland to own Western Ukrainian lands on the basis of the protection of this territory by the Polish people for centuries and the absence of grounds for revising the statehood of the region⁷. The document stated that the issue of statehood had been finally resolved. It was noted that attempts to revise the status of the region were the result of external influences, in particular the policy of former occupiers. The Union of Lviv Defenders denied the right of Ukrainians to create their own statehood on the territory of Western Ukraine. Moreover, in those minor cases where Ukrainians were mentioned, official documents of the Union used only the terms “Ruthenians” and “Eastern Lesser Poland”, while using the word “Ukraine” only to designate the territory of the former Ukrainian People’s Republic⁸. Despite official declarations of readiness for peaceful coexistence with Ukrainians, the Union of Lviv Defenders actually refused to recognize a separate Ukrainian cultural identity. It was emphasized that the region should remain in the Polish cultural and economic space.

The Union of Lviv Defenders adhered to a clearly Polish-centric position, which reflected the general trends of the national policy of a number of Polish governments at that time. The Union enjoyed the support of the state structures of the Polish Republic, which made it a part of the country’s ideological system. This support was expressed both in financing the activities of the Union and in cooperation with government organizations. Such interaction contributed to the spread of state policy in Western Ukrainian lands and the integration of the Union into the official ideological narrative of governments. Because of this, the Union of Lviv Defenders played an important role in Polish national policy in Western Ukrainian lands in the 1920s and 1930s.

The organization engaged in extensive ideological and patriotic activities as well as primarily focused on glorifying the outcomes of the Ukrainian-Polish War of 1918–1919. These efforts aimed to emphasize the historical significance of the conflict while fostering a narrative that highlighted the heroism and sacrifices of Polish soldiers in the struggle for control of Lviv. A central objective of the Union’s campaigns was the cultivation of a positive public image of the Polish armed forces and state authorities, reinforcing their roles as defenders of national integrity and historical justice. To achieve these goals, the Union made strategic use of various forms of official state support. This included direct financial assistance from the state budget to fund the organization’s initiatives, as well as the granting of administrative powers, particularly in the coordination of public commemorations and the organization of national holidays in the territories of Western Ukraine. Furthermore, the Union collaborated closely with key state institutions, such as the ministries of education and culture, to promote historical memory through public education, cultural programming, and memorial events, ensuring that the narratives it advanced were integrated into the broader framework of national identity formation. Consequently, the Union of Lviv Defenders was not only a veteran organization, but a full-fledged element of the political system of the Polish Republic. Its activities, closely connected with state structures, contributed to the implementation of Polish national policy in Western Ukrainian lands in the interwar period.

⁵ Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 135–148. Accessed January 14, 2025 https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Timothy_David_Snyder/The_Reconstruction_of_Nations_Poland_Ukraine_Lithuania_Belarus_1569–1999_anhl.pdf.

⁶ Robert Potocki, *Polityka państwa polskiego wobec zagadnienia ukraińskiego w latach 1930–1939* (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2003), 201–218. Accessed January 14, 2025. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL3761572M/Polityka_panstwa_polskiego_wobec_zagadnienia_ukrainskiego_w_latach_1930–1939.

⁷ Державний архів Львівської області (далі – ДАЛО), ф. 266, оп. 1, спр. 4 (Листування Спілки оборонців Львова в листопаді 1918 р. з організаціями та особами про діяльність Спілки, його закордонних федерацій, відкритті курсів, російського університету та інше), арк. 10.

⁸ Ibidem, 11.

In the context of this situation, the Union adjusted its activities in accordance with the ideological needs of the state. One of the most important expense items in the organization's financial statements is the item on public relations work. For instance, in 1932 alone, the Union spent over 2,500 zlotys on various informational, representational and ceremonial events⁹. Also, each financial report of the Union includes a separate article for the publication and dissemination of materials about the heroism of Polish fighters during the battles for Lviv and substantiation of the legitimacy of the presence of Polish authorities in Western Ukrainian lands.

To develop its public relations strategy, the Union also focused on symbolic gestures and public messages. They used printed materials, such as commemorative brochures and posters, to reach a wider audience. By emphasizing the values of sacrifice, unity, and patriotism, the Union aimed to strengthen public support for its cause and ensure that the historical significance of the Battle of Lviv would be remembered for generations Poland's citizens including those of non-Polish origins. Also the Union of Lviv Defenders conducted extensive public relations activities aimed at fostering historical memory and national unity. They collaborated with the Civic Committee for the 20th Anniversary of the Defense of Lviv, making significant contributions to its information policies and press department. A key result of this collaboration was the publication of the periodical *Pobudka*, which closely mirrored the original 1918 edition in both design and content¹⁰. This publication served as a means of educating the population, disseminating historical narratives, and honoring the legacy of Lviv's defenders.

Moreover, official financial documents always contain at least 7–8 items dedicated to various types of ideological work and activities related to public relations¹¹. In addition, the Union participated in various actions related to the construction of monuments, the creation of memorial plaques, murals, the installation of memorial signs, and other types of stationary objects that were designed to glorify the soldiers who participated in the Battle of Lviv, the Polish Army, the restored Polish statehood, and the politicians who contributed to this restoration¹². Among other things, the Union took an active part in the promotions, advertising and information support of the most powerful projects dedicated to the November events, such as the construction of the Memorial to the fallen Polish volunteers who fought in Lviv in November 1918, called "Cmentarz Orląt" at the Lychakiv Cemetery, a monument to the legionnaires who died in the Battle of Lviv and are buried at the Yaniv Cemetery, the Glory Monument at the Defenders' Cemetery in Lviv and Persenkivka, and the creation of the Lviv Defense Museum in Black Building on Rynok Square in Lviv¹³ and many more.

In addition, an important area of activity of the Union was to ensure proper information support and popularization of the mentioned historical events among the general public and youth. Among the main activities: organization of mass celebrations, in particular the anniversaries of the defense of Lviv, publication of commemorative booklets, calendars, photo exhibitions, information support through the press and radio.

The Union's participation in the celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Lviv deserves special attention. In the interwar period, the celebration of the anniversary of Polish independence acquired key importance in the formation of the national identity of the Second Polish Republic. The Union of Defenders of Lviv was among the key participants in these celebrations. And again, the participation of this organization in those celebrations not only served to honor Polish military traditions, but was also an instrument of the Polish government's national policy aimed at establishing the state ideology and hegemony of Polish national culture in Western Ukrainian lands.

The celebration of the tenth anniversary of Polish independence in 1928 was a culminating moment in which the Union of Defenders of Lviv played a significant role. This celebration took place against the backdrop of growing contradictions, in particular between Ukrainians and Poles in Galicia in connection with the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic¹⁴.

⁹ ДАЛО, ф 266, оп 1, спр 26 (Касовий звіт Спілки оборонців Львова з листопада 1918 р), арк 2.

¹⁰ ДАЛО, ф 266, оп 1, спр 81 (Звіт секції пропаганди та друку Цивільного комітету зі святкування 20-річчя Союзу оборонців Львова у листопаді 1918 р. про розповсюдження спеціального видання "Побудка"), арк 2–4.

¹¹ ДАЛО, ф 266, оп 1, спр 29 (Звіт про діяльність Спілки оборонців Львова у листопаді 1918 р. за 1932–1933 рр), арк 12–13.

¹² Sprawozdanie z Działalności Związku Obrońców Lwowa z Listopada 1918 za rok 1938–39 (Lwów: Pierwsza drukarnia związkowa Związku Obrońców Lwowa od listopada 1918 r., 1949), 47–54. Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://polona.pl/item-view/7dd42100-3afe-4f06-9b2a-c4958fb95b9f?page=3>.

¹³ Ibidem, 40–41.

¹⁴ Чоповський, В. Українська інтелігенція в національно-визвольному русі на Західній Україні (1918–1939) (Львів, 1993), 71–73.

The Polish authorities sought to use the celebration of the independence of their state as a means of consolidating the Polish nation and demonstrating the power of state power. At the same time, the demonstrative participation of the Union of Lviv Defenders, which was associated with the events that led to the fall of Ukrainian power in Lviv in 1918, caused acute misunderstanding among the Ukrainian population of the city.

The members of the Union of Defenders of Lviv took an active part in a number of official events dedicated to the anniversary, in particular, the laying of a stone for a future monument to the participants in those events. This symbolic action carried not only historical significance, but also aimed to consolidate the Polish vision of history, in which Ukrainians were depicted as an obstacle on the path to Polish statehood. The absence of representatives of national minorities, including Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians and Germans, in the organizing committees of the celebrations further deepened ethnic divisions and complicated the integration of these communities into the public life of the Second Polish Republic.

A special component of the celebrations was the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Union of Defenders of Lviv, which coincided with the celebrations marking the twentieth anniversary of Polish independence in 1938. This celebration was held in Lviv with impressive grandeur, and the Union played a central role in the events, which included military parades, flower-laying ceremonies and memorial events¹⁵. The Polish authorities used this event as an opportunity to emphasize their national policy, which was based on the ideology of state monoculturalism and national dominance.

The financing of these celebrations was carried out from several sources: the state budget, funds from public organizations and private donations¹⁶. The involvement of the church and large business structures in financing testified to the nationwide importance of these events, but at the same time emphasized exclusively Polish identity, ignoring the contribution of other ethnic communities to the development of the region.

Furthermore, in 1938, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the defense of Lviv, the Union assumed a central and influential role in organizing a grand ceremonial event marked by significant public participation and official state recognition. This formal occasion was attended by high-ranking state authorities and prominent military officials, underscoring its national importance. The event featured the installation of multiple commemorative plaques across various locations in Lviv, each serving as a lasting tribute to the historical significance of the city's defense. Additionally, the ceremony involved the symbolic renaming of several streets, honoring both fallen soldiers and distinguished figures who played pivotal roles in the defense efforts, thus further embedding the memory of these events into the urban and cultural landscape of Lviv¹⁷. These demonstrations were intended not only to honor past victims, but also to inspire the current and future generations to uphold patriotic values.

Consequently, the participation of the Union of Lviv Defenders in the celebrations of the anniversaries of Polish independence was an integral part of the national policy of interwar Poland. It served both as a means of historical legitimization of the Polish presence in Western Ukraine and as an instrument of cultural and political hegemony, which contributed to the aggravation of interethnic misunderstandings and complicated the processes of integration of national minorities into Polish society.

The Union played a leading and active role in organizing public ceremonies and demonstrations that had both commemorative and educational goals, aimed at popularizing historical heritage, fostering patriotism, and preserving national memory. These events were often accompanied by careful coordination with local authorities, military units, religious institutions, and cultural societies, which ensured the scale and solemnity of the events.

One of the central events in the Union's activities was the annual commemoration of the fallen at the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv. During this ceremony, speeches were delivered with an emphasis on heroism and sacrifice, prayers were said for the repose of the souls of the deceased, and symbolic actions, such as the laying of wreaths and the lighting of lamps, emphasized the significance of national memory. The event was attended not only by representatives of the Union, but also by a wide range of the public, including educators, students, and military delegations.

¹⁵ ДАЛО, ф. 266, оп. 1, спр. 82 (Програма відзначення 20-річчя незалежності Польщі та оборони Львова, списки членів Цивільного комітету та секцій), арк. 6.

¹⁶ ДАЛО, ф. 266, оп. 1, спр. 80 (Фінансові звіти Цивільного комітету зі святкування 20-річчя незалежності Польщі та оборони Львова), арк 2–10.

¹⁷ ДАЛО, ф. 266, оп. 1, спр. 82, арк. 41–44.

Public demonstrations and commemorative events frequently incorporated diverse forms of cultural expression, carefully curated to engage the audience and evoke a sense of national pride. These expressions included musical performances by brass bands, whose powerful soundscapes contributed to the ceremonial atmosphere, as well as choral singing, which often involved patriotic songs designed to foster collective emotional resonance. Theatrical skits and dramatized reenactments further amplified the historical narrative by visually representing pivotal moments in the nation's past. Public readings of historical texts served to emphasize the continuity of national heritage, while ceremonial parades, rich in symbolism, recreated the military traditions and visual emblems associated with the Polish state. The profound visual and emotional impact of these public spectacles was far from incidental; rather, it reflected a consciously constructed strategy aimed at reinforcing national identity, deepening historical consciousness, and cultivating a shared sense of belonging among citizens of Polish descent. Through the deliberate blending of artistic performance, historical commemoration, and public spectacle, these events played a pivotal role in shaping collective memory and fostering cultural cohesion within the broader national narrative.

The Union's commitment to education went beyond commemorative events and evolved into more formalized educational initiatives. One of the most significant contributions was its collaboration with the Society for the Study of the History of the Defense of Lviv, which led to the publication of the third volume of "The Defense of Lviv". This volume provided a detailed historical narrative and documentation of the participants, making a significant contribution to the preservation of historical memory.

The Union also supported initiatives aimed at educating young people. In particular, it facilitated the establishment of the first Polish craft school and a hostel for underprivileged Polish youth in Lviv. This institution aimed to provide vocational education while instilling a sense of historical awareness and national pride among its students. The curriculum was designed not only to develop technical skills, but also to impart important historical knowledge and foster civic responsibility.

Educational activities also included public lectures, historical workshops, and round tables where veterans of the defense of Lviv shared their firsthand experiences. These interactive sessions were particularly meaningful because they personalized the historical narrative, creating a direct connection between the past and the present, and fostered critical thinking among young people.

The Union of Defenders of Lviv played a leading role in PR, demonstrations, and education aimed at preserving the memory of the defense of Lviv. Through strategic public engagement, symbolic ceremonies, and comprehensive educational programs, they managed to embed the historical narrative into the cultural identity of the region. Their efforts not only honored the victims of the past, but also sought to inspire future generations to uphold the values of patriotism, unity, and historical awareness. Another example of the Union's presence in the education system and national politics is its participation in student and pupil state patriotic events. This applies in particular to state holidays, military anniversaries, and official ceremonies honoring the memory of fallen heroes, which ensured a constant connection between the past and the youth of that time through public events¹⁸. Thereby, the legacy of the Union goes far beyond commemorative events, contributing to a broader national dialogue on history, memory, and civic responsibility.

Thus, the Union of Lviv Defenders emerged as a pivotal component of the Polish state's national policy in the Western Ukrainian territories, shaped by several interrelated factors. Primarily, the Union functioned as a key instrument for safeguarding Polish historical memory while actively contributing to the construction of Polish national identity in the region—an effort of considerable importance given the context of interethnic competition and contested territorial claims. Secondly, its public activities played a significant role in amplifying the influence of Polish national narratives among the local population, reinforcing historical interpretations that centered Polish heroism and sacrifice. Thirdly, the Union's support for veterans, combined with its efforts to popularize the heroism of those who fought in the battles for Lviv, served not only to honor past sacrifices but also to legitimize and reinforce the Polish state's presence and authority in these contested territories. Finally, the Union of Lviv Defenders was instrumental as a mechanism for exerting control over public initiatives, ensuring the predominance of Polish cultural and social structures in the region's civic life.

Consequently, the Union's activities extended beyond veteran support to become a strategic element of Polish national policy, actively working to consolidate Polish identity and historical dominance in Western Ukraine through cultural influence, historical commemoration, and the regulation of public memory.

¹⁸ ДАЛО, ф 266, оп 1, спр 56 (Звіти Ревізійної комісії Спілки оборонців Львова у листопаді 1918 р. за 1935–1938 рр), арк 7.

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**СПІЛКА ОБОРОНЦІВ ЛЬВОВА
ЯК ЧАСТИНА НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ МІЖВОІННОЇ ПОЛЬЩІ
НА ЗАХІДНОУКРАЇНСЬКИХ ЗЕМЛЯХ**

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The Union of Lviv Defenders (1918–1939) was a public organization that united veterans of the Ukrainian-Polish War who fought on the side of Poland. Created in the context of the post-war reorganization of the Polish state, this organization played a key role in the political and ideological processes of the interwar period.

The Polish state actively supported the Union of Lviv Defenders, using it as a tool for spreading Polish patriotic narratives in Western Ukrainian lands. Special attention was paid to the formation of loyalty to the Polish state among the non-Polish population, in particular Ukrainians. This included the propaganda of the heroism of Polish soldiers, the depiction of the Battle of Lviv as a national feat, and the establishment of Polish cultural hegemony.

At the same time, for a significant part of the Ukrainian population, the activities of the Union of Lviv Defenders were unacceptable. This was due to the fact that the members of the Union were veterans who participated in the conquest of Lviv by Polish troops, which became one of the key episodes in the liquidation of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic. Ukrainians saw this organization as a symbol of Polish expansion and a means of legitimizing Polish power in Western Ukrainian lands.

The Union of Lviv Defenders participated in numerous official events, such as celebrating the anniversaries of the defense of Lviv, unveiling monuments and memorial plaques, and holding parades. All these actions were aimed at consolidating Polish identity and glorifying the Polish army, which, however, only increased ideological tensions in relations between Poles and Ukrainians.

The organization was also engaged in educational activities and supported historical research that covered the events of the Polish-Ukrainian war from a Polish perspective. These initiatives were accompanied by the marginalization of Ukrainian narratives and attempts to portray the Western Ukrainian People's Republic as an illegitimate state entity.

The Union of Lviv Defenders became an important element of the national policy of interwar Poland in Western Ukrainian lands. It served as a cultural and ideological instrument that was supposed to ensure the integration of the Ukrainian population

and the affirmation of Polish state identity. However, this policy only contributed to the deepening of interethnic misunderstandings and the strengthening of the Ukrainian national movement in the region, which sought to restore its own statehood.

The activities of the Union of Lviv Defenders in the interwar period are an example of the use of veteran organizations to achieve political goals and the formation of historical memory, which raises complex questions about state policy in the multinational region.

The terms “defenders” and “defense” of Lviv were actively used by both sides of the conflict as an element of the ideological narrative that reflected different historical interpretations of events. On the one hand, Ukrainians claim that they defended the capital of the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic from external aggression. For them, Lviv symbolized an important center of national revival, and the defense of the city was seen as a struggle for state sovereignty and the right of self-determination.

On the other hand, Poles believed that they were defending Lviv as an integral part of Poland from attempts to take it away in favor of the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic. The Polish side saw the battles for the city as part of the process of restoring Poland’s independence after World War I, emphasizing Lviv’s historical connection with Polish culture and traditions.

The use of the terms “defense” and “defenders” in this context is not simply descriptive, but has a deep ideological connotation. Both sides tried to legitimize their claims to the city through the prism of heroism and patriotism, consolidating these concepts in the collective memory, thereby making these terms the subject of interpretative conflicts. These terminological differences reflect the depth of historical memory and the difference in perception of the past, which shaped the ideological discourse of the time around the events of the Ukrainian-Polish battle for Lviv.

Key words: Lviv, Ukraine, Poland, the Union of Lviv Defenders, war, veterans, national policy, defense