

**Politically Active Women in the Ukrainian Independence Movement,  
1988-1991**

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To my sister, Natalya Luciw, for being my role model

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## Abstract

The current historiography of the Ukrainian Independence Movement, 1988-1991 portrays a male dominated political struggle. This thesis confronts the history of the movement as one consisting of prominent leaders, great events and immense achievements with the one of day to day efforts of resistance, initiation and organization of events and mobilization of people. The role of women becomes visible through this approach and illustrates female involvement in the movement. Seventeen years later, through the memories of nine politically active women, an untold version of women's participation in the national movement is disclosed.

The concentration is on the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv because this is where the national movement was centralized. Western Ukrainian women played a major role in bringing the Ukrainian national identity and its values from the private sphere to the public, contributing to the mobilization of the movement. While there were significantly fewer female politicians than male, their active participation elevates them to the same level of achievements as men. The nine interviewees perceive women as an essential part of the political decision making process because they feel that women possess a different understanding than men. Furthermore, they perceive themselves as women bringing ethics into politics, and this they define as a key element that guided Ukraine towards independence.

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## Introduction

This thesis will examine how women remember their role in the Ukrainian independence movement seventeen years after it occurred. This will be done through the stories of nine politically active women, who represent a small sample of how women perceived themselves and the independence movement in Lviv. The text hopes to present a better understanding of the movement from a female's perspective. I chose the city of Lviv and the surrounding regions as a focus of my studies because in the late 1980s this outermost western part of the country was a hotbed of anti-Communist opposition in the form of Ukrainian national, religious and democratic revival. It inspired and headed a national awakening throughout the Ukrainian SSR and, together with other oppositional movements, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet regime. From the memories of nine female activists a picture of their understanding of the movement and their perception of their own work and contributions on the local level will be created. Also, their achievements will be brought into the forefront to reveal the affect they had on the monumental history of the independence movement.

In the late 1980s, the Ukrainian public became dissatisfied with and distrustful of Gorbachev's policies of glasnost (1985) and perestroika (1987). Other contributing factors to the dissatisfaction were the Chernobyl nuclear accident, war in Afghanistan, declining economy, lack of food and basic goods, and the political instability in Moscow. In Western Ukraine<sup>1</sup>, the discontent was more deeply felt because of the Sovietization and Russification of a historically, nationally and religiously conscious people. The linguistic, cultural, religious,

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the term, Western Ukraine (*Zakhidna Ukraina*), when speaking of the territory that had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and after 1939 became part of the Ukrainian SSR. According to *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, volume 5 (1993), "In Soviet terminology 'Western Ukraine' designated the historical or geographic territories that became Lviv oblast, Ivano-Frankivske oblast, Ternopil oblast, Volhynia oblast, and Rivne oblast."



traditional and national revival in the western regions, along with the economic and social demands from the rest of Ukraine created a popular movement known as Rukh - People's Movement of Ukraine (*Narodnyi Rukh Ukrajiny*). Rukh unified different groups and organizations, which, at first, only sought the revival of the Ukrainian culture, economy, ecology and sovereignty from the centralized Soviet rule in Moscow under the banner of perestroika. However, the materialization of activism and deterioration of the Soviet system fostered the right kind of setting in 1990 for Rukh to take on a democratically political form demanding complete independence. Rukh's leadership consisted of dissidents, former political prisoners, and cultural intellectuals, primarily banding in Western Ukraine and Kyiv. They were successful in mobilizing the public and, with the support of National Communists and the worker movement in industrialized eastern Ukraine, achieved Ukraine's independence on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1991.

The process towards Ukraine's independence is commemorated in national history and is studied by scholars and policy makers. It is seen as an example of the beginnings of nation building on a territory that is divided linguistically, historically and culturally. There have been many publications on Rukh and specifically the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the dissidents and the politicians who led it. Contemporary heroes of the movement, such as Vyacheslav Chornovil, Levko Lukyanenko, Ivan Drach, Dmytro Pavlychko, Mykhailo Horyn, and Bohdan Horyn among other prominent men, are nationally memorialized with pride and illuminated as cultural and political leaders. In the Central European University's library there are dozens of books on this topic. The most appropriate case studies on the movement, such as *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence* by Taras Kuzio and Andrew Wilson (1994), *Ukraine: Movement without Change, Change without Movement* by Marta Dyczok (2000) and *The Ukrainian Resurgence* by Bohdan Nahaylo (1999), carefully analyze the active roles of these men. However, women

are barely mentioned; a name or two are dropped in secondary positions as wives of the activists. Current historiography reveals that there were no female counterparts to the male political activists (in some cases with the exception of Iryna Kalynets). From these sources, a general conclusion can be drawn that women did not partake in the national independence movement as a gender, and those few who did were not mentioned or recognized except for being the wives of political leaders. This thesis hopes to confront the history of Rukh through the perception of the nine female interviewees. It will do so through painting a comprehensive picture of everyday issues the public faced, concerns of morality, a need to preserve one's identity, a dream of a better future for one's children, and the daily efforts of educating, informing, organizing and mobilizing people. Also, the political views of the interviewees will be discussed; what were they and how did they transmit them into their civic and political activities. The movement will be reconsidered from intellectual and nationally oriented women's standpoint, which will shed some light on the important role women truly played in gaining independence.

Three things should always be kept in mind while reading this thesis. First is that the movement is recalled through the memories of the interviewees seventeen years later. These women have seen the results of their work and had time to reevaluate and reconsider their role. This is how they perceive the movement and their role looking back in history. This is a study of both history and historical memory, and on events and how these events are remembered. The second point that the reader should be aware of is that the interviewees represent a very small sample of intellectual and politically active women in the Lviv region and even more so of all women in Ukraine. Therefore the aim of my work was not to make a representative selection of interviewees, but rather to use interviews as a source for stories that were untold by the previous historiography. The third thing the reader should be conscious of is that these

women are religiously and nationally conservative in their outlook.

This is a project based on oral history methodology, which is defined by an oral historian Charles Morrissey as a taped memoir, typed transcript and research method that involves in-depth interviewing.<sup>2</sup> I approached each interviewee with a series of open-ended questions, although at times I received answers to yet unasked questions. As a result, the in-depth interviews I conducted enabled me “to give the subject leeway to answer as (he or) she chooses, to attribute meaning to the experiences under discussion, and to inject topics,”<sup>3</sup> as explained by the author of *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientist*.

The interviewees vary in professions, age and background, although four of them work in the educational sphere. I interviewed a journalist, a poet, a doctor and a former director of military units in the Lviv region, in addition to also having the opportunity to interview a famous dissident, political prisoner and leading politician, Iryna Kalynets. Two of the women were born and raised in Cherkasy *Oblast* (province), Central Ukraine, and the rest were from Western Ukraine: one was from Ivano-Frankivsk *Oblast*, one was from Volyn *Oblast* and the rest were from Lviv *Oblast*. In 1990, their ages ranged from 35 to 57 years old. All had supportive husbands and families; thus, they could take the risk of losing their jobs due to their national activism.

The interviewees were all highly educated and were or became nationally conscious during the late 1980s. All of the women had close ties with the events in Lviv because seven of them resided in the city while two were from Sambir and Truskavets, towns in the Lviv Oblast. The interviewees’ activism consisted of scholarly works, samizdat publications, charitable projects, organization of cultural, religious and political meetings, initiation and leadership of

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<sup>2</sup> Yow, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

organizations, mobilization of the public and confrontation of the problems and pressures of the Soviet regime among many other countless things. With the creation of Rukh, six of the women were elected to either *Miska Rada* (City Council), *Oblasna Rada* (Province Administration) or *Verkhovna Rada* (Parliament), and one was elected as an administrator of a *raion* (district within an *oblast*).

The thesis will concentrate on two women's organizations, Marian Society Myloserdia (Compassion) and Souiz Ukrainok (the Ukrainian Women's Union), of which some of the interviewees were members. Thus, their activism through these organizations will highlight the influential role women's groups played in the movement's success.

The text is not in chronological order nor is the independence movement fully described. Due to the national and religious conservative nature of the interviewees, purely their standpoint will be represented in the thesis. Only certain events and problems will be confronted in this essay exclusively based on what the interviewees spoke about the most. The independence movement is reconstructed particularly on the topics the interviewees elaborated on because, after all this time, these issues remain memorable and are therefore important in the women's perception of the movement.

## CHAPTER ONE

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**The Tradition of Resistance**

In the late 1980s, women in Lviv and the surrounding western regions found themselves in a completely different situation from the rest of the women in Ukraine. They were caught between three realities: the Soviet propagandized public entity, the discrepancies of the Communist regime and the traditional Ukrainian private life. The latter identifier is specific to Western Ukraine, thus making the experience of these women different in comparison to women from the rest of the republic. The fusion of the three value systems brought on an uncompromisable mix causing women to seek change that launched a cultural, at first, and then a political movement towards independence. This chapter will explore the three value systems, specifically concentrating on the historical background of cultural and religious traditions in Western Ukraine in order to provide the context in which the interviewees found themselves prior to the independence movement.

Public life was propagated by Communist doctrine in which internationalism, atheism, professionalism and patriotism for the Soviet Union needed to be displayed. This elevated image of a Soviet persona did not correspond with the reality of daily life that women faced. The Communist Party claimed to have liberated women; on paper gender oppression did not exist, therefore there was no need for the discussion of it. In reality, a double burden was created for the liberated women. They worked full time and were held responsible for the care of families. After working long hours they would come home to a second shift of housework, which likely was unshared with their husbands. The government provided women with maternal help however failed to promote women as a group economically, socially and politically. Despite being allowed into some higher level positions in the workplace mostly due to quota requirements, women could not achieve a top ranking position because of the

implemented glass ceiling nor could easily take an active political role. They were underpaid in their often manual labor and feminized occupations in the agricultural, manufacturing, social services, childcare, and food managing fields.

The stagnation and the failure of the Soviet economy created chronic food and basic goods shortages in the late 1980s. Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev suggested that the economic crisis could be solved if women were to “return to their purely womanly missions” because as he stated “many of our problems...are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities”<sup>4</sup> due to the communist attempts to make women equal to men in all fields. Under the guise of gender equality, the Communist Party reversed its original attempts to liberate women and tried to help women become better wives and mothers. This further handicapped the female population because the government insisted on a perception that the state was generously supplying women with all their needs. Although, in reality, women spent countless hours in queues waiting to get a small share of bread and worrying about finding food, clothing and healthcare for their children.

The third reality that existed, peculiar to the western regions, was the role of women as the preservers of religious and cultural traditions in the private sphere. In order to better comprehend this role a brief history of the region will be given that explains the special character of Lviv, Galicia and Western Ukraine<sup>5</sup>, and why nationally conscious women from those regions were bound to be nationally and religiously conservative. The western regions of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil, once known as the eastern part of Habsburg Galicia, were incorporated into the Soviet Union only after World War II. Ukrainians in these territories were historically accustomed to resisting integration to the various people that governed them.

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<sup>4</sup> Gorbachev, 102.

<sup>5</sup> The thesis' concentration is on Lviv and the Lviv Province, which is in eastern Galicia that is part of Western Ukraine. However, I will use these terms interchangeably because of the historical context. Today, in

This was possible because of the socio-economic position Western Ukrainians maintained. As a peasant class they were able to preserve their religious and cultural traditions in the uncultivated/backward villages. Although, many prominent Ukrainian families and successful individuals became Polonized in order to be accepted into higher society. Due to Austrian reforms, the clergy of the Greek Catholic Church, which held on to Orthodox practices and acknowledged the superiority of the Roman Catholic Pope, were the first to distinguish their parishioners as a distinctive people rather than a peasant class. From the clerical families a secular intelligentsia developed and was the one to cultivate the Ukrainian peasant culture and to promote Ukrainians as a separate nationality in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The new class of Ukrainian intellectuals looked toward Vienna and the West for a model to condition a highly civilized society. They created various institutions, such as cultural and educational societies, and based them on western models. One of the largest Ukrainian societies was Prosvita (Enlightenment), founded in 1868 by Reverend Stepan Kachala. Prosvita, as the name suggested, sought to spread enlightenment through community self-help programs and education. It emphasized community institutions, political and cultural organizations, such as reading rooms, libraries, lectures and concerts, to raise the education and thus social-economic status of Ukrainian peasants and bring national cohesion.

Wives and daughters of priests partook in their role as daily organizers of educational events, although without the communities' and self-acknowledgement. In *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939*, Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak explains the context these women understood themselves in.

These women, coming from clerical families, discussed neither women's rights or emancipation, nor were they interested in the woman issues... In their view, life was a series of interlocking pieces: feminism, nationalism, socialism and modernity. While West European women strove for emancipation from the strictures of society, Ukrainian women concentrated on expanding the

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independent Ukraine, eastern Galicia is simply referred to as *Halychyna* (Galicia). Therefore, when the term Galicia is used it implies the eastern Ukrainian part of the historical Galicia.

role of women in society.<sup>6</sup>

Numerous women's organizations prospered especially during the inter World Wars period. The largest and the most influential organization was Souiz Ukrainok (Ukrainian Women's Union), which altered the social, economic and political life of Ukrainians in Galicia. The Union's leaders and organizers came from the intelligentsia and the educated middle class, while most of its members were compromised of peasant women. At a time of a national and class struggle, for almost twenty years the organization united all women regardless of their socio-economic background to work together for the bettering of the Ukrainian community and thus the lives of Ukrainian women. Its main goals were civic enlightenment, higher education and the improvement of Ukrainian women's economic welfare. It was structured with main branches in the cities but most of its progressive work was done in the village peasant circles. The union established various educational courses for the peasants varying from literature, trade skills, household affairs to basic economics and provided supportive relief efforts, public health, peasant co-operation, finances, day-care centers and cultural development. Feminist thinking appeared throughout the Souiz Ukrainok's existence, although, overall national aspirations were placed above women's issues. All of the organization's activities were aimed at national promotion and sovereignty, even though the Union did not have a political character. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Polish gentry gained autonomous rule of Galicia under the Habsburg and established discriminatory policies against Ukrainians, which in turn raised great political interest among the persecuted. Bohachevsky-Chomiak observes "In an era of growing intolerance, political differentiation, and ideological incompatibility, the women maintained a democratic, open organization which opposed, clearly and articulately, all authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies."<sup>7</sup> In this context Galician women were vary of extreme political groups

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<sup>6</sup> Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 155.



and the populist movement in the Russian Empire due to its connotation with terrorism. Bohachevsky-Chomiak continues to explain that “they identified socialism with terrorism, atheism, the disintegration of the family and runaway children.”<sup>8</sup> In regards to 1920s and 1930s politics, Galician women were socially conservative. Bohachevsky-Chomiak continues, “the average Western Ukrainian identified communism with Russia, which made communist doubly anathema.”<sup>9</sup> Western Ukrainians have witnessed the purges and the man-made famine of the Stalin’s regime across the border in the Ukrainian SSR. Therefore, they rejected all ideology that was connoted with communist because they saw it as a means of Russification and destruction. In retaliation to communism, many women, especially of the younger generation, became attracted to the ideals of nationalism, which were sweeping the region.

In the 1930s, a national movement fully developed in Western Ukraine, which was led by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military branch, the Ukrainian Insurgence Army (UPA). OUN and UPA struggled for the establishment of a united nation state on ethnic Ukrainian territory, and during World War II fought against the Polish Home Army, the Nazis and the Soviets on all fronts. OUN saw their struggle as a national revolution and accepted violence as means to reach their goal. It defined itself as a movement not as a party and condemned social and liberal factions blaming them for the failure of the independence struggle from 1917-1920. OUN emphasized its Ukrainian character and national ideals, although internal conflicts and splits caused it to have various ideologies, at times even fascist. OUN’s membership consisted mostly of young people and students. The article on OUN in Encyclopedia of Ukraine suggests, “The OUN can be said to have shaped the political outlook of an entire generation of western Ukrainians.”<sup>10</sup> Many young women

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>10</sup> Yurkevich

supported and even took part in OUN and UPA. However, the relationship between the national organization and the Souiz Ukrainok was complex. At times, women were treated as equals and honored as potential mothers who would insure the future of a nation, and at other times, because nationalism opposed liberalism, the role of potential mothers was exploited and women were limited to domesticity. The irony in national ideology towards women was unsatisfactory for many Souiz Ukrainok members. However, countless number of them still placed greater value on the need of an independent nation and saw it as a liberation of the Ukrainian society. Bohachevsky-Chomiak explains that young women grew up in the same Polish restricted context as men, and they were more angered by national discrimination rather than by gender discrimination.<sup>11</sup> The older generation of women held different attitudes to the national movement than their younger counterparts because of a different context they were socialized in. There was a difference of attitudes between the uneducated peasant women and the leading intellectual women, who were very critical of OUN. The multi layered relationship Western Ukrainian women had with the national movement in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is intricate and cannot be easily summarized. However, there are parallels in the relation of these women to nationalism and women's attitude towards nationalism in the 1980s. In the late 1980s there was still national and gender discrimination against women. The struggle for an independent state continued to be placed above women's concerns. Women were assigned and continued to take on the primary roles of mothers, the keepers of the national hearth and the bearers of children who would assure the future of the nation.

Prior to developing national consciousness, peasants from Eastern Galicia identified themselves by the village they inhabited, the language they spoke and by the Greek Catholic parish they attended. Greek Catholics saw themselves as a bridge between Western Catholicism

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and Eastern Orthodoxy, although they were an isolated group and looked down upon by the two powerful congregations. The Greek Catholic Church was constantly pulled into different directions and even though it identified with both sides, at the same time it retaliated from the Roman Catholic Church, which promised Polonization and the Moscovy Orthodox Church subordination to which meant Russification. Therefore, the Greek Catholic Church attempted to preserve and develop its own traditions, leading its parishioners to identify as a different Slavic people. When the Soviets gained power over the western regions, the Greek Catholic Church was liquidated, its priests were eliminated as a class and its property turned over to the Moscovy Orthodox Church. This was a tragedy for Western Ukrainians because their cultural traditions are extremely interlocked with the Greek Catholic religious holidays, and the elimination of one was devastating because it handicapped the other. Thus the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church meant a removal of half of the Ukrainian identity. During the Soviet times the Church existed abroad and in the underground, in the secret privacy of homes and deep remote villages. The persecution of the Greek Catholic Church is one of the reasons why Galician women held conservative Christian views at the end of the 1980s.

The issue of the Ukrainian language under Polish domination, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union has had long historical roots and will continue to present problems in the future. Many nationalities rely on language to legitimize themselves as separate people. The Ukrainian language was regarded as either a dialect of Polish or Russian and the lower language of the peasants. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire there was some room for the development of the Ukrainian language even with Polish attempts to suppress it; while the Russian Empire was more successful in outlawing public uses of Ukrainian and disregarding it as a language altogether. The Communist Party first promoted the Ukrainian language in order

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<sup>11</sup> Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 221.

to counteract the policies of Russian imperialism and gain support from the people. However, its long-term plans were to promote one language, Russian, and to unite the proletarian society above ethnic divisions. There was a drive to promote the correct form of Russian based on 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature and the Moscow dialect, which was regarded as the most highly cultured.<sup>12</sup> The Kremlin saw a threat in the promotion of national languages in the USSR and intensely forced Russian in order to centralize power. Ukrainian linguists were accused of creating a “bourgeois nationalist” language. Under Stalin, Ukrainian literature and dictionaries were burned, traditional Kobzari<sup>13</sup> eliminated as a class, and the cultural elite purged. All forms of manipulation were used to promote Russian as the world language. However, the Communist Party’s approach to the national language in Western Ukrainian regions differed then from the rest of the Ukrainian SSR. According to Roman Szporluk’s, “West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication, and Linguistic Assimilation,” the region which the Soviet Union acquired in 1944 continued to produce an overwhelming amount of Ukrainian-language press, therefore further supporting its Ukrainian-speaking public and distinguishing it from the rest of the republic. The Communist Party “declared that the local party organizations committed ‘a major error in underestimating the role of the newspaper as an important center of political work among the masses,’ and it made specific recommendations on how the local press, especially the Ukrainian-language Lviv daily paper, should be improved.”<sup>14</sup> The lack of Russian imposed in the beginning stages of Communist rule in western regions and later regal attempts made to impose it explains why Western Ukrainians felt so attached to their native language.

There were various attempts made to suppress the Ukrainian language and promote

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<sup>12</sup> Bilaniuk, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Oral historians who would travel from village to village singing folk songs of Ukrainian legends, heroes and histories.

Russian in Lviv. An interviewee, Maria Chumarna, who is a journalist, a poet and an educator, gave several personal examples of the pressure top administrators placed on the use of Russian.

As a teacher of Ukrainian literature, my income was less by fifteen percent from those who taught Russian literature... As a journalist for a Ukrainian Communist Party newspaper in the early 1980s, I was pressured to speak Russian at work even though we published in Ukrainian.<sup>15</sup>

The push for Russian was also inflicted at the most elementary levels, not just high business or governing institutions. A nanny at a Ukrainian-speaking daycare center recalls that it was mandatory to teach her three-year-old toddlers Russian twice a week, while on average toddlers only learn to speak at two years of age.<sup>16</sup> In Lviv, about one fourth of daycare centers and schools were taught in Russian. The Ukrainian language was purposely degraded while Russian was promoted in all institutions. Therefore, in the late 1980s people who did not embrace Russian were not only frustrated that their native language could not be used because of the context, but also because there was pressure that it should not be used in daily correspondence. Many felt upset that their language deteriorated to such a pathetic existence, while others for work-related reasons and personal gains, especially in the urban setting, adapted to using Russian. However, Ukrainian continued to thrive in the privacy of homes, on everyday basic communication and in the villages.

On different occasions the Communist Party promoted Ukrainization when it served their interest. The author of *Contested Tongues* gives an example of the Parties attitudes towards a very famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko's birthday.

...the potentially dangerous fact that Shevchenko's birthday was being publicly recognized at all, since many of his works highlight Russian-Ukrainian conflicts and decry Ukraine's oppression by Russia. In earlier years people had been arrested for organizing a celebration of Shevchenko's birthday, while at other times he was officially celebrated as a champion of those oppressed by tsarist imperialism. The acceptability of Shevchenko was reinterpreted in shifting Soviet official policies in response to, and in competition with, the ways in which people unofficially mobilized the symbolic significance of this literary figure.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Szporluk, 110.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Chumarna.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Valentyna Kolinchak.

<sup>17</sup> Bilaniuk, 4.

Ukrainians savored the periods when the Soviet regime promoted their native language and cultural tradition. However, they understood well the limitations of those activities, the Communist ideology involved, and that at any time what was praised could turn to something that was abolished.

Furthermore, demographics reveal the peculiarity of the region and the national outlook of its inhabitants. The western territories were homogeneously ethnic Ukrainian when the territory fell under the rule of the Soviet Union. According to the estimates of an Ukrainian geographer, V. Kubijovyc, in 1933 the population of Galicia and Volhynia, a northwest province which was also under Poland, “was about 66 percent Ukrainian, less than 1 percent Russian, and the bulk of remaining 33 percent was Polish and Jewish.”<sup>18</sup> After WWII, due to the Holocaust and deportation of Poles, the western regions were homogeneously Ukrainian, even after ethnic Russians immigrated to the area. Between 1959 and 1989 the Russian population in the Ukrainian SSR increased from 16.94 percent to 22.04 percent.<sup>19</sup> Lviv on the other hand experienced a complete reversal. According to Szporluk,

Data indicates that while in Ukraine as a whole the number of Russians since 1959 has increased very significantly, and while the share of Ukrainians within the republic has correspondingly declined, in the Lviv region and city in the thirty intercensal years the Russians hardly increased at all, and reduced considerably their share of the total population.<sup>20</sup>

Historical roots, religious identification, linguistic development and demographics set the Ukrainians in Lviv apart from the rest of Ukrainians. They were accustomed to resisting cultural, linguistic and religious changes. Therefore, when the Soviets annexed Eastern Galicia into the Ukrainian Socialist Republic, they acquired a religiously and nationally conscious people whose dream of a nation state was not achieved although they were united with the rest of Ukraine. It took extensive ideological conditioning, deportations and repression to gain

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<sup>18</sup> Szporluk, 111.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 271.

control of these regions. However, the mentality of Eastern Galicians did not change but the repression only fostered their desire for an independent Ukraine. Thus for many the late 1980s brought on changes that they have hoped for and that they fully embraced.

Due to the historical background of the region, many Galician women rejected the Soviet ideology and saw their duty as proper Ukrainian mothers to preserve the language, religion and traditions in their homes. This was all done only in close circles behind closed doors. The suppression of religious and national freedoms conditioned women to savor those ideals, and shaped their conservative outlook in the late 1980s, in retaliation to Communism. Many of the interviewees spoke of where their patriotism came from. Many came from, as they defined, “Bandera families”<sup>21</sup> in which there was no forgiveness for the unjust pains the *Moscal*<sup>22</sup> inflicted on their relatives. Yaroslava Yasnyska, a pedagogue, who in the 1980s worked on communist ideology in preschools, explains,

I was devoted to the cause because of the suppression my family suffered. During collectivization my family lost all their property and one maternal grandparent were deported to Siberia. My uncle who had ties with UPA hid between two walls in my grandmother’s house during the day and came out at night... I can’t say this was told to me but it was felt, especially through songs. I did not know whom they were singing about but I understood through them how we suffered. Traditions were saved in villages and at home. There were political carols... It was a norm for me to hear my mother-in-law singing lullabies to my son, such as *Hey, U Luzi Chervona Kalyna*<sup>23</sup> ...<sup>24</sup>

Five of the interviewees grew up in families where the atrocities inflicted on loved ones and on the Ukrainian people were discussed in the privacy of home. There was talk of family members participating in or supporting the UPA and of loss of property during collectivization, deportation of parents and the loss of human rights. Iryna Kalynets recalls “In school all that

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> From Stefan Bandera, a 20<sup>th</sup> century western Ukrainian nationalist. The Soviet regime gave the term a negative connotation meaning extreme nationalist.

<sup>22</sup> Derogatory term for a chauvinistic Russian

<sup>23</sup> Ukrainian Sich Riflemen's song. Part of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces that fought the Russians on the Eastern Front.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Yasnyska

was most sacred was defiled but then at home explained in whispers.”<sup>25</sup> Two of the interviewees, who grew up outside of Galicia, said that it was not outright discussed although the hatred towards *Moscal* was felt at home through comments, actions and especially songs. One of the interviewees from central Ukraine spoke of an ideal Soviet childhood and it was not until the late 1980s that her parents were willing to tell her the long feared truth of the man-made famine and other atrocities. While, a contemporary Ukrainian poet, Maria Chumarna found out the truth about her father’s involvement with OUN during the peak of the independence movement. She explains,

In 1989, at one of my book readings, a man came up to me and told me the truth about my father. He told me that my father cooperated with OUN... My father did not commit suicide like his death records states. KGB agents killed him for delivering and showing forbidden films to UPA members. My mother saw him dyeing in our front yard but they did not let her go near him. She did not tell us, her children, about any of this.<sup>26</sup>

Those women who did not come from “Bandera families” and who, as they view today, were brainwashed by communist ideology, were more likely to embrace the truth about the communist regime rather than national ideology. Admitting the truth, however, led to a form of patriotism. Those who grew up in villages were more knowledgeable in Ukrainian traditions, folklore and folk music, which incorporated many political and national elements.

Regardless whether an individual was oppressed or prospered in the Soviet system, if that person was raised in a Ukrainian household or spend summers in his or her grandparent’s village, than they were likely to resist Russification and embrace their Ukrainian identity. The home sheltered individuals from subsuming to communist ideology while cherishing the national and religious spirit. Many of the interviewees, who held high positions in the old system, led completely different lives in private. Even such individuals as Vira Lyaskovska, who held nomenklatura status, befriended a Greek Catholic priests who provided her with old

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<sup>25</sup> Kaplun.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Chumarna.



Ukrainian Encyclopedias and literature of the underground movement. Along with her husband she completely memorized the encyclopedia. Another example is of Yaroslava Yasnyska, who monitored the teachings of Communist ideology, and yet had her children baptized by a Greek Catholic priest outside the city limits and attended church on religious holidays in her aunt's village. In the late 1980s, regardless of how one came to national consciousness, the interviewees all saw it as the exposure of truth. They emphasized the importance of truth and saw all that was Ukrainian as something sacred that needed to be saved, cherished and promoted.

The only form of true and ideologically free preservation of Ukrainian identity was possible inside the home. In a patriarchal society women dominated the private life and were seen as the hearth of the home. Therefore it was their duty to provide the abolished context in the small private sphere of home. The role to raise their children in accordance with the values of Christian faith and the Ukrainian moral was inflicted on them due to the historically national struggle in Western Ukraine; thus, shaping the religious and national conservative outlook of Galician women. Therefore, as mothers in the late 1970s and 1980s, the interviewees, like many Ukrainian mothers, conditioned their children in the same manner as they were raised. Three of them mentioned their concerns over how difficult it was for their children growing up in the dual morality. At home Ukrainianism was maintained through art, literature, songs, history and the celebration of Ukrainian Greek Catholic holidays. All this was ignored and repressed in the public sphere. On religious days such as Easter, children were asked to come into school so they would not have Easter breakfast with their families. Interviewees, Oksana Hentosh and Rostyslava Fedak recall that as assistant professors they were instructed to stand outside church on Sundays and religious holidays to see which students attended. They outright refused to inform on what were their students' rights. Teachers who were not as secure in their

positions were forced to stand outside of church and not allow children to enter. Some parents refused to listen and brought their children inside while others went to different neighborhoods where no one knew them or to their remote villages. Rostyslava Fedak spoke of how her children had to fill out surveys of whether they attended church, prayed at home, celebrated holidays or sung national songs. She states “the poor children had to do one thing, think another and say something different.”<sup>27</sup> Many of the women interviewed expressed concern over the dual morality their children had to grow up in. Maria Chumarna explains “this confused them, learning one thing at home, another at school. Sometimes they were too young and admitted to the traditional home practices while others knew that they placed their families in jeopardy.”<sup>28</sup> It was the concern of mothers over the future of their children, and it was due to the preservation of religious and national traditions inside the home that led women to take action in the failing Soviet system.

In conclusion, it was the third perception that differentiated women in Lviv and the surrounding regions from the rest of the women in the Ukrainian SSR. This was due to the historical development of Eastern Galicia, which fell under Soviet/Moscow’s rule only during World War II. The women from this area had a different historical, religious, linguistic and demographic experience than those from the parts that have been under the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union from its forming stages. The historical resistance of Galicia explains why Lviv women were more nationally patriotic and had such a strong cultural, linguistic and religious base. Due to Sovietization and Russification, women became the preservers of Ukrainian culture inside the private sphere of home. Furthermore, living in the contradicting perceptions, Soviet versus national, women became concerned with the morality of their

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Fedak.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Chumarna

children, causing them to seek change.

## CHAPTER TWO

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**The Opposition**

This chapter will briefly analyze the dissident movement in Ukraine that gained ground in the 1960s. It will look at its development, aims, tactics and constant repression as it evolved throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with a concentration on women dissidents. Due to the right conditions and activism, the same dissidents along with cultural intelligentsia and support of the public were able to mobilize an opposition movement in the late 1980s. The major reasons the movement was successful in 1991 and different from the previous ones is because of the power bemusement in centralized Moscow, the public's participation and the support of national communists. The 1960s dissidents led the movement using identical arguments, methods and techniques to advocate for similar aims. The understanding of the dissident struggle is important because most of it is centered on the Ukrainian intellectual thought outside communist ideology. Many of the interviewees were exposed to independent thinking; they were conditioned by them, took part in their development and realization. This chapter will also concentrate on the beginning of the independence movement in Lviv. It will examine how dissidents and former political prisoners used Gorbachev's reform policies to promote their national cause. This chapter will examine the methods Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia used to wage a battle against Soviet propaganda. Furthermore, fear of the Soviet authority will be discussed and examples will be given of efforts to eliminate it amongst the public. Lastly, different organizations that formed between 1987 and 1989 and their activities will be described.

The road towards independence was laid out after Stalin's death, when Ukraine's situation improved economically, politically, and especially culturally. Ukraine experienced a cultural revival in which a dissident movement arose demanding civil rights and national self-

rule within the USSR. A literary generation known as *Shestydesiatnyky* (the sixties activists) contributed to the opposition movement. It was composed of publicists, historians, poets, artists and musicians, who were cultural intellectuals and were even supported by the Ukrainian nomenklatura. Many of the dissidents had successful careers within the Soviet system and used their positions as a means to achieve their goals. *Shestydesiatnyky's* main aims were to resist Russification and restore their national culture through liberating the regime. They advocate for civil rights and publicly questioned the system, pointing out its faults and injustices.

Under the guidance of Ukraine's First Secretary, Petro Shelest, the Ukrainian language saw its revival and usage in public. In 1965, writer Ivan Dziuba reevaluates the policies of the Soviet Union towards the national question in his famous 'Internationalism or Russification?' essay. However, this short-lived national renaissance was brought to an end under Brezhnev, who replaced Shelest with Shcherbytsky. Although Shcherbytsky maintained the best interests of Ukraine's economy, he suppressed different forms of cultural and national expressions. In 1965 there was the first wave of repressions followed by arrests of some of the *Shestydesiatnyky*. Consequently, their work was published in the West and the circulation of samizdat became a common tool for Ukrainian dissidents to spread information. The dissidents also used articles and letters of protest, writing openly about the repression.

Unlike the Russian samizdat, Ukrainian samizdat had a narrower theme, which focused on the national repression through historical, cultural and political articles. Written exclusively in Ukrainian, the samizdat was read primarily by people from the western regions where Ukrainian was spoken and Russification was resisted. Consequently, the information bypassed a lot of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians. According to Kuzio and Wilson, authors of *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence*, "Western Ukraine always played a disproportionate role in the dissident movement of the Brezhnev era and as the leading initial base for the national

revival under Gorbachev.”<sup>29</sup> The language used to publish samizdats and the unbreakable national tradition of western regions, where Russification was less impenetrable, explains why in the movement was more feasible in Lviv rather than any other major Ukrainian city. In the 1960s, 1970s and later in the late 1980s, Russification could not penetrate the identity Western Ukraine. Another reason the national struggle was based in the western regions is because the dissidents from Western Ukraine concentrated more on national and religious liberation while those from eastern and southern Ukraine pursued human rights without necessarily focusing on the national problem. The human rights movement resembled the movement in Russia at the time, hence not distinguishing it as distinctly Ukrainian.

Another factor that distinguished Lviv from most Ukrainian cities was the nature of urbanization. Ethnic Ukrainians made up the majority of the population in most of the Republic's cities. However, through ethno-demographic trends from 1959-1989, the author of *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union*, Roman Szporluk reveals that Lviv was becoming more Ukrainized while the rest of the cities more Russified. This was due to the mass migration of ethnic Ukrainian from villages to cities after World War II. In most cities, the newcomers yielded to Russification while in Lviv on the contrary they Ukrainized the city.<sup>30</sup> Szporluk's point reestablished the fact that unlike eastern and southern Ukrainian cities, inhabitants of Lviv were more likely to resist Russification and to incline towards national issues.

The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) controlled the press, prohibited the creation of informal groups and organizations, and harassed dissidents. In 1965, many active Ukrainian dissidents were arrested for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” and sent to labor prison camps. However, the struggle continued through the written word. In 1970, samizdat began to

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<sup>29</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 54.

release a periodical called *Ukrainsky Visnyk* (Ukrainian Herald) edited by the famous activist Viacheslav Chornovil. Most of its issues if not all were produced in Lviv. The Herald contained information on national issues, the movement's progress, repression, political prisoners, Ukrainian history, poetry and literary criticism among many other topics. The Soviet authorities took repressive measures against the opposition for their underground publications. The second wave of arrests was followed by mass searches, and hundreds of freethinking Ukrainians lost their jobs. Surveillance and monitoring of individuals, both secret and openly public, took place on a grand scale. Russification in western regions increased in order to eliminate the sense of Ukrainian identity. In Lviv, those suspected of political agitation were harassed by the KGB, and arrested for nonsensical and fabricated crimes, such as for rape or illegal drugs.

Ukrainian national intellectuals attempted to legitimize Ukrainian sovereignty by pointing out Moscow's repeated oppression of Ukrainians and their culture. National historiography was used to demand an independent state in the framework of the Soviet Union. This challenged Soviet history in which Ukrainian nationalist were portrayed as villains, such as OUN and UPA, and certain events were manipulated while others completely eliminated by the Communist. People's personal memories and those that were passed on from their grandparents did not correspond with the Soviet depiction, which also changed along with government's policies.

Ukrainian intellectuals used criticism and reevaluation of Soviet historiography to promote their cause. It began with Stalinist crimes that amounted to excessive amounts of evidence, which proved that the Ukrainian nationality was suppressed. The Soviet elimination of the kurkul class and rapid industrialization brought on the destruction of peasant life, which

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<sup>30</sup> Szporluk, 305.

embodied Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian national and cultural elite was purged along with thousands of the most successful farmers. The Soviets left poor peasants of whom many migrated to industrial cities where they were more exposed to Soviet propaganda, Russification, and the creation of perfect Soviet workers. Another historical atrocity is Stalin's artificially created famine, *Holodomor*, which occurred in 1932-1933 due to Soviet policies. Some have categorized this unfortunate event as a genocide that claimed the lives of an estimated six million victims. The religious revival in the late 1980s, contributed to historical legitimacy because of constant persecution and brutal oppression of Ukrainian national churches: the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. All these events were caused by Soviet policies and therefore, Ukrainians placed responsibility on Moscow's Soviet rule for the catastrophes that they endured. The surfacing of brutal events that were inflicted by Soviet policies was an effective tool used by the nationalists to achieve mass support for their political purpose.

The dissident movement first aimed for national rights in regards to language, cultural traditions and history. Their attempts were completely suppressed; therefore the dissidents turned to defending human rights. In this context, their battle gained greater international recognition because the global community better understood the issue of human rights rather than the need for a national struggle. The Ukrainian dissidents managed to bring more attention to their national cause by placing it in the human rights framework.

In November 1976, Ukrainian dissidents established the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (UHG) to advocate for democratization, to defend human rights and resist Russification. Its members, low in number, were carefully monitored and by 1981 were all arrested under false charges or Article 62 of the Criminal Code ("anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda"). They spent their long and sometimes renewed sentences in prisons, labor camps, psychiatric hospitals



or exile. Some were murdered and others died in prison due to the terrible conditions. Famous dissidents such as Oleksa Tykhyi, Vasyl Stus and Valerii Marchenko perished in the Gulag prisons. Those who survived returned to continue their missions and later became prominent leaders of the national movement. There was a small percentage of officially registered female members in the Ukrainian Helsinki Group. One of its two founding members and later the organizations leader was the 70-year-old Oksana Meshko. Out of 33 members only five were women, Nina Strokata, Iryna Senyk, Stefania Shabatura and Oksana Popovych.<sup>31</sup> However, looking deeper into the functions of the group, it is apparent that there were many female supporters who did the everyday work of typing, printing, and distributing samizdats. They also were secret informants between the political prisoners, samizdat and the West. For example, Raisa Rudenko (Kaplun), wife of UHG's founder Mykola Rudenko, played a major role in the group's functions.

All preparatory documents, the first Memorandum, the Credo of unity, the lists of Ukrainian patriots who had been repressed, and other documents, were all typed by Raisa Rudenko up till her husband's arrest. Her name was not listed among the founding members of the UHG. Mykola Rudenko believed that this would help the "permanent secretary" of the UHG ward off arrest. It was necessary that somebody should remain at liberty in order to pass on information and to help those imprisoned.<sup>32</sup>

Even considering this form of work, women still ranked low in numbers compared to male activists. An online virtual museum, *Dissident Movement in Ukraine*, composed 120 biographies of dissidents, out of which only 19 are female; this means that women constituted only 16 percent of the activists. Nevertheless, their role should not be disregarded as it was through the work of wives, sisters, mothers and friends that UHG was able to function even when most of its members were imprisoned.

The imprisoned dissidents continued with their mission behind cell walls, despite

<sup>31</sup> "The Ukrainian Helsinki Group." *The Ukrainian Weekly*, December 30, 1979, No. 296, Vol. LXXXVI.

<sup>32</sup> "Dissidents: Rudenko (Kaplun), Raisa Panasiwna." *Dissident Movement in Ukraine*

struggling to survive and maintain morale while undergoing intense psychological and physical pressure. The prison camps were filled with civil rights activists from other republics such as the Baltic states. The prison became a form of endurance and schooling. The prisoners learned from each other, discussed and formulated their thoughts, and planned further action to liberate their nations. In defense of their rights they wrote statements, petitions and letters to leading officials. Their writings were smuggled out of the labor camps and printed abroad and in samizdat. They also used collective and individual hunger strikes in protests of their ill treatment. Thus, when these individuals were freed with Gorbachev's reform policies or after serving their terms, they continued the same work as before their arrests. The late 1980s provided conditions in which their later attempts proved to be more successful than their first ones. The regime was not as severe, and the dissidents were more prepared and much stronger, due to their experiences in the political prison camps. They were able to actively promote their causes in the same manner as before but this time the public responded.

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he inherited all of the problems of his predecessors. His greatest challenges were economic stagnation from the Brezhnev era and decrease of political legitimacy of the Communist rule. Perestroika, a restructuring of the Soviet economy, was Gorbachev's solution to Brezhnev's stagnation, which contributed to rising prices, food and basic goods shortages, and the overall decline in standard of living. In order to enforce perestroika, Gorbachev introduced glasnost, "openness," which allowed the public to speak freely of the Stalinist crimes committed against them. Gorbachev's administration suspected that they might encounter public resistance to the proposed rapid change. Thus, the public's consciousness needed to be formulated in the same direction as their political policies. The officials hoped to achieve this by relaxing censorship. Glasnost was

implemented in order to legitimize the Soviet rule and to create a more trusting public with new working values to carry out perestroika. Prior to this, the Soviet rule depended on terror and coercion for implementation of its policies. In contrast, Gorbachev's approach of public openness was used to initiate progress in the structurally deficient Soviet Union. However, these reform policies took on an adverse format in Lviv. The Ukrainian cultural elite were able to use glasnost for their national cause which brought on additional mistrust in the regime and a nationally conscious public, thus further weakening the frail system.

The glasnost policy failed at aiding the process of economic restructuring because the flow of information of crimes committed by the Soviet state against its people was enormous and eventually turned to criticism of the government. Gorbachev's administration thought that the public would constrain itself to Stalinist crimes and other minor criticisms, but the new freedom of speech led to comprehensive criticism of the modern Soviet government as well. The scrutinizations included Leninism, the Revolution of 1917 and the colonial nature of the USSR.

The glasnost policy was fully implemented in Ukraine a bit later (1988-1989) than in Russia and other republics because of Shcherbytsky's neo-Stalinist rule. There were a handful of groups and organizations advocating the revival of Ukrainian language and culture based in Lviv. However, these groups and dissidents were harassed by Shcherbytsky's government, which prevented them from flourishing. In the second half of 1980s, many political prisoners returned home, and along with various dissidents, civil rights activists, and nationalists used glasnost specifically to promote their cause. Iryna Kalynets, a formal political prisoner, a political activist and a deputy in the Ukrainian parliament, spoke of 1987 as still a restricted year for any political movement. At that time she was released from prison and was confined to basic work as a cashier because the KGB was concerned about the power and influence she

would gain if she were to have a higher position that her talents would normally demand.

Kalynets recalls,

During this time I published hundreds of articles. At the end of 1987 we started to publish a samvydav (samizdat) journal, *Yevshan Zilly*. Unlike the *Ukrainian Visnyk* it had a little bit of a different twist. We wrote about current problems that faced us such as the need to preserve and develop Ukrainian art, crafts, architecture, folk and literature, and we also wrote about lost memories which were erased by the Communists such as the destruction of Ukrainians by the Bolsheviks in 1939/1941... It was necessary to have as many samizdats published as possible during Gorbachev's perestroika because the more there were the more likely the public would read them. They were meant to broaden the circle of conscious and active Ukrainians. Some people were afraid of the *Visnyk* and also one journal was not able to capture everything. We started to work on something specific. Our friend and poet, Mykhail Osadshyn, at the same time organized and released a journal called *Kafedra* in which abolished literature and critical essays were published.<sup>33</sup>

Written words continued to be dissident's greatest tool and a source of information. The Ukrainian intellectuals organized various samizdats in order to inform the public of the suppression of all that was Ukrainian, thus broadening the public's knowledge and participation while lessening the fear of the system's retributions.

Glasnost allowed people to finally say what was held back for decades. Fear no longer existed among former political prisoners, dissidents and the Ukrainian intellectual elite. They realized that this was their time and opportunity to bring on change. Oreslava Hamyk, a doctor and a deputy of Lviv's Oblasna Rada (Province Administration), recalls how she felt.

I would lie if I told you it was not scary then. It was very scary. Knowing the history of my family (UPA supporters who were deported) and where I was born. The light from that chapter of my life was not turned off and it would have been possible for them to return me to where I was born. However, God was giving me a chance and I had to take it.<sup>34</sup>

All the other interviewees based in Lviv insisted that although it was a scary time, their sense of truth and justice overwhelmed their fear. It appears that their understanding of fear varied upon their contact to political prisoners, other dissidents, and exposure to samizdat and forbidden historical literature. Those who were more exposed to or participated in the national struggle were less likely to be afraid of what the system might do to them, especially those women who

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

were already punished by the system for their activism, relations with political agitators, and for spreading national ideas and text. This tendency is visible if one were to compare Oreslava Hamyk's above response with Iryna Kalynets's response to the question "Were you not afraid of how the authorities would respond to your actions?" Hamyk is from a small tourist city known for its sanatoriums, while Kalynets is a leading activist from Lviv who had spent many years in political prison camps. Therefore, when Hamyk expressed fear but decided to take a chance on what she believed was her duty, Kalynets could not understand the question. She dismissed it by stating "at that time there was no fear, there was only work."<sup>35</sup> Kalynets had already been repressed and served nine years in political prison camps, she had nothing to lose unlike Hamyk.

Fear continued to exist among the common folk. They were afraid that the system might reverse its policies at any time as history has taught them, and they were afraid of losing their positions, thus their livelihood. There were also those who were successful in the Soviet system and therefore did not want political changes that would disturb their comfortable lives. The leading intellectuals wanted to awaken the public, to shed their fear, to say all those things people held back. The first step in mobilizing the movement was to educate and awaken the public.

Other methods used of showing the public that there were people willing to take a risk because they believed in a popular movement was to publicly question and confront the old system. This was done through simple meetings, ceremonies and prayers. In the case of Kalynets, her projects were specifically staged in order to first show people that change could be brought on if united, and second to find out the extent to which these meetings could go on before suppression. She began to test the limits as soon as she was released from her

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

imprisonment, as early as the end of 1987. She organized a mass service on the grave of Bohdan Ihor Antonovych, a Ukrainian poet, in October of 1987. It was suspiciously watched, questioned and attempts were made to suppress it. However, little projects like those began to gain momentum and occurred more often, regardless of the inflicted obstacles. These were the first patriotic and anticommunist meetings. Iryna Kalynets gave an example of the form these small-scale meetings took on.

In early 1988, near the Fedorov monument, we held a public meeting in the city center to honor Antonovych once again. We planned everything out in the open and were not secretive of the programme. The KGB sent young boys, about twenty or twenty one years of age, to disperse the meeting. On the agenda that evening we had a famous performer, Victor Morozov, poets and other distinguished speakers and guests. I decided to resolve the problem by myself; I approached the boys and spoke to them. I told them not to come near us with their instructed intentions. In the end of our talk, they joined us, and stood and sang with us. I am lucky that I was able to talk to people like that.<sup>36</sup>

Kalynets as a political activist and later, as a Ukrainian parliament deputy, perceived herself as someone who stood out among her peers for her determination, bravery, hard work, ability to speak the truth, and quick wit to resolve difficult situations. She was a leading figure in the movement and at times more successful in confronting problems than her male peers. Unfortunately, historiography dismissed her work in the movement and she herself highlighted her achievements and the changes they brought on in the interview. To the fact that historians bypassed her role in the movement, she calmly responds “of course, we live in a man’s worlds.”<sup>37</sup>

At the time, friends and fellow inmates of Ukrainian former political prisoners, were actively working on the Baltic Popular Fronts. Keeping in contact and supporting each other’s common causes, Ukrainians received many of the Baltic’s publications and understood the situation in the USSR. Following in their lead, Ukrainian activists began to test their limits. Kalynets recalls the first meetings.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

*Tovarystvo Ukrainskoi Movy* (The Ukrainian Language Society) were to meet in a club on Stefania Street. The KGB did not allow us to have it there so we held it near the Ivan Franko monument. This was one of the first meetings... people wanted to come; the second meeting on the Franko Plaza was much bigger. There were a lot of people. Ivan Makar helped me out greatly during this time because of his ties with scholars and students. We invited intellectuals, the Party Secretary (Vovko) and other notable persons who held high administrative positions. Questions were asked mostly by me but the end result was that people felt themselves free.<sup>38</sup>

These first meetings may seem insignificant in the whole scheme of the movement in their size and meagerness, although as illustrated above they played a major role in shedding the public's fear. With each meeting the size of the crowd grew because people realized that extreme measures would not be taken against them if they were to listen or even participate in the meetings.

From 1987 small unofficial groups, leagues, unions and organizations evolved, predominately concentrated in Western Ukraine, in advocacy of cultural, language and religious revival. The most recognizable one was the Ukrainian Helsinki Group which in 1988 became a Union (UHU), comprised mostly of former political prisoners and represented one of the most radical groups at the time. In theory it aimed to encourage the masses to participate in their government and functioned as a union for human rights groups. Although in practice, UHU saw itself "as an unofficial popular front with the intention of uniting a broad range of people in opposition to the highly conservative CPU."<sup>39</sup> UHU's leaders, such as Viacheslav Chornovil, Levko Lukianenko, and the Horyn brothers, always stayed one step ahead of the demands commanded by other groups thus earning UHU an extremist reputation.

Other famous cultural organizations in Lviv were based on writers' union and youth groups. In 1987, Kalynets and her husband founded an organization for Ukrainian writers called the Ukrainian Association for the Independent Creative Intelligentsia. *The Ukrainian Weekly*, a North American newspaper reported,

The Ukrainian Association of Independent Creative Intelligentsia (UANTI) was created to

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 68.

promote the development of Ukrainian culture outside Ukraine's official cultural structure. This second informal group to have been formed in Ukraine by Ukrainian dissidents concerned with injecting glasnost into Ukraine's cultural and public life, was apparently founded sometime in early October.

The membership includes former political prisoners: poet Ihor Kalynets, writer and poet Mykhailo Osadchy, poet Mykola Rudenko (now in the West), literary critic Yevhen Sverstiuk, literary critic Ivan Svitlychny, poet Iryna Senyk and Mr. Chornovil.<sup>40</sup>

The newspaper lists Iryna Kalynets as a member, although she is not recognized as one of the founders. A youth organization, *Tovarystvo Leva* (The Lion Society) came into existence in the spring of 1987 in Lviv with the motto "The Revival of a Ukrainian Sovereign State through Culture and Intellect."<sup>41</sup> It placed great effort on renovating the Lychakivskyi cemetery and churches. The Lion Society also undertook in reviving cultural traditions such as *Vertep*, Christmas theater, and *Haivky*, ritual spring folk songs and dances. Padraic Kenney, who wrote on the group, explains, "the Lion Society searched for the micro-nationalism of everyday practice, in contrast to the macro-nationalism of forbidden holidays, banned writers, and violated sovereignty. Micro-nationalism accomplished the same goals, awakening people's hunger for greater freedom."<sup>42</sup> In the beginning, most of the organizations in Lviv worked on the micro-nationalism level. Another popular organization was Prosvita, which was a continuation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society mentioned in chapter one. It concentrated on cultural and community work, with special attention on promoting the Ukrainian language. Doctor Oreslava Hamyk recalls,

My husband and I took an active part in initiating Prosvita in Truskavets. We understood then that Prosvita was preparation for political work...Prosvita gather intellectuals who held high positions/careers. These people wanted to renew Ukrainian traditions; to promote the Ukrainian languages and renewal of Ukrainian gymnasiums, schools and daycare centers. Prosvita entered all spheres and groups were organized in all establishments. It sought to find active people that could become future leaders.<sup>43</sup>

Members of these organizations were well aware that the cultural and social revival would lead to national and political resurgence. There was also the Association of the Ukrainian Language

<sup>40</sup> 1987: A Look Back: Human Rights and Glasnost in the USSR.

<sup>41</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 68.

<sup>42</sup> Kenney, 306.



“Memorial” which concentrated on properly revealing the tragedies that befell on Ukrainians under the communist regime and building monuments for those that perished. Most of the interviewees were either members of these organizations, took part in the groups’ activities or worked alongside them as Souiz Ukrainok members. Souiz Ukrainok (the Ukrainian Women’s Union) was the successor of the interwar women’s organization based in western Ukraine, which is discussed in chapter one. The initiator of the organization was Oksana Sapelyak, a pedagogue. The KGB constantly monitored Sapelyak for her association with the circle of dissidents, who were imprisoned in the 1970s, and for her nationalistic expressions. She could not hold on to a decent job because of her affiliation with national dissidents. Therefore, she decided to go into the academic field of research; she was granted access to uncensored archives in order to do research on the Soviet woman. “There, I stumbled on the material about Souiz Ukrainok and I read all of it. I was caught up by it and by their idea... There were still older women alive who participated in the Union, or women remembered their mothers belonging to it. There was live memory”<sup>44</sup> Sapelyak explains. She discussed the idea of starting a women’s organization with Olha Horyn and shortly after thirty members established Souiz Ukrainok with Oksana Sapelyak as their head. It became an instant hit and hundreds joined. Sapelyak traveled opening up branches in various cities and villages. The organizations goals were “to unite Ukrainian women for rebirth of women democratic movement; to inspire and direct creative forces to the promotion and popularization of national ideas, our history, culture; to bring up new generation of Ukrainian youth capable of building new democratic state.”<sup>45</sup>

National revival continued to steamroll through the advocacy, demonstrations,

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

<sup>45</sup> “General Information” *Lviv Branch of Souiz Ukrainok*.

lobbying, protests, samizdat and other activities of the growing opposition groups. Most of the organizations were armed with independent and self-sufficient newspapers, article and periodical to battle the heavily propagandized CPU media. *The Ukrainian Weekly*, summarizes varies publications the organizations released.

The first step of this reactivation was the December 1987 announcement that the Ukrainian Herald would be the UHG's official press organ and that the journal's editorial board had been co-opted in to the group.... In addition to The Ukrainian Herald, the UHU's official press organ, three new major independent journals appeared this year in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. The three new publications attempt to cover the socio-political, cultural and religious aspects of movements seeking to speed up the process of democratization.

The journal Yevshan-Zillia actually commenced publication in the fall of 1987 and is edited by Iryna Stasiv Kalynnets, a poet, ethnographer and cultural rights advocate. It focuses primarily on current Ukrainian cultural, literary and artistic life in Lviv.

In January, the first issue of Kafedra was published under the aegis of the Ukrainian Association of Independent Creative Intelligentsia (UANTI), Mykhailo Osadchy, a 51-year-old poet, literary critic and former political prisoner serves as chief editor of the new literary and cultural journal, created to publicize the works and activities of members of UANTI who hail from all over the Ukrainian SSR, and focus on the arts in general, past and present, all over the republic.

The fourth unofficial journal in Lviv, The Christian Voice, appeared in January. Edited by Ivan Hel, of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Believers and the Church in Ukraine, the journal focuses on the movement for religious rights, especially the Ukrainian Catholic Church, in Ukraine.<sup>46</sup>

Oksana Sapelyak asked her friend, a well-established contemporary Ukrainian poet, Maria Chumarna to organize and edit a newspaper for Souiz Ukrainok. "I liked the idea of such an organization, I agreed and named the journal Ukrainka (Ukrainian Woman)"<sup>47</sup> Chumarna recalls. As in most of the publications at the time, Ukrainka concentrated on prohibited historical memories, renewal of cultural traditions and literature, and on the problems facing women in the Soviet society. Shortly after independence, Chumarna resigned from the periodical because "there were disagreements over what kind of material to include. Some members wanted to publish cooking recipes and embroidering techniques."<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that Ukrainian intellectuals led the struggle and the public did not necessarily support their aims, especially when the movement gained ground, and when everyone was comfortable to

<sup>46</sup> 1988: A Look Back: Human Rights and National Movements in the USSR.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Chumarna.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

propagate their goals and take up leadership positions. However, it was the cultural elite which first emerged with historical and cultural information. They were equipped with long researched knowledge to challenge the regime. It was a battle of Ukrainian intellectuals against the Soviet propaganda. Oksana Sapelyak recalls “It was a period of romanticism. I thought, along with others, that if we spoke the truth it would set us free, that things would happen.”<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, the movement in the late 1980s had the same combination of national, religious and civic inclinations as that of the dissidents in the 1960s. However, oppositions’ attempts started and ended with a small circle of intellectuals, while their last attempt was successful because they were able to transfer the struggle onto the masses. There were very famous female dissidents. However, most women played a vital role in maintaining the struggle, while almost all of the dissidents were imprisoned, by being an intermediary between the political prisoners and the public as well as the West. Due, to Gorbachev’s reforms, the conditions in the Soviet Union had begun to change and the time was right for the movement to be successful this time around. Former political prisoners, dissidents, and cultural intelligentsia used independent press as a major tool in fighting the communist propagandized media and educating the public. The foundation of the movement was specifically laid out in Lviv because of the culturally and nationally oriented samizdat, which was published in Ukrainian, thus aimed at only a Ukrainian-speaking public. The beginning of the movement was formed by various organizations working on cultural revival on the micro level with the intentions of a national and democratic establishment in the future. The chapter revealed how the dissident movement became a popular movement in Lviv.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

## CHAPTER THREE

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**Women in the Resurgence of the Greek Catholic Church**

In this chapter the role of women will be examined in the resurgence of the Greek Catholic Church from its catacomb existence into a national Church in Western Ukraine. This is important because it will reveal how women brought Christian conservatism into the politics of the independence movement. This chapter will examine the Christian base they used to retaliate against Communism. Through examples taken from Iryna Kalynet's interview and the work of Marian Society Myloserdia (Compassion) will be reevaluated and placed in the context of the movement. Kalynets was the initiator and key member of the Marian Society, thus all the information on the women's group will be derived from her interview to demonstrate how she perceives the role of the society seventeen years later. The chapter will then reveal why women's activism is overlooked in the memory of the independence movement.

In August 1987, the Ukrainian Catholic Church emerged from its underground existence with 206 bishops, priests, nuns, monks, and believers to advocate for its legalization, starting with a letter to Pope John Paul II.<sup>50</sup> The Church had been liquidated by the Soviets after Eastern Galicia was annexed; bishops, priests and devoted believers were imprisoned or deported. The rest of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics "united" with the Russian Orthodox and were intensely conditioned to become atheist. The Church therefore existed underground; there were undisclosed Greek Catholic priests in Russian Orthodox parishes since only the Orthodox Church was authorized to function. The memory of ones' grandparent's and parent's denomination was acknowledged and secretly practiced at home. Galician women were framed and framed themselves into the keepers of home, and thus preservers of religion. Women taught their children to pray and to attend church: whether it would be the official Orthodox

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<sup>50</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 74.

Church or the clandestine Greek Catholic; although later the reestablishment of the Greek Catholic Church and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church caused great conflict between Galicians over property and rights. Regardless, women felt responsible for maintaining the national and Christian moral of the family. Accordingly, in the late 1980s they wholeheartedly advocated for reestablishing the Church. Once again, as in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was a different experience for Western Ukrainian women in comparison to other women in the Republic. Even those women who were not originally from Lviv and from Orthodox families embraced the Greek Catholic faith. For example, Vira Lyaskovska, a deputy and an Orthodox from central Ukraine who married a Greek Catholic, explains “I go to both churches. It is the same church.”<sup>51</sup> Another case is of Oksana Sapelyak from a predominantly Orthodox Volyn, who said, “From my archival research, I realized that the Greek Catholic Church is the true national church. I went to a Greek Catholic priest to convert and he told me that I need only to accept it within myself and I would become Greek Catholic.”<sup>52</sup> For these women, the Greek Catholic Church was deeply nested in the Ukrainian national identity of Galicia. The two examples reveal how far these women went to embrace the national identity, as even try to convert and deny that there is a difference between the Greek Catholic and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Lyaskovska and Sapelyak’s acceptance and understanding of the Greek Catholic Church occurred during a time when there was a lot of animosity between the two Ukrainian churches in the western regions; their resurgence caused great tension and conflicts over property and parishioners. The Greek Catholic Church was exclusive to Galicians while most of the population in the Ukrainian SSR belonged to the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church also emerged in Lviv

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

and Galicia, with numerous supporters. The rise of two national churches, without Moscow ties, demonstrates how strongly hand in hand the churches worked along with nationalism.

The first anti-Communist mass rallies became an everyday reality in Lviv between the years 1988 to 1989. Kalynets along with a woman's group called Marian Society Myloserdia, which she belonged to, initiated, organized, advertised and led most of these rallies and meetings. The group was structured on three pillars of the Greek Catholic Church, therefore most of its activities concentrated on the church's revival. Its endeavors varied in scope from meetings near the Ivan Franko statue, prayers in memory of national figures, poetry evenings, rallies to reestablish the Greek Catholic Church, and rallies to celebrate forbidden Ukrainian historical events. These events were planned without authority's permission and therefore either intensely watched or dispersed. The Marian Society was formed in response to the suppression of the first attempts to hold political meetings. Kalynets reminisces "let them try to fight with women. It is a hard option. It is not easy to fight with women."<sup>53</sup> Throughout the interview, Kalynets seemed to place greater value on the strength of women. She perceived intellectual women more rational than intellectual men. The Soviet society promoted the image of a strong new woman while the national Western Ukraine produced the perception of a strong protective mother. These two constructions of strong woman might have caused Kalynets to suggest that women were more difficult to fight with. Chapter six will further discuss how women empowered themselves with their gender in politics.

The Marian Society was very small; it consisted of only up to twelve members at most. It was never formally registered nor expanded in membership. Kalynets explained that the Society functioned well as a small group because all members were extremely dedicated to the cause and worked hard on various public projects. They thought up of different tactics to

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

agitate for their cause and bring the public together. In 1988, political and national meetings were still impossible in public. Kalynets explains her solution to the problem,

I figured if we could meet every month than it would be for a prayer, a big prayer. We would say a prayer that would cover all that would have been said at those political meetings. On January 22<sup>nd</sup> (1988), Marian Society at Lychakivskyi cemetery cautiously held a prayer service over the graves of thousands who were murdered by the Bolsheviks. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, under my direction and with Ivan Hel we were able to air the prayer service led by Greek Catholic priests. We made sure there were no political or nationally oriented speeches; the entire cemetery was covered with KGB agents who were waiting for someone to say something. There was a prayer and everyone knew whom it was for.<sup>54</sup>

The Marian Society continued to organize such public prayers in Lviv. The official Orthodox powers were unwilling to take part in those prayers, therefore it became a solely a Greek Catholic action. The Marian Society saw it as a means to bring together Greek Catholic priests and accumulate enough public support to reestablish the Church. Kalynets expresses that “this was the most important moment of our activism.”<sup>55</sup>

Moscow was not ready to accept such religious activism of national Catholicism. It hoped to deal with the only lawful Russian Orthodox Church. Leading female activists were very aware of the odds against them. Kalynets recounts,

Earlier that year, there was a huge Memorial conference in Moscow to which I was invited. Andrei Sakharov<sup>56</sup> organized it. There I met with many prominent people, one of which was the Minister of Religion in the USSR. He was a very interesting person; Stefa Shabatura and I talked with him till nightfall. We asked several concerning questions about the Greek Catholic Church and his response was “Russia will go with everything except giving you your church back. It will prove to be the most difficult.” And thus it was.<sup>57</sup>

There was a public push for the reemergence of the Greek Catholic Church. Greek Catholic mass was held in various villages across the western regions. However, one of the first greatest events that took place was in Lviv to mark the Ukrainian Independence Day of the short-lived state in 1919 on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Thousands gathered for an authorized gathering, celebrated by

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> an eminent Soviet nuclear physicist, dissident and human rights activist

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

priests of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, in front of St. George's Cathedral<sup>58</sup> in Lviv. Kalynets depicts that meeting,

We received great help from the Helsinki Group and a public invitation was published in *Svoboda*, a newspaper that everyone read. When they (officials) found out that such a rally was to be held they used all their strength to make sure it would not occur. We knew that there were KGB observers from Moscow in Lviv that January who were to study the situation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church... We had a megaphone, we had presenters ready with speeches, and we had secret priests who were going to hold Greek Catholic prayers for the unity of Ukraine. We did not do this in secret; we made it known that Marian Society was coordinating such a meeting. We invited every one to join us, people of all confessions. Protestant and official Orthodox churches did not respond. Imagine, 22<sup>nd</sup> of January in Lviv there was a freezing chills and everyone heard church bells. All of a sudden from St. George's... liturgy was heard – people were shocked, they thought that the cathedral was given back to them. Even those who did not hear the invitations on the radio showed up. There was a crowd already there but the liturgy music drew more people in. It was unbelievable. It was the biggest assembly of people that St George's Cathedral ever witnessed... The Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Nikodim, my greatest enemy who till this day remembers my name in vain, was going mad. He allowed Moscow journalist to film us from his apartments, while cameras from our guys were taken away. It was hard to start the prayer because the Orthodox mass did not end at 10:00 a.m. as usual but at 12:00 p.m. Their (Orthodox) priests walked amongst the people telling them that they need to go home because the mass was over and that this was not a place for political meetings. However, to our luck the people stood firm... The Marian Society walked around passing out fliers and asking people to stay. They listened to everything we, the organizers, said. We did not tell them to disperse and they remained.<sup>59</sup>

Through out all the interviews, it becomes clear that there was never a problem of gathering a crowd in Lviv. There was just a need for initiating and organizing these meeting, and to produce speakers who would talk about the suppression and rights to freedom, and people would gather. Kalynets continues,

Our Greek Catholic priests changed their robes and started mass from the balcony... However, the liturgy music was too loud and in the way. Thus, I approach a few teenage boys and ask them to cut the wires. "Right away" they respond. They just climbed the pole, cut it and the music stopped. After the mass for Ukraine's unification, Chornovil asked for a prayer for Ukraine's independence and justice. In the beginning of 1989, we were already praying for independence... people cried... There we announced our next meeting, which was to be held on April 9<sup>th</sup>, a day for Taras Shevchenko. She continues to explain as if she herself was amazed by all that was accomplished "once, a Ukrainian metropolitan told me that it was impossible for me to organize all of those things. I was not alone.... What is there to tell of how we did it? Marian Society wrote announcements, fliers, glued them to poles and that was everything. People came."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> baroque-rococo cathedral that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century served as the mother church of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Under Communist it belonged to the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



Kalynets gave various examples of the society's initiative and leadership in the movement for the revival of the Church. I explained to her that in all my reading on the Ukrainian independence movement, I have not come across such a society. Her reply was "Yes, and you will not hear about it nor about me, even though, they all know the role I played. Why? Because we live in an anti-feminist world and Ukraine is still Muslim..." Kalynets perception does not agree with reality. Kalynets is recognized for her role as dissident and for her participation in the independence movement, although it might not be to the degree she deserves or would prefer. The society is only mentioned in the North American newspaper, *the Ukrainian Weekly*.

Organizers of such meetings were prosecuted for their activities; they were convicted for alleged "administrative terror," which included fines and 10 to 15 days prison terms. To the former political prisoners it was all a joke because they knew it was a period in which it would be difficult to bring a case and find adequate criminal charges. The Orthodox Nikodim brought up charges against Kalynets and Bohdan Horyn for disturbing the peace. *The Ukrainian Weekly* published "Mrs. Kalynets was tried on March 9-10 on charges of allegedly yelling obscenities against Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Nikodim during a January 22 moleben in front of St. George's Cathedral, and sentenced to 10 days in jail."<sup>61</sup> Kalynets recounts the events and how she retaliated,

On January 26th we were taken to court. Horyn joked about wanting to see me in prison... This court date was at the beginning of a big religious fast... We prepared the people for that day in church, on typewriters we wrote little leaflets that said when Nikodim was to pray for The Russian Patriarchal, we wrote that the people should instead say loudly for the Roman Pope (*laughs*). The court process took two days, and it was a circus. They asked us stupid questions; they did not let people in, a mass of our supporters gathered outside.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> 1989: A LOOK BACK, Ukraine: human rights, vox populi

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

Kalynets was found guilty and secretly transported to a prison in a town outside of Lviv. The public demanded her release but it was not enough to release her and she had to serve her short term.

The celebration of Easter was another monumental step in the reestablishment of the Greek Catholic Church. Kalynets narrates how she was able to coordinate the blessing of the Easter baskets. One must keep in mind that this is her construction of the events, only from her memory and point of view. Kalynets testifies,

There are things that even words cannot describe with logic. People were used to showing up to these meetings. The blessing of the Paska<sup>63</sup> ... I took me only a few phone calls and priests of the illegal church organized it that moment. People listened to them. I cannot tell you the impact of the Greek Catholic Church. It was something unique. Before that, the highest secretary Volkov gathers us for some sort of meeting. I showed up an hour late on purpose and Mykhailo Horyn edged me on that I am up to something. I placed a serious of agendas in front Volkov. I told him that on Saturday before Easter, we are going to have our Easter baskets blessed by Greek Catholic priests. He asked where? I said near the *Porokhova Vezha*, which is at the top of the stairs while Ruska Church plaza is at the bottom. Why did I say that? I don't know. Again we informed the people. Radio Svoboda helps out. We managed to get huge amounts of our announcements posted. People showed up. Then I understood God's works. The location is a long ally with blossoming trees. The Orthodox Church guided their people to the Ruska Church Plaza for the blessings of the Eater baskets. They thought we were going to go to that same spot. However, we were higher up on an open space. Even those who already had their baskets blessed by the Orthodox priests wanted to get them blessed again by the Greek Catholic priests. People came from the afternoon to late evening non-stop to bless their baskets. The people came to get their baskets blessed by illegal priests. The KGB could not do anything. Volkov approached me worried when a prayer was being held. I told him what was he going to do, attack the people who are on their knees praying. I asked "Haven't you learned from history yet?" ... He did not know how to respond. They were lost. They later invited us to have some sort of talks, discussions.<sup>64</sup>

From the way Kalynets recalled the movement, through her confidence it became apparent that she was skillful at using visual elements as a tool to challenge her opponents. This will become more visible in the next chapter. She also clearly dominated the crowd, which listened to her blindly. KGB agents even resorted for her help in controlling the consistent crowds that swept Lviv in 1989. Kalynets gives an example,

At some point, two of our priests were late to a prayer meeting. I got this source of information from two round-eyed KGB agents asking me to come and calm down the restless mass of people, who were angry about the missing priests. They blocked major city roads. I asked the

<sup>63</sup> Traditional Easter bread. Also, translates into "Easter" (named after "Passover")

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

people to move to the Mykhail Church while they (KGB agents) work on this issue of finding the priests... I told them that in the future it would be our church and the people, around ten thousand of them moved to Mykhail Church... It was unbelievable how they listened to me. I did not even have to raise my voice... we decided we would meet every Sunday near the closed church and hold mass on the hill outside the locked doors... those were the first Greek Catholic masses in the city that were not dispersed.<sup>65</sup>

Kalynets used her ability to control the crowd as a means to reach her goals. She was able to stop the road blockade by confidently promising the return of a church. Kalynets was also an intermediately between the masses and the Soviet authorities. She knew how to work both sides.

Kalynets' recollections of the few of the meetings give us a better understanding of the atmosphere of Lviv at the time. The public was informed, people wanted change and showed this by attending these sorts of prayers, which also had national and political aspects. The public responded well to the meetings since they eagerly listened to the organizers as demonstrated above by Kalynets. They did not disperse even when watched by KGB agents or when they were told to go home by the Orthodox authorities after mass.

This was all possible because a woman like Kalynets found an ulterior way to the abolished meetings, through prayer. Furthermore, this was possible because not only a woman initiated this approach but also because a woman's organization arranged the prayer meeting. Famous dissident and activists helped out and might even have dominated the speeches. It was the Greek Catholic priests, men, who held the prayer service. However, it would not have been possible if not for the women who worked behind the scenes. It was their ideas and their hard work of realizing the meetings that set the stage for men to come on and perform. In the end, the public remembers the actors rather than the directors and producers.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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**Women's Roles in the Reestablishment of National and Religious Identity**

This chapter will examine the various communital and cultural projects women embarked on and the intentions behind them. The text will concentrate on the different ways Souiz Ukrainok tried to revive and establish religious and cultural holidays such as St. Nicholas Day, Easter and Mother's Day. Examples from the interviews will demonstrate how religious and cultural activities transformed into national and political agitation, and reveal how women reestablished a sense of national identity.

The first attempts to hold meetings with a national direction were suppressed. The authorities were not willing to tolerate such gatherings, unmistakably predicting the momentum they would gain and later develop into an unmanageable force. Therefore, women turned to humanitarian and cultural work. Iryna Kalynets along with Stefaniya Shabatura, a national artist and dissident, and others formed a small women's group called Marian Society Myloserdia. The Society started with humanitarian work due to restrictions; their community projects included everything from helping the homeless to taking care of orphans. However, their charity work had a national and religious aspect; for example, they celebrated Saint Nicholas Day with the orphans. This is one of the main religious holidays in Eastern Christianity and it also has national traditions incorporated into it. It has nothing to do with Christmas or *Did Moroz*<sup>66</sup> but of "Saint Nicholas" who comes down on his birthday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, and gives presents to well behaved children. Kalynets explains

We collected money and made sure these children had a proper celebration of St. Nicholas Day. As you know during that time, eastern Ukraine did not celebrate those holidays... We wanted this holiday to be spiritual. At that time our friends across the west border were also able to provide us with humanitarian aid, medicine, which we distributed among the orphanages.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Russian/Soviet Santa Clause

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The way Kalynets chronologizes the charitable activity reveals that it was more important to first establish a spiritual holiday and then to provide humanitarian work. Women activists from Lviv did not only want to promote the religious and national holidays in their regions but also in all of Ukraine. They took it upon themselves to bring this national and religious spirit to the Russified and Sovietized Ukrainians in the central and eastern regions of the republic. They felt culturally superior to the more Russified eastern regions, and thought of themselves as more able and determined to enlighten the rest of the Ukrainians by establishing holidays such as Saint Nicholas Day. However, at the same time they imposed specific Western Ukrainian traditions on the rest of Ukraine. According to an online Encyclopedia of Ukraine,

In Western Ukraine gifts were given to children on the eve of his feast day. The Ukrainian Catholic church encouraged the development of ritual plays and games depicting Saint Nicholas with an angels and the devils in appropriate masks and garb, which exhorted children to do good deeds. These plays, some of which were written by professional authors, were often staged by amateur theaters.<sup>68</sup>

There is a correlation between Western Ukrainian traditions and the Greek Catholic Church, thus in a way these women also inflicted Greek Catholic traditions upon a predominantly Orthodox population by coordinating, as Kalynets stated, “proper celebration.” A proper celebration of Saint Nicholas Day to Lviv women was a traditionally Western Ukrainian celebration as encouraged by the Greek Catholic Church. Saint Nicholas Day was a private event; as a result, Western Ukrainian families were able to celebrate it under the Communist regime. It was a holiday that the Communist government could not abolish and even Western Ukrainian nomenklatura presented gifts to their children on December 19<sup>th</sup>. The Marian Society initiated the transformation of a private family holiday into a public one. The move of such a celebration from a private sphere to a public space represents a symbol of rooted traditions and non-Communist identity. From the perspective of the interviewees, they were returning Ukrainian traditions and reestablishing the religious spirit which Sovietization

eliminated. They saw this as a positive act, a return to the true Ukrainian holidays therefore the rightful identity, a national identity. Yaroslava Yasnyska, who monitored the teachings of Communist ideology in children's daycare centers, explains

In December 1988 we thought to renew St. Nicholas Day. It did not matter if one was in the Party or not. I would never think that so many people would react and help with it... We made it happen in all schools, daycare centers and orphanages in our *raion*. It was such a wave of people that it is hard to explain. The underground Church had secret nuns that belonged to it, and there was one sister that opened a Sunday school, Sister Volodymyra, who actively becomes involved. While we went around spreading national ideas she, was spreading Christian ideas.<sup>69</sup>

Although, Yasnyska's occupation contradicted the celebration of Saint Nicholas Day she embraced it. The women were very conscious that their task lies in spreading Christian and national values but for them it was the spreading of a form of truth.

Over the next few years major efforts were made to ensure that this holiday was celebrated on a national level. When Kalynets became a deputy of the parliament, she brought the celebration of Saint Nicholas to a secular governing body. She describes how she arranged "for the parliament to feel the spiritual holiday."

I ordered 425 dough baked Saint Nicholas pastries. By the time I arrived with them to the parliament building our wheels were popped. Nevertheless, I pass out the St Nicholas to all the deputies. They were touched and pulled their money together so we would be able to bring the St. Nicholas pastries to the children's hospital. It was such happiness... This activity was swiftly taken over by the Protestants.<sup>70</sup>

The project seemed like missionary work in bringing religion, "the spirit," back into the hearts of policy makers. Conservative women may have supposed that bringing the Christian spirit of Saint Nicholas into the government organ would cause positive emotions to arise in some pro-national deputies while it was a statement to pro-Communist deputies that change is coming and that their values would take over. Through a simple act like this the Marian Society thought to install either a Christian or a national moral by which the politicians would be guided. As demonstrated by Kalynets there was resistance; the wheels of the automobile that

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<sup>68</sup> Mushynka.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Yasnyska.

was transporting the pastries were popped. Maybe the women knew what they were doing, the affect these pastries would have on the parliament; therefore, there were such attempts made to prevent the project. Also, because the Protestants took on the coordination of Saint Nicholas day reveals that it was further adopted as a national holiday, without any connotation to Greek Catholic influences. When the interviewees were elected to deputy positions their first task was to push for religious and traditional holidays to become nationally public holidays. Doctor Oreslava Hamyk described, “we continued to celebrate Ukrainian traditional holidays. After the elections, we registered Saint Nicholas Day and made it an official holiday so the children would get it off school all over the Lviv *oblast*.”<sup>71</sup>

Ukrainian Christmas and Easter also have many national elements such as *vertep*, Christmas theater/play, and *pysanka*, elaborately decorated Easter egg. *Pysanka* was a pagan practice adopted by Christianity. Therefore, *pysnaka* is deeply rooted in national identity, even though it is associated with the religious one. Women organizations’ primary tasks were to reestablish these religious holidays because they saw it as the restoration of religious and national morale, which the Soviet regime attempted to erase. The reestablishment of these holidays reappeared in each interview; therefore this theme will intensify with examples as the story of the movement progresses.

In the winter of 1988<sup>72</sup>, *vertepy* (plural) took the central role in the rebirth of traditions. Since the first meetings were dispersed, and attempts to stage new ones were impossible. Leaders, intellectuals and the public turned to cultural traditions, which also took on national and even political elements. Old cultural societies were reestablished such as Prosvita, and new youth groups formed in Lviv such as The Lion Society. They began to work on purely cultural

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

<sup>72</sup> Christmas in Eastern Christian Tradition (which covers Ukraine) is celebrated according to the old church

matters because the Communist government suppressed all national and political activities. They concentrated on the reestablishment of religious holidays but more so on Ukrainian traditions that accompanied the celebrations. The *vertep* is traditionally a play of the nativity scene based on Ukrainian folk village characters, and is followed by a series of carols. In the beginning of 1988, *vertepy* became a common sight throughout the western regions, and at times they took on political connotations. Once again, a family and a private tradition was transformed into a public one to resist Sovietization. They would mock Communist leaders and criticize the Soviet regime. Maria Chumarna, a poet, explains “the original *vertep* villains would take on the form of Lenin or Stalin.”<sup>73</sup> “*Vertepy* were critical towards the system, it was beautiful work, and people cried when they saw them,”<sup>74</sup> Kalynets describes. The revival of such a tradition proved to be successful because as the above quote suggests, people became emotional when they witnessed the dear act. They could relate and saw it as a form of the forbidden truth. *Vertepy* were able to arouse emotion, a connection, and a feeling of a common shared identity therefore an awakening or reassurance of a national identity.

The political aspect incorporated into *vertepy* played a vital role in directing the public’s future opinion towards politics. This cultural tradition was transformed into a political campaign ad. It becomes apparent in Kalynets’s interview, “In 1989, I gave young boys a scenario for a *vertep* and they created an amazing show... It was before the 1990 elections and they managed to incorporate all the politicians.”<sup>75</sup> Through the micro work of the revival of simple Ukrainian traditions, the cultural intelligentsia in Lviv was able to gather public support on the macro level.

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calendar, on January 7<sup>th</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Chumarna.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



The authorities watched the unveiling of *vertepy* with stern eyes. They made every attempt to declare this activity illegal. Kalynets, whose daughter was a member of the Lion Society, recalls “the Lions Society members were questioned about the angels in the *vertep*. Their response was why don’t you ask us why there is also a devil?”<sup>76</sup> It was an intellectual battle between dedicated Communists and Ukrainian cultural elite. They tried to outsmart each other through words and actions.

By 1989, Easter was fully undertaken by women’s organizations. One of the biggest Souiz Ukrainok’s activities was to introduce traditional Easter celebrations into the army. Conservative women perceived themselves as mothers and the soldiers as their sons. On one occasion, Rostyslava Fedak, a senior citizen who became a fulltime activist after her speech in an airforce base, was asked by a soldier if sides were taken between Ukrainian pro Soviet forces and national forces which side would she fight on. Her response was “you’re asking a mother to choose between two sons.”<sup>77</sup> Women not just from Lviv but from all over the Republic took on the issue of the army; they were very sensitive towards the stationing and treatment of Ukrainian soldiers because it affected their sons. Women’s responses to the army question will be elaborated on in chapter five.

Conservative women in Lviv sought to reestablish a sense of Ukrainian identity and moral in their children. Thus, they were attracted to bringing change in the army because they regarded the soldiers as their sons. Souiz Ukrainok held an all branch wide auction, which brought Easter to the army. On Easter Saturday, while people had their baskets blessed, members would stand outside churches with huge empty baskets and signs asking people to share their Easter food with the soldiers by placing what they could in the empty baskets. Doctor Oreslava Hamyk recalls,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Easter baskets for the army bases was only a Souiz Ukrainok project with the help of priests. We wanted for the soldiers to feel some sort of a holiday, some warmth and a piece of their home. People were very giving. We wrote a sign near a church and with huge baskets we waited for people to fill them. The first year, people were a little lost but the next years people brought extra portions for the soldiers.<sup>78</sup>

Rostyslava Fedak a Souiz Ukrainok member, relates a similar story.

We found sponsors, we asked women to bake extra *pasky*<sup>79</sup> (plural) and girls to paint *pysanky*. We even had girls embroider traditional towels to cover the baskets. They were simple, a few stitches of “Jesus, has risen” and some sort of a design. There were boys from the eastern parts where traditions could not be saved. There were a lot of military bases. On Easter we brought baskets with everything traditional in them that needed to be blessed to a military base. Priests came with us for the blessing.<sup>80</sup>

Once again, religious and national traditions were inflicted on a secular institution. One must keep in mind that not all soldiers were Ukrainian and Christian, especially the officers who were mostly ethnic Russians. However, the women saw this as a positive action because it was able to penetrate the most rigid Soviet institution, the army, and to reestablish a sense of belonging for the Ukrainian soldiers. Doctor Oreslava Hamyk recalls, “in the beginning the soldiers did not know how to react but the village boys were touched. They remembered their homes and the feeling of a holiday.”<sup>81</sup> Only those from the villages and those who grew up in un-Russified households appreciated the women’s gestures. Souiz Ukrainok hoped that the other soldiers who did not feel a connection would learn from, yearn for and embrace such traditions. The action was repeated the following year with a stronger positive reaction from the servicemen.

Women in Lviv took on another extensive task to establish Mother’s Day. It is important to note that this is not a religious or national holiday, even though some of these elements were incorporated into it. Mother’s Day is not even a historical tradition thus claims to the Ukrainian identity cannot be made. The establishment of such a holiday is a perfect

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Fedak.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

<sup>79</sup> Easter bread

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Fedak.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

example of how women perceived themselves during the independence movement. They did not see themselves transforming from strong Soviet women to strong democratic women because otherwise they would try to reform the Soviet exploited Women's Day. However, they instead perceived themselves as national mothers whose mission in the independence movement was to reestablish morale in the atheist and corrupt Communist structure. This reveals the lack of feminist thought they had at the time or any drive to promote women's issues. As their predecessors did, they placed the national cause above the feminist cause.

Souiz Ukrainok initiated Mother's Day. Oksana Sapelyak, the head of the union, explains, "Moscow noticed it right away when in Lviv for the first time this holiday was so highly elevated. It was very nice because many stores, factories, theaters etc cooperated with us and took part in funding it. It was not very easy to renew it... Moscow protested on every level."<sup>82</sup> Once again, these women knew the consequences such a holiday would bring. It sounds like a secular holiday, than why did Moscow protest? There must have been a reason why government officials were suspicious of any event Western Ukrainian women's organizations hosted.

The construction of Mother's Day was first aimed at poverty stricken women, single mothers and mothers of many children. Rostyslava Fedak depicts the organization of it in her home city of Sambir.

We aimed at mothers of multiple children and those in extreme poverty. We all had nothing because of the economic crisis, but everyone gave what they could: cans, pasta, rice etc... We found a sponsors who would fund a bag of flour, a bag of sugar and a bag of oatmeal... we collected clothes and brought all this to these mothers.<sup>83</sup>

Yaroslava Yasnyska describes the first Mother's Day in her Lviv neighborhood.

We invited mothers of nine or more children to a local auditorium. We went to all factories, collected money and goods from sponsors and people. Factories gave out such things as perfume and women's and children's clothes. These mothers were

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Fedak.

extremely poor. Some were so poor that they slept on the floor on hay mattresses in one room with eleven children. They probably never heard a good word nor had supportive husbands. We honored them.<sup>84</sup>

Besides the humanitarian actions, there were actions aimed for the general public. Oksana Sapelyak managed to host a Mother's Day concert in the Lviv Opera House, a central landmark. The poet Maria Chumarna recalls,

Oksana Sapelyak came running to me for help. The concert was about to begin but the first performers were held up. The entire auditorium was filled. Quickly we managed to put an act together, with the choir and a friend's daughter who was an actress... I dressed in my everyday work clothes read my poetry and between the intervals the choir would sing. It went back and forth between the choir and me on the dimmed light stage as the girl dressed in white walked around with a candle. It was very emotional because I spoke of the devastation the Soviet regime inflicted on our women and how much they suffered.<sup>85</sup>

Chumarna's recollection of the performance reveals that the conservative women in Lviv saw themselves as martyrs of the national struggle, as mothers who risked it all for their children to grow up with a national spirit. Only Mother's Day associated women with nationalism. Women's Day is international and runs contradictory towards the national and Christian depiction of women. Also, Women's Day was affiliated with a major Soviet holiday and Western Ukrainian women could not accept that. The Mother's Day celebration was aimed specifically at women who would be able to situate themselves in the Ukrainian identity.

Women played a vital role in strengthening and growth of the movement because they saw themselves as mothers and keepers of national and religious traditions. Therefore, when the first meetings of political agitation were abolished, women activists, such as members of the Marian Society Myloserdia and Souiz Ukrainok, took initiative to return the sense of Ukrainian identity to the public. This was done through the reestablishment of national and religious holidays and traditions, such as *vertepy*, Saint Nicholas Day and Easter. As the national movement evolved women took on a greater role in developing and standardizing religious and cultural holidays because they saw it as returning the Ukrainian moral to the

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with Yasnyska.

Sovietized public. They believe that this moral was the base needed for the independence movement and later an important characteristic in nation building.

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with Chumarna.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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**Women and Politics**

In the March 1990 elections, Rukh's Democratic Bloc won a respectable amount of seats in the Ukrainian Supreme Council. In Lviv and other western cities, Rukh's candidates were overwhelmingly elected to city and *oblast* councils. This chapter will discuss how the interviewees became politically involved and elected, and what made them successful in politics. Furthermore, it will examine the changes women brought on, specifically in the army and the education system.

Prior to getting into the micro history of the interviews, a brief summary will explain the opposition's situation on the macro level. In the summer of 1988, the first attempts to unite different cultural and social organizations under one banner of opposition failed because of the government's severe suppression. On February 16, 1989, literati, supported by dissidents, took the official steps to publish a draft programme for the Ukrainian Popular Movement in Support of Perestroika in *Literaturna Hazeta*, a weekly newspaper of the Writers' Union of Ukraine. The Rukh programme, broad in scope, "called for fundamental changes in the political, economic, social, cultural and ecological spheres, the aim of which was to transform Ukraine into a genuinely sovereign republic and a law-governed state."<sup>86</sup> It stated that the people of Ukraine had the right to determine their own destiny and Rukh would promote these rights. The programme explained that the state should work for the people, and not the other way around, and called for the formal recognition of Stalinist crimes. It hoped to see the release of political prisoners and the legal prosecution of their persecutors. It demanded social reforms such as freedom of speech and religion, the end of nomenklatura's privileges, end of corruption, greater equality, and a better health system. Rukh also emphasized equal citizenship of all the ethnic

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<sup>86</sup> Nahaylo, 172.

minorities living on Ukrainian territory. At the same time, the first draft proposed to do this in a Communist way based on Leninist principles.

Against all odds and drastic changes, Rukh formed and held an inauguration congress in Kyiv from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1989. Its membership grew to 280,000 and at the congress 1,109 elected delegates represented 1,247 broad groups; 994 Ukrainians, 77 Russians, 9 Jews, 6 Poles, 6 Belarusians, 2 Armenians, and 7 other national groups' representatives were present.<sup>87</sup> It was an uneven representation of the republic because among the Rukh representatives 85% were Ukrainian, 72% had higher education, 10% were workers and 2.5% collective farmers.<sup>88</sup> Due to heavy industry, central and southeastern regions of the Republic had greater populations than those of Western Ukraine. However, half of the delegates were from Western Ukraine, 35% from Central regions and only 15% from eastern and southern Ukraine. Out of all the delegates, ranging between the ages of 25 and 35, only 10% were female.<sup>89</sup> The congress revealed that a male dominated intelligentsia from Western and Central Ukraine lacking working class association characterized Rukh. Rukh sought to revive Ukrainian language, national customs and to uphold human rights. Delegates believed that the economic problems could only be solved through political change. Kuzio and Wilson, authors of *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence*, explain that Rukh wanted to "co-operate with the CPU<sup>90</sup>, the government and other organizations, but also put forward candidates in elections, propose new legislation, use public pressure and influence, conferences, publications, pickets, demonstrations and open letters to the press."<sup>91</sup>

In November 1989 Rukh, representing forty independent organizations, formed a Democratic Bloc in order to bring the opposition struggle to the political table. The running of

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<sup>87</sup> Nahaylo, 217.

<sup>88</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 111.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

the mobilized opposition in the March 1990 elections for a new Ukrainian Parliament—the Supreme Council was a turning point for the republic because it was a creation of a multi party system. The Democratic Bloc managed to obtain 25-30% of the seats. Out of 442 deputies elected 373 were Communist.<sup>92</sup> Local elections were held at the same time and the Democratic Bloc acquired total control of three Western Ukrainian provinces, while CPU retained its control of eastern and southern Ukraine. This was the end of CPU’s monopoly because “for the first time, the opposition had a foothold in the state, and some control over the institutional resources at its command.”<sup>93</sup>

The brief summary of Rukh evolution into a political force demonstrates the transition of the independence movement from its cultural revival stage into its second, political, phase. This political phase is more important because it gave the opposition the power to formally make macro changes. One may wonder how women fit into the male dominated world of politics. The initial stage of the independence movement has been embraced by Lviv women, since they saw themselves as mothers, whose duty it was to preserve the religious and national identity of their children. Their main goal was to publicly revive the national morale, which had been maintained by them in the private sphere of the home. Women also participated in the second, political, phase; not in such great numbers as men, but seven of the interviewees were deputies of either *raion*, city, *oblast* or Supreme council. The interviews will demonstrate how these female deputies perceived their role in politics seventeen years after. One has to keep in mind that they have seen the results of their work and can reevaluate and construct their memories based on the outcomes.

All of the interviewees spoke of the March 1990 elections as a turning point for the

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<sup>90</sup> Communist Party of Ukraine

<sup>91</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 112.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 125.



opposition. Rukh promoted its members as candidates in all levels and divisions of the government. In the 1989 preparation for elections, Rukh actively prepared lists of delegates who should be recommended for the *raion*, city, *oblast* and parliamentary elections. Oksana Hentosh, an educator, recalls,

Prior to election, the lists were published in the newspaper *Viche*, calling on the people to vote and vote for the national democratic people that Rukh recommended. There were lists of the people Lviv inhabitants should vote for; no campaign was needed because Rukh had such a huge influence. People just voted for the delegates recommended in their districts. The strength of Rukh was so great...<sup>94</sup>

Hentosh's above demonstration reveals that Western Ukrainians eagerly voted for Rukh's candidates because they believed Rukh would be able to carry out the necessary reform, unlike the inadequate CPU. For women this was a turning point because if their name were on the list people would vote for them. However, Rukh recommended one or two people for each post. Thus, when people ran it was against a similar democratic candidate. People would vote for either or because it was not for a communist but a Rukh recommended pro-democrat. However, Yaroslava Yasnyska brought up a good point; she said, "there is a barrier because people are more likely to vote for men than women." Therefore, if a female and a male candidate were recommended by Rukh people were more likely to vote for the male because they associate men with politics. This was a disadvantage for women.

Lviv inhabitants became familiar with the orators of the ceaseless anti-Communist meetings and rallies. It is these people they saw as future leaders. Those who spoke at rallies were the most popular candidates, and they also included women. Most of the interviewees were able to enter politics because of their visible involvement in the first stage of the movement. Four interviewees explain how and why they entered the world of politics. Oksana Sapelyak remembers,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Hentosh.

I met with people on the graves of heroes. That is where people met on holidays. They heard my speeches and they invited me. I told the truth and advocated for Ukraine's independence. I told them that it was not good for Ukraine to belong to the USSR. The KGB watched but did not touch me. I never prepared my speeches ahead of time because I never knew who the audience would be and the focus of the assembly or the problems at hand. Thus, I first oriented myself in the context and then gave a speech. After all my speeches somehow the conflicts were resolved... I just found my words on stage. My educational work and my faith in what I said came in pretty handy. Once a man told me after my speech "wow, you turned that into such a successful speech" and I said "no, that's what I think"... I was elected to the *raion* council where I lived. Everyone knew me and I did not have to run. They remembered me from the various speeches I gave and the different conflicts I resolved. They asked me. I was chosen as the head of the currently named *Lychakivskyi raion* in Lviv.<sup>95</sup>

Sapelyak credits her speeches for getting elected. She constructs the history in such a manner that it was not her who initially wanted to go into politics; she was asked because of her successful speeches. Sapelyak understands the success of her speeches because she perceived herself as telling the truth. Later on she explained that telling the truth got her elected but it did not bring on changes that she hoped for in her office. Sapelyak was convinced that "the truth did not set us free from the Soviet mode."<sup>96</sup> According to Sapelyak's memory, she must have been a visible orator as she was asked to be a candidate and without campaigning became a deputy. She stood out amongst her male peers with her speeches and ability to resolve problems. Her civic involvement left a trademark on the public because they elected her.

Oksana Hentosh reasons for entering politics is similar to Sapelyak's story, she also understands her success because of her ability to stand up and not be afraid to tell what she perceived as the truth. Hentosh remembers,

I was recommended because of the Rukh branch in our college. At that time, there were not that many active people that could really work on the level of deputies... If there was injustice, I constantly stood up and disagreed with those people in higher positions... I headed an organization called *Profspilka* for ten years at our college. I was very active at pedagogue meetings and conferences. I would always raise very important and hard issues that people in charge did not appreciate.<sup>97</sup>

Hentosh also regards herself as the candidate of truth and justice. She spoke of her ability to confront the Communist education system when there were discrepancies. Later in the

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Hentosh.

interview she explained that she was sometimes the only one who stood up to the bureaucracy. Therefore, she understood her ability to solely confront the other side and her sense of justice as the reasons for why she was chosen as a candidate.

Hentosh remembers that she did not initiate the decision but that her friends and students pushed her into it. She had supported the Rukh branch in the college she taught in to the dissatisfaction of the school's administration, which was predominantly composed of Communist Party members, and who discriminated against those students who partook in Rukh. Hentosh recalls the close relationship she had with the students.

Some people still were scared but a few of us pedagogues worked with the students and went to all the Rukh meetings with them. The director (her boss) constantly threatened to fire me. He accused me of stirring up national feelings in the students. Students were called out to the office and also threatened that they will not graduate if their behavior would continue... The students usually came to me after the director scolded them for consultation and understanding. I supported their rights.<sup>98</sup>

Hentosh had a strong relationship with her students because of their common cause and discriminatory reaction their activism brought on. Thus, she perceives the students as the initiators of her political career. "They even went door to door telling people to vote for me" she explained with pride. As a result, Hentosh herself did not do much campaigning. Again, according to the memories, there is promotion of a woman because of her civic involvement in the past. The students and others saw Hentosh as a leader, and to receive that recognition she must have stood out amongst her peers.

Doctor Oreslava Hamyk had different reasons for joining and for being elected. She explains, "I was born to deported parents, and I always knew that my career would not advance in the Soviet system. Also, all other freedoms were limited. So when in 1988, the wave of a struggle started for Ukraine's independence, I felt right away that in that sphere I would be able

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

to realize myself.”<sup>99</sup> Hamyk is a doctor from a tourist town in the Lviv *oblast*. She was not as exposed to Lviv’s cultural intelligentsia that formed the opposition like Sapelyak and Hentosh. Hamyk was not as swept up in the opposition’s ideals; therefore, her reasons are less romanticized. She joined Rukh because she saw it as a way to create a new system in which her career could grow. She was the only one of the interviewees that expressed the hope of personal gains if an independent Ukraine was to be realized.

As other female politicians, Hamyk became known for her activism on the local level. She joined Rukh and opened up a branch in the sanitarium she worked at. She also worked actively in the regional headquarters. Therefore, her name was recommended by Prosvita, an officially registered organization of Rukh, as one of three candidates for the District Council in Lviv; unlike the above interviewees, she campaigned fulltime for half a year prior to the elections. Hamyk credits her success to her ability to tell what she perceived as the truth. She speaks about her campaign,

It was an intense struggle because from Prosvita there were three other candidates and many from the Communist Party. Thus, whoever from Prosvita spoke first he or she would get all the votes. I was the only woman running.... I won in the second round of elections because of my honest position... I told people that the other two candidates that ran against me from Prosvita and I all have one platform, and they will not make a mistake if they choose either one of us because we were colleagues not enemies. All of us advocate against the corrupt system. Once the two Prosvita candidates joined me in one of my campaigns and when I spoke those words one of the candidates said a very unpleasant thing in front of the audience. He said that he is not my colleague but my enemy. However, I continued to tell the same thing in my future speeches and I think that is why people voted for me. I spoke the truth.<sup>100</sup>

Hamyk believes that she won the elections because she was not confrontational against the other two candidates. She promoted the same cause as her rivals did but did not discredit them. She lists this as one of the major reasons why she won. The second reason she regards was her ability to answer questions truthfully. Hamyk gives an example

After my campaign speeches numerous questions were asked... I am a doctor and one of the questions that I remembered is why do doctors take bribes? I gave them examples of how others

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

even construction workers take ridiculous bribes. I honestly told people the truth. How low my pay was and that I had two children to feed, clothes, and house. I told them that I did not have enough money left for candy and my children like anyone's want candy. I asked them why do they only see doctors. I told them that all professions should have a comfortable income, especially those that go through six years of schooling and one year of unpaid internship. People understood me therefore they chose me. If one speaks with the people honestly, people will understand.<sup>101</sup>

Hamyk promoted her honesty in political work. She saw herself as winning the trust of the people. Unlike Hentosh and Sapelyak, Hamyk had to run for office, but her leadership qualities were visible because she was elected over the two male candidates also recommended by Rykh.

The most interesting example of a woman in politics is of Vira Lyaskovska because she already held a politically administrative position in the Soviet infrastructure. She recalls why she switched over to Rukh.

There was a wave of nationalism and it simply was something that we wanted and waited for a long time. It was something that I felt for a long time; I knew that Ukraine would become independent.... As an insider of politburo I knew how much we were governed by Moscow. My work sometime required me to travel to Kyiv and then to Moscow, from there back to Kyiv and back to Moscow and then to Lviv, I flew five times a day to collect all the necessary documents to even make the smallest alternation in one of Lviv's policies. I can't describe how much we depended on Moscow just through work.<sup>102</sup>

Lyaskovska was successful in the Soviet system, although she claims that her work was made difficult because of Moscow's control. She envisioned greater self-rule in the independent Ukraine. Lyaskovska was greatly influenced by her surrounding as she explains "I have lived here in Lviv for sixteen and a half years and all this Ukrainianism."<sup>103</sup> She was swept up in the national character of Lviv and herself became a national patriot. Lyaskovska was one of those government officials, who as an insider was very aware of the situation in the Soviet Union and understood the power of the opposition. She was a product of the Soviet system but felt loyal to the new democratic and national forces. It should also be taken into consideration that she was one of the many party members who switched over to Rukh later in the independence movement when victory was predictable because the entire Soviet infrastructure was in the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

process of collapsing. Therefore, this might make her testimony of her genuine intent of involvement in Rukh less credible, maybe more so because she avidly insisted on being a national patriot.

The four above cases are examples of why and how women entered politics. The interviewees advocated truth as a means to battle the corrupt system and a base for building a democratic nation. Two of them, Oksana Sapelyak and Oksana Hentosh were in the circle of dissidents and cultural intelligentsia, and had experience standing up to and questioning Communist administration, especially in the academic sphere. Both women were ready to sacrifice their careers and to take up civic work fulltime. They had supportive families, therefore could take the risk of losing their jobs. They perceived themselves honorable because they took the risk of losing their jobs by confronting officials. They fully relied on their sense of fairness and honesty and saw themselves above others who were too afraid and not willing to stand up for justice. Unfortunately, both of them failed to realize that not everyone was conditioned by dissident literature and intellectual work, and furthermore not everyone could take the risk of losing their job, which perhaps was their family's livelihood. All the women spoke of special characteristics they possessed, their boldness and the ability to tell the truth.

Doctor Hamyk was exposed to a smaller circle of cultural intellectuals in her hometown outside of Lviv. Out of all the interviews, her description of the late 1980s was framed in a more unpredictable atmosphere. She was the only one who spoke about campaigning for her deputy position, while Sapelyak and Hentosh recollections convey that the positions were almost given to them; it was others who suggested and laid out the carpet for them to enter politics. Hamyk was the only one who spoke about how an independent Ukraine

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

would affect her life personally. Lyaskovska, unlike the others was already in politics; she only had to make a switch to the opposition front. Her reasoning was sovereignty for Ukraine. One wonders if Lyaskovska would have risked the switch and followed, what she claimed to be, her national consciousness if the opposition had not accumulated power. All four interviewees perceived that their sense of truth brought them into politics.

Once elected and involved in politics full time, women continued their mission of reinstalling Ukrainian identity and moral in the public's consciousness. In Lviv the power was in the hands of the opposition after their landslide victory in Western Ukraine. The first steps taken were the acceptance of Ukrainian symbols, such as the flag and the trident, and Soviet-named streets were renamed to Ukrainian ones. The *Ukrainian Weekly* reported,

Among their first acts, many of the new city and oblast councils voted to legalize the outlawed blue-and-yellow Ukrainian national flag and raised the flag above their council buildings: in Lviv and many of the towns in Lviv Oblast, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kiev, and Zhytomyr and several smaller cities and towns as far east as the Ukrainian capital.

As the flags went up in the spring the monuments of Vladimir Lenin, founder of Bolshevism, went down throughout the summer and fall months in the cities of Chervonohrad, Lviv, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Kolomyia and smaller towns in the western regions, either by local official decree or by vandals.<sup>104</sup>

Among other changes, in April 1990, the Lviv City Council restored all the rights of the Greek Catholic Church and voted to return Saint George's Cathedral to it. Women politicians participated in the decision-making process of all the reforms. However, most of their work lay in education and army reconstruction. Through education they sought to reestablish a sense of Ukrainian identity, and push for the creation of a national army. Their involvement in these two spheres brought monumental changes that further promoted opposition's power.

At the same time, the interviewees reflected on their political work through the lens of time. They know the outcome of the Ukrainian system and expressed deep disappointment of the corruption on all levels in the current state. They expressed feeling of failure because they

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<sup>104</sup> 1990: A Look Back: Ukraine in Transition

were not able to control and suppress the corruption when they had the chance in the beginning. Hentosh and Sapelyak suggested that the corruption of Soviet system prospered in a capitalistic independent Ukraine. They blame the continuation of corruption on Communist administrators in all branches of society who were able to succeed after independence. Hentosh explains “we should have dismissed them all there and then. We were afraid that we would not find pro-Ukrainian replacements for them. We could have; there were so many talented people...” Sapelyak on the other hand stated “the Soviet Union is a huge mountain and it will take us many years to break it apart.” Sapelyak explains that there is corruption because “the truth will not set a Soviet person free. It will take years to reestablish internal laws or some sort of moral in that individual... Then our nation would truly be democratic.” As a result, their current understanding of the situation in Ukraine explains why the interviewees spoke of moral and education reforms. Today, they view education as a means to reinstall “internal laws” to guide individuals away from the publicly acceptable corruption. Furthermore, their current views undermine their perception of their achievement in the independence movement.

In 1990, critical education reforms took place orienting towards a Ukrainian centered curriculum. Education was perceived as the socialization of a new generation and steps had to be taken to insure that the new generation would have a Ukrainian identity. Kalynets recalls the changes in education,

In Lviv there were 47 Russian schools and after the reforms only seven were left... Teachers received language classes and pedagogy/ psychology classes. We fired all the iconic Soviet administrators. The curriculum was changed. The geography of Ukraine changed. New history books were written. While schools waited for the new textbooks, we provided journals in which we glue back together our history. It was very interesting work. Teachers formed societies... We did not want to leave the Russian speaking population out who were devoted to our cause so we gave them three months to learn Ukrainian and adjust to the new curriculums.<sup>105</sup>

Yaroslava Yasnyska spoke of the reform in the children’s daycare centers in Lviv. “In 1990-1991 the daycare centers in our *raion* started celebrating Easter and Christmas. We asked the



children to bring special holiday food and explained the meanings behind different traditions.”<sup>106</sup> Yasnyska, who a few years earlier was installing Communist ethics in daycare centers, began promoting Christian holidays. It was a rapid turnaround of ideology. Women as education administrators sought swift reforms. It was a difficult time for the Russian speaking and non-ethnic Ukrainian population. The change in Lviv’s schools’ curriculum and language, which teachers had only three months to learn, was an important step in nation building because reforms had a greater influence on the younger generation. Women politicians saw this as the only way to insure a Ukrainian future.

Oksana Hentosh had a different experience in regards to education. As a lecturer she led a private battle against the college’s administration inside the walls, while Lviv was experiencing demonstrations everyday. She spoke about a deeply rooted and dedicated Soviet bureaucracy and its corruption and discrimination against students. Hentosh gave many examples of the corruption that took place on different levels. One that will be examined is the punishment students received for participation in national demonstrations and one woman’s mission to find justice for the students. *The Ukrainian Weekly* summarizes the students’ hunger strike in which Hentosh’s students participated.

On October 2 some 150 students from various Ukrainian cities declared a hunger strike on a list of demands similar to those demanded by the National Council in Parliament: the resignation of Prime Minister Masol, new multi-party elections in the spring, the nationalization of Communist Party property, rejection of a new union treaty, and the return of all Ukrainian soldiers from beyond the republic’s borders.

The student camp or tent city at the front of the Lenin monument on October Revolution Square became the focus of attention in Kiev and throughout the republic during the dramatic events that followed.

In capitulation to student hunger strikes and massive protests Mr. Masol submitted his resignation as prime minister on October 17 and an overwhelming majority in the Parliament resolved to uphold the students’ demands. The Supreme Soviet voted to hold a referendum on confidence in the Parliament in 1991 and multi-party elections if the results of the vote demand it, to pass laws on voluntary military service beyond the republic’s borders, and to create a commission on nationalization of Communist Party property.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Yasnyska

<sup>107</sup> 1990: A Look Back: Ukraine in Transition

Hentosh recalls the discrimination against those students who participated in the hunger strike.

At the college I worked in, there was a student brotherhood that participated in student hunger strike in Kyiv, in which they managed to get all their demands. Eleven students participated; all of who I knew very well. They were on their last semester of either the third or the fourth, final, course... When they returned they were investigated by the director and threatened that they would not be able to graduate or receive high marks for their hooliganism. All this was done to scare people. They came to me with all of this, they trusted me and thought I could help them as a deputy in the city parliament. I tried to help them with all my strength. Two boys, A-students, who were very active, in the spring were defending their thesis. One of them received a 4(B) a lower mark than he deserved. I knew this would happen since they were threatened.... At first all the advisors agreed that this was an excellent job and deserves a 5 (A)... However, at the end of the day he received 4... The next morning I ran into the director's office and gave him a piece of my mind... I told him that I will not drop this, will see to another board of evaluators and wrote a letter to Kyiv's several administrative departments. This form of injustice done to the students happened everywhere. I was to make sure it stopped. I explained everything to Dzuba, Minister of Culture, in Kyiv that these students were punished for their active role in the movement. Another committee for review was established. The process took a long time, they managed to get their own people through for the second review, all my efforts were a waste because nothing happened. From then on there were too many people and things set against me. They did not allow me to properly function in the college. They told me that I am dangerous and everything would be done to make sure I would leave. They cut the subjects that I was teaching from the department and I was forced to leave... Later, I gave a controversial speech at a pedagogue conference explaining the injustice in grades and threats against the students. And how the university does not have a single reform, it does not even have a scent of national democracy, as outside the people are demanding. It still functioned in the old Soviet corrupt way. I said that we still have a lot of work ahead of us. I guess this speech was not a waste of time because everyone sat with their heads down. My colleagues told me that "can't you see, they are about to chew you apart and stamp you down." I replied "yes, because I am alone, but if one of you was not a coward and stood up and said that what I say is the truth than they would not be able to eat the two or the three of us. But, yes they will eat me if I am just one but I am ready for this." I would not leave this alone, they will not get away with this, I had to tell them what I really thought. At first they did not even want to give me the floor but I was a deputy and made them. Everyone was so scared after that... I wanted justice and truth and I was willing to pay the price for it. Took it outside later and screamed at them about how they fell underneath Communist influence... this was the final straw – I could not work with Communists and cowards... I was sad to leave my students.<sup>108</sup>

Hentosh experience with Communist dominated higher institution reveals that students were not supported by their universities, with the exception of a few faculty members. Higher education was much harder to reform because the Russian and pro-Soviet faculty and top administrators were tough to find replacements for. Hentosh fought the administration in every way she could because she felt that the students were cheated out of a deserved grade. This shows a woman single-handedly take on an entire administration and its corrupt ways. She was the only one who stood up against an injustice that could have been easily overlooked.

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Hentosh

Hentosh persisted to the end until a second advisory would reevaluate the student's work. As much as she fought the college's administrators resisted. Her struggle proved unsuccessful and in the process she lost her job. However, her attempts showed her bravery and showed others that there were those who were "willing to stand up for justice."<sup>109</sup>

The higher the education the more difficult it was to reform. Yasnyska's example of childcare centers reveals that the transformation was swift and painless. Kalynets spoke of grammar and secondary school reform, which were relatively manageable because they rely on government control. Hentosh spoke of the higher level institutions as the most difficult to reform because the Russian and pro-Soviet faculty and top administrators were tough to find replacements for, therefore, making it the most difficult institution to reform. Most of the interviewees continue to work in the educational sphere. Today, Yasnyska, Sapelyak and Hentosh use education as a form of nation building but more so of reinstalling Christian values, that the Communist system tried to remove. Currently, all public daycare centers in the Lviv *oblast* have Christian ethics build into their curriculum due to Hentosh and Yasnyska's work.

Women were the ones who primarily achieved reforms in the army. As mentioned before, women were greatly affected by the Soviet Army because their sons served in it. Mothers mobilized in response to the harassment their sons experienced. Soldiers served in republics other than the one from which they originated thus making them more prone to discrimination and abuses. Furthermore, Ukrainian soldiers were dispatched to the unpopular war in Afghanistan and to clean up nuclear waste at Chernobyl. Women perceived the Soviet Army too vast to confront the problem. They formed a Committee of Soldiers' Mothers to place pressure on the government for the creation of a national army in which soldiers were to only serve on Ukrainian territories. The group was based in Kyiv and did not have national,

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

religious or cultural initiatives.

Western Ukraine became a safe haven for deserters because of the democratic changes taking place there. Vira Lyaskovska, who in 1990 was placed in charge of the military units, explains,

Many boys left Russia, the army, because of the abuses, not only psychological ones but also physical. Perhaps, it was due to the national movement in Lviv. One by one they returned and then with entire groups. First, it was only boys from Lviv and later children from all over Ukraine escaped to Lviv. They returned abused, hungry and poor. They traded in everything they owned in order to come here.<sup>110</sup>

It became an epidemic as Lyaskovska suggested. She, as an administrator, was confronted with it and had to deal with both sides, the soldiers and the Soviet military administration. She explains how it was handled,

We had to figure out a way for these boys not to be identified as deserters... All the commanders and officers in Lviv were ethnic Russian and refused to understand... I was able to find decent officers, who accepted these Ukrainian soldiers into their own ranks on the Republic's territory. Thanks to their honor the boys were not sent back... The Lviv City Council and different community groups supported me and asked the parliament not to call them as deserters but as soldiers who returned back to serve on their homeland. I had to reregister them, regroup them, locate funds to support them, and find them a place to live... South of Lviv there was an army base where those boys were to be trained as reserves... Their numbers increased to more than a thousand and we had to find other bases where they could serve their terms...<sup>111</sup>

Lyaskovska faced great opposition from Moscow. She describes,

I met with a general from Moscow who came "to set things right" and in a calm and decent conversation asked him where his sons serve? Why do they get to serve in Russia, on their own land. Why should Ukrainians not be able to serve on their homeland too? Is it because they deserted their other posts? I explained to him why they escaped. I had tens, no hundreds of examples about the abuse done to the young Ukrainian soldiers. These boys told and showed me the harassment they went through. For example, one boy showed how his cross was branded on his chest because he was seen as a *Bandera* and a believer and they were not. I told him about the beatings these boys received... I asked him why is he not setting things right where the root of the problem is, where the hazing takes place? The Ukrainian SSR has its own territory what is the problem than if these boys want to serve on it. He tried to convince me otherwise and the end result was that we (I) will not change. The Russians should take an example from us and embrace this demand from all the populations in the Union. This way he would be able to go down in history as a reasonable person. He left and said he will never return because he "came with options and left with nothing." I had to be careful with these people and not fully express my feelings in order not to get an unpleasant reaction from them.<sup>112</sup>

The connection Lyaskovska felt to this issue was very emotional because she was a witness

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

whom the soldiers told their grievances to, and she was also the one in power who could help them. Due to her strong background in the Soviet Armed Forces she was familiar with Moscow's policy makers and more able to cajole them. The advocacy to return all Ukrainian soldiers to their home territory was so colossal that in July 1990 the parliament adopted "a resolution on military service which demands that Ukrainian soldiers serving "in regions of national conflict such as Armenia and Azerbaijan" be returned to Ukrainian territory by October."<sup>113</sup> However, Moscow continued to apply pressure regardless of the resolutions the Ukrainian SSR passed. Lyaskovska describes how she handled the confrontation.

A General came flying into my office from Chernivci, where there was a training army unit. He reported that a helicopter flew in from Moscow to pick up 110 soldiers for the front lines in the Caucasus, Armenian war... That moment I jump from my desk into a helicopter... When we arrive the boys were waiting to board the helicopter in the warm sun. They were about to be used like meat; to be send out into the battle...seeing this I was neither alive or dead. I told them no one is going anywhere. The plane will not take off... I was asked who was I? And what right did I have? I told them that they should listen to me if they do not want to have any problem. I promised to stand right in front of the helicopter and not let it take off. I asked him what right he had? Who gave him the right to take these young boys that do not even know how to shoot into battle as some sort of meat under the grenades. Who gave him the orders? They were lost with words because they did not expect to encounter this. Their response was that these boys were volunteers. So I asked the boys to step out of line that was voluntarily agreeing to do this. No one stood out of line. And that was the end of it... there were never any problems...I was the only women, they listened and supported me, I felt and understood as a mother... I went to all the military branches and I spoke with the boys, examined were they slept what they ate...<sup>114</sup>

Lyaskovska felt great concern for the soldiers. She thought she was able to understand their needs better because as a mother she was able to take care of them better than a man. She paid attention to little details, such as if their beds were comfortable or if they were provided with nutritious food. Lyaskovka was responsible for all the formalities of the military in the Lviv *oblast*, and in addition, she felt more responsible for the wellbeing of the soldiers because she was a woman. Lyaskovska was emotionally involved in her work from preventing the deportation of soldiers to the frontlines of a war to making sure they were comfortable in their barracks.

<sup>113</sup> The Tenth Anniversary Of Ukraine's Independence: Independence: a timeline.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

Lyaskovska's military work reveals a woman who was able to confront the most rigid military men. Her contribution to the independence movement lies in the service she was able to provide to Ukrainian soldiers. Lyaskovska managed to smooth out a controversial issue of the deserters. She was able to rehabilitate them and keep them from the repercussions that they may have encountered if they were to be taken back to the army. Lyaskovska was also responsible for saving the lives of hundreds of soldiers by keeping them on Ukrainian territories. In early 1991, there were disputes over the issue of whether or not to create an independent Ukrainian army. Kalynets, a deputy in the parliament, relates

We knew that the next day the Communists would use all forms to block such a development. That night I got a phone call from Liudmyla Trukhmanova (head of Committee of Soldiers' Mothers), she asked me what they can do to help... I asked them to show up at the parliament the next morning before the parliament meets in black headscarves with candles and peace branches. She said it would be done and asked if they could bring portraits of their sons who died in the army. The next day, I can't tell you... It was scary, the entire front of the building was filled with women in black holding candles and black ribbon telling the parliament that they do not want their children to die. Later Khmara tried to take credit for this and I laughed. This demonstration had a huge influence on the parliament that day and anytime arguments would start. We would tell them to go look in the eyes of those women, how could they go outside... It absolutely helped our cause of an independent army.<sup>115</sup>

Kalynets's example illustrates how women achieved their goals by using emotional symbols in their demonstrations. The effect on the decision process of the parliament was monumental that day because the women were able to demonstrate to the decision-makers in the parliament the results of their policies. Kalynets also notes in the description that Stepan Khmara, a dissident and deputy, sought to take credit for the influential demonstration. If this is the case, it shows that men tried to take responsibility for women's accomplishment. It is obvious, even if Kalynets is taken out of the picture, that Liudmyla Trukhmanova and the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers were responsible for the demonstration. They had the resources, were the ones to organize and stand outside the parliament building. It is doubtful that a man told them to do this. Women played a monumental role in the establishment of a national army, further

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<sup>115</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

discrediting the Soviet army and destabilizing the Soviet Union.

In conclusion, the examples from the interviews reveal that conservative women perceived that their ability to tell the truth caused them to enter politics. In politics they continued to establish a sense of morality and national identity. They concentrated on education and military reforms. In education they tried to establish Ukrainian curriculum with rewriting history and transforming Russian taught schools into Ukrainian. Elementary and secondary education was easier to reform than higher education institutions because it was harder to replace Soviet specialists and scholars. Kalynets reveals how she approached the problem on the macro level, while Hentosh explains her attempts on the micro level. Women's involvement in the army reforms was not nationalistically based. It was just the concern of soldiers' mothers that pushed for an independent army which would guarantee military service within the Republics territories and better treatment of their sons. Women from Lviv also felt the same maternal feelings towards the abused soldiers. However, they were more confronted with the problem because deserters escaped to Lviv for a safe haven. Lyaskovska described how she was able to formally rehabilitate them and save them from further abuses or repercussions. Kalynets's example reveals how women used visual elements in their emotional demonstration to persuade the parliament to vote for the creation of an independent army. Women numbered a small percentage of deputies and only ten percent of Rukh members.<sup>116</sup> However, their political influence was indispensable.

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<sup>116</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 111.

## CHAPTER SIX

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**Because I was a Women in Politics**

This chapter will reveal how women perceived their gender in politics. Women were a minority of politicians therefore the chapter will concentrate on individual interviewee's perception of themselves as women in politics. In all the interviews feminist characteristics like motherhood was expressed. However, not one voluntarily spoke of gender discrimination or women's issues. I had to pose the question whether an interviewee felt discriminated because she was a woman. The chapter will closely examine the interviewees' perception as women in the male world of politics.

One has to take into consideration the personality of each interviewee, her background and her experience. All the interviewees emphasized the peculiar characteristics of their personality that differentiated them from the general public or the average women: boldness, honesty, sense of truth, bravery, honor and in Iryna Kalynets's self-description, impudence. These are the characteristics which they perceived to make them successful as women in politics. Oksana Hentosh recollection of how she was the only one who confronted the corrupt college administration, mentioned in chapter five, reveals that she understood herself more honorable because she refused to work in such an unjust context. Hentosh explained,

My colleagues told me that "can't you see, they are about to chew you apart and stamp you down." I replied "yes, because I am alone, but if one of you was not a coward and stood up and said that what I say is the truth than they would not be able to eat the two or the three of us. But, yes they will eat me if I am just one but I am ready for this." I would not leave this alone, they will not get away with this, I had to tell them what I really thought. At first they did not even want to give me the floor but I was a deputy and made them. Everyone was so scared after that... I wanted justice and truth and I was willing to pay the price for it. Took it outside later and screamed at them about how they fell underneath Communist influence... this was the final straw – I could not work with Communists and cowards...<sup>117</sup>

Lyaskovska was also eager to set herself apart from others. She did not feel discriminated against because she was a woman but at the same time she worked in the male dominating



military sphere. She knew it was uncommon for a woman to hold such a high bureaucratic military position. Therefore, she spoke of her special characteristics that made her successful in the customarily male domain. Lyaskovska recalls,

I feel that it was my confidence that carried me through. This confidence reflects on people and if one is not sure of ones work than it would lead to bad results. I was confident in my work... If a women is a professional or even if she does not know something and does not have those complexes to show that she understands everything than she will be respected. I have a completely different personality; when there is something that I do not know I ask for it to be explained; and when someone asks me for an explanation I have greater respect for that individual. I always asked if there was something that I did not know and when I knew, it was unlikely that I would alter my choice. Confidence was needed.<sup>118</sup>

She defines her special characteristic as confidence in ones work. Her quote suggests that most women may have complexes in a male dominated workplace and therefore pretend to know everything. She perceives herself unlike most others because she does not pretend to know it all. Lyaskovska regards this characteristic as the one that made her successful and respected by her male colleagues.

Each interviewee thought herself unique because she made up the minority of women in politics. Furthermore, these women not only felt uncommon because they were women but because they were also a minority in the opposition. In the Rukh's inauguration women only made up ten percent of its membership,<sup>119</sup> therefore it is no wonder why they felt themselves isolated. Oksana Sapelyak, an educator and a former city deputy, explains,

In the city council, if out of 100 politicians there is one woman than more people are likely to listen to her. If there were 50 women and 50 men, her words would not be heard. I did not worry that they were not going to listen to me. But from the other side I was more responsible for representing the opinion of women. I had to be careful of what I said.<sup>120</sup>

Sapelyak perceived herself as a minority in the parliament but at the same time representing half of the population; because of this she received more attention. Sapelyak was aware of how influential her thoughts might be because she spoke for an entire gender. She felt more

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<sup>117</sup> Interview with Hentosh.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

<sup>119</sup> Kuzio & Wilson, 111.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

important than the next male deputy did because she perceived herself to be taken more seriously. Women were a minority in politics, although they did not have the mentality that they were any less important than men. Even with the existence of gender discrimination they felt that their words carried more weight because they represented half of the population.

Not one interviewee spoke of gender discrimination or women's issue in her recollection of her political work. The concentration in the interviews was motherhood; the celebration of Mothers' Day, Lyaskovska's maternal understanding of soldiers, and a mothers' concern over the morality of children and the interviewees' own guilt for taking time away from their children because of their demanding political careers. Here is one example of Doctor Oreslava Hamyk, who expressed mother's guilt,

...On Easter Sunday after church we went with the priests to the military base to present the basket to the soldiers... One time I remember my husband was away and I told my children to wait for me to have Easter breakfast with them. The proceeding at the base took longer than expected. My children waited till late afternoon hungry for me to come home and have Easter breakfast with them. There were many situations like that and it broke my heart. However, it was a marvelous time that called for civic work. It was a beautiful time. A single lady from my building watched my children. Those times demanded such sacrifices.<sup>121</sup>

All of the interviewees spoke about how much precious family time was sacrificed, due to their involvement in politics. They felt guilty for not having the time to be there for their children. However, all said it was what the time demanded, excusing their guilt. Nevertheless these women did not pay attention to women's issues besides that of motherhood, although they were eager to talk about various projects they organized in the late 1990s to promote women into politics.

One may wonder why female politicians did not confront women's issues when they were elected to power. In the late 1980s women suffered the most under Communism; lack of liberties, lack of basic goods, working extended hours, second shift of household chores, underpaid and more receptive to family violence. It would seem that as women they had a

better understanding of the problematic situation many females found themselves in, and as a result would express some interest in promoting the wellbeing of women. The below descriptions of how they perceived themselves in politics and their stand towards gender discrimination will better depict their lack of interests on gender issues.

The first case that will be considered is that of Iryna Kalynets, a dissident, who was repressed and imprisoned for her activism. Out of all the interviewees she played the greatest role in the independence movement because she stood in the frontlines of the opposition struggle. Her visibility also made her a public figure and a deputy in the parliament. Kalynets recalls how she perceived women in the parliament.

There were four active women in the parliament Larysa Skoryk, Kateryna Zavoyska, Tania Yahivna and me. Practically, everything that was happening in the parliament was due to the women's part. That is what the deputies, not ours but the other side would say, "who makes the weather here?" From standing up in protest, to hunger strikes, to costume change in the parliament. However, each time we changed it up. We did something new. Women were the first to place miniature flags on their parliamentary seat and we were the first ones to display the blue and yellow flag during, President Bush's visit.<sup>122</sup>

Kalynets perceived herself and three other female deputies as a major force in the parliament. She contends that women were the ones who were always coming up with new ideas, while men were only adopting and processing them through. Kalynets views women as the creative ones, and as the initiators of revolutionary ideas and actions. Women were more likely to use visual elements such as flags, costumes and body language to keep the parliament on its feet. Therefore, Kalynets regarded women as the idea makers and rule breakers of conservative political parliamentary proceedings.

Kalynets saw women as powerful participants in the game of politics. In regards to the gender discrimination question she gave examples, and how women coped with it. Kalynets recalls,

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Hamyk

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Kalynets

Mykhailo Horyn's party wanted to take a vote if they needed women. For me this was circus on a string. I laughed. Only Chornovil had respect for us. Otherwise, our (the opposition's) men discriminated... we laughed. Ukraine is anti-feminist. It was all very funny. In the media they wrote about how women should partake in politics. For some male deputies it was unacceptable for a woman to become a minister. This discrimination was even felt in the political camps. It was glory for men to protect women. Women should be able to pull the same load, but still be women and could be pushed aside... Some parties were made up of only men. We laughed at them all day.<sup>123</sup>

Kalynets's examples reveal that some men regarded women inappropriate in politics and therefore did not want to accept them into their parties, while others could not fathom the idea that a woman could be minister. Female deputies felt themselves above this discrimination; they saw men as weaker individuals who were not able to accept women in politics. To them this was ridiculous, "a circus on a string," and somewhat funny, "we laughed at them." Kalynets's understanding of the situation is that men saw women as someone to protect but at the same time someone who they could disregard if need be. This was impossible with female politicians because they did not need protection not could they be pushed aside. Kalynets suggests that men discriminated against women but at the same time expected them to be able to do the same amount of work as men. This double standard exists because of the Communist propagandized image of a strong Soviet woman, who is able to do everything. Some politicians did not want to compete with women who may do twice as much work as men therefore they completely wanted them out of politics.

Kalynets describes how women deputies handled this discrimination. She explains, "I confronted them that they were Muslims. Kateryna Zavoyska gave them heat. She reminded them when they stopped riding horse that is when they lost their manhood..."<sup>124</sup> Female deputies in the parliament did not take gender discrimination lightly. They stood up for themselves and disclaimed sexist accusations. At times, Kalynets even stooped to the lowest

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

level of confronting her opponents. To the question, “although there was discrimination did the male deputies listen to your ideas” she responded,

Only if they even tried not to listen, than they would get it in the face. I once punched a Communist, Babanski, who was sitting behind me complaining, I barked at him and he responded, “be quiet jailbird.” I turned around and smacked him across the face, he was about to fight me but the Communist held him back.<sup>125</sup>

Kalynets also played the dirty game of politics. Unlike other interviewees, she did not resolve to be proper, instead she could start a physical fight in the parliament because she did not appreciate the name-calling. However, in her words she describes that she “barked” at him for complaining. Therefore, him offending her was rooted in her crude behavior towards him. Kalynets is contradictory in her opinion, because at one moment she is physically attacking men at parliamentary proceeding and the next she holds women to a higher moral level. She explains why women were better politicians,

Men in politics are *babstvo*. Women understand household and understand responsibility. Women should be in politics where there are moral issues. Men just try to outdo each other. Meetings were dissolved and thus there was prayer all this was led mostly by women, that started it all. Women are devoted to religion, church, faith and their children’s future.

Kalynets perceives women to be more noble individuals than men. She calls men in politics *babstvo*, meaning that they were like fighting old hags, which reveals that she also discriminates against women. She took the negative stereotype of older women and used it to describe bickering male politicians. Furthermore, her lack of understanding of gender equality is in her contradictions. Women as she perceives are responsible for moral issues in politics and are not shameless, rude and crude, as Kalynets described herself to be. It should be taken into consideration that women might have had to take on those characteristics to be able to succeed in politics. However, Kalynets perception is contradictory because one cannot have moral and be in politics; or can one? Perhaps women are the ones who can display morality in politics.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

Regardless of whether women could incorporate moral into the treacherous political games, Kalynets is a product of her society. She plainly stated, “I am not anti-man, I am not a feminist but I am anti-chauvinist.”<sup>126</sup> She is keen on stating she is not a feminist. This might be due to the Ukrainian society’s negative connotation of the term, “feminist.” However, it reveals that Kalynets as an intellectual does not understand the true meaning of the word. According to the Oxford Dictionary, feminism is “the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim.”<sup>127</sup> It might be due to her lack of knowledge and understanding that she denies being feminist. On the other hand Kalynets is probably being completely honest because she herself, as shown above, discriminates against women, which can be perceived as one of the reasons that explains her lack of interest in women’s issues.

Kalynets perceives Ukrainian women in politics as a central role in restoring morality. She states, “in Ukraine, feminism will not change the situation, only morality will.”<sup>128</sup> As many post Communist intellectual women she does not identify with Western feminism. She does not see it as a solution to Ukraine’s problem. She regards morality as a solution. Kalynets lack of concern for women’s issues stems from her Christian and national conservatism. Christianity and nationalism have morality while feminism does not.

Some interviewees saw a positive side of being a woman in politics. The next case that will be explored is of Vira Lyaskovska, a deputy who was in charge of military personnel at the time. She was the only woman amongst her male colleagues, officers, generals and policy makers. Lyaskovska explains,

As a woman I never felt any forms of discrimination. I think military men liked the fact that I was a woman. They enjoyed my presence, I was younger, leaner and looked after my

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> “Feminism.” *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary-Search Online*.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

appearance... I knew when to tell a joke, when to smile and when to critically and firmly respond... I sometimes had to remind them not to behave rudely in front of a lady.<sup>129</sup>

Lyaskovska did not feel discriminated against, being one of the few women in the Soviet

Armed Forces. Instead she perceived being a woman worked towards her advantage because she relied on her physical appearance to be admired. Lyaskovska used her femininity towards her advantage she controlled rude behavior by reminding men that they are speaking to a lady.

Lyaskovska embraced the stereotype of femininity and when needed used it to get her arguments through, but at the same time she knew how to be firm. These characteristics perhaps were necessary for a woman to become successful in military politics. She had to work with military men who perhaps were not accustomed to dealing with women on such high levels of decision making.

The third case that will be examined is of Oksana Sapelyak, who was elected a head of Lviv *raion* and a deputy in the Lviv City Council. She recalls how she perceived her gender in politics,

Because I am a woman, people paid more attention to me, not necessarily in a positive or a negative way... For example in a film, one is likely to pay more attention to the actress rather than the actor. She is more interesting. This is true in civic and political life. A woman calls more attention because she is more interesting. A woman can call on the interest of both men and women in the same way. She can call on positive and negative attitudes. But, there is a higher level of interest and an individual who calls for more interest, she is noticed more, there is more attention given to her, she is more under the control of others, she has to watch what she says and how she behaves. Because if a man says something stupid he will not be judged but if a woman does the same thing it will be interpreted that she said or behaved in a stupid manner because she is a woman. It is not from society but from nature that women are more interesting.<sup>130</sup>

Sapelyak has a more neutral stance towards women in politics. She can see from one side that women are more noticeable which places greater value on what they do. However, on the other side, because of the attention, if she was to make a mistake people would not so easily overlook it as if a male deputy made a similar mistake. Her major point is that a woman's unsatisfactory behavior is explained by her gender, unlike man's behavior which is individualized. When

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska

asked to recall a positive and a negative example of being a woman in politics, Sapelyak could only recall the positive. She explains,

There was a battle over a church... However, it is very hard to remove the KGB surveillance team from church's attic because they were not under my control nor was Kyiv. It was pointless to ask them and I needed *Oblasna Rada* to decide on this. Before giving a speech on this issue to the deputies, I asked all the men to sign a petition. Maybe because I was a woman they had a hard time saying no to me. Thus when, I gave the speech everyone had already voted with their signatures. This was the positive side of being a woman. A negative example, well it is hard to remember.<sup>131</sup>

Women perceived themselves using their femininity to their advantage in politics, therefore explaining why most felt a lack of discrimination. Nevertheless they understood that there was discrimination. Oksana Hentosh recalls "There were 13 female deputies out of 147. However, at that time I did not feel discriminated against because of my gender."<sup>132</sup> The interviewees understanding of discrimination did not necessarily come from feeling its consequences, even though they surrounded them. They perceived themselves different from other women and contributed their special characteristics and traits to their success in politics as women and as politicians. They saw themselves above the discrimination because they felt themselves untouched by it.

Another reason why women did not feel discriminated against is because they felt that they had a common cause to demolish Communism and establish an independent democratic nation. They, like their foremothers as mentioned in chapter one, felt the discrimination more against their nationality than their gender. This is confirmed by Doctor Hamyk's answer to whether she felt discriminated against because of her gender. She responded,

Of course, when I had to bring papers to register myself as a candidate of Prosvita at the city hall, they (Communist officials) tried to convince me otherwise. They asked questions such as. "Do you really want to do this? Do you want to stay home with your children? You should stay home with the children?" I always heard this.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Sapelyak.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Hentosh.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Hamyk.



Hamyk only felt gender discrimination from the Communists when she was registering as an opposition candidate. This reveals that she felt gender discrimination because of her national and democratic stand, although, it was their tactic to stop her from getting involved in the opposition's work.

The final explanation of why women did not feel discriminated against is because of Chornovil and the way he conducted the political proceedings. In each interview Chornovil comes up as a man from whom gender discrimination was not felt, and who promoted women's ideas and right. Kalynets recalls, "Chornovil was the only different one,"<sup>134</sup> while Hamyk describes,

In Rukh I did not feel discriminated against. The leading members of Rukh did not care whether I was a man or a woman and especially during the times of Chornovil. After he went away the situation changed, there were fewer women. I found that Chornovil understood the role of women in politics and that they should be recognized on a higher level... It was visible in his work, when he headed, he invited women to speak and always made sure we had our say. During the times of Chornovil it was good being a woman. I took an active role at those sessions and I am sure they remembered me... We all were very active.<sup>135</sup>

Chornovil dominated Lviv politics and all the interviewees worked alongside him as deputies from the March 1990 elections past independence August 1991.

The last case that will be examined is of Yaroslava Yasnyska because she was the only one who did not succeed to the office she aimed for. Yasnyska recalls,

In our *raion* council there were 70 deputies and only 5 or 6 of them were women. Why? because it is difficult for women to join politics. When I ran for city council I did not win. There is no gender equality in politics like there should be. Women do control the educational sphere. In education or cultural institution women hold most of the directorial positions but when a bit of politics is involved it is regarded to be men's work... There is a barrier because people are more likely to vote for men than women.<sup>136</sup>

She felt discriminated because she was woman. Yasnyska views gender discrimination as a reason why she was not elected and why there were fewer women in politics.

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<sup>134</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Hamyk.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Yasnyska.

The interviewees perceived women's role necessary in politics for various reasons.

They viewed women as more practical and moral. Yasnyska stated, "...where there is a woman there is more organization, stability and morality."<sup>137</sup> Kalynets explains,

Women understand household and understand responsibility. Women should be in politics where there are moral issues. Men just try to outdo each other. Meetings were dissolved and thus there was prayer all this was led mostly by women, that started it all. Women are devoted to religion, church, faith and their children's future.<sup>138</sup>

Vira Lyaskovska also presents a similar view,

I hope that my work was effective... It was my strength, confidence, womanly intelligence and protection, that the process of the army transition to go smoothly... A woman is necessary in these male structures, a woman has her own mission, something only she can do and a man would not be able to because she feels/ has instinct, intuitions and female logic; one that can see differently from men. Men love this, they love to listen to women when she speaks differently from them but intelligently. That she speaks with feeling and understanding rather than formally.<sup>139</sup>

The interviewees understand the role of women in politics as necessary in all branches because they represent a side men cannot. Morality keeps resurfacing when there is talk of women in politics. As a result, according to the interviewees, women are the moral in politics. They are the ones that establish and maintain guidelines for decision making and behavior.

In conclusion, the reason why Lviv female politicians in the early 1990s did not approach women's issues is because they were the products of their society. Their initial goal was to oppose Communism. One battles Communism with democracy, nationalism and religion; the last two run contradictory to feminism. Politically active women in Lviv saw themselves as a minority in the sea of male politicians and different from the general female population because of their special characteristics that promoted them to administrative positions. As, a result they did not feel discriminated against even though they acknowledged that gender discrimination existed. Their main concern was democratic national liberation rather than gender equality. Some thought that gender equality would naturally follow

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Kalynets.

democracy. Women also perceived their role in politics as necessary and important because of their mother-like understanding and ethical guidance.

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<sup>139</sup> Interview with Lyaskovska.

## Conclusion

This thesis presents one perspective, that of politically active women in Lviv, on the Ukrainian independence movement. Almost seventeen years after independence, through the memories of nine female politicians, a better understanding of the movement and women's participation in it are revealed. The mainstream historiography of the movement excludes women and therefore, severely undermines a big part of what had contributed to the movement's overall success.

Women from Lviv approached the movement differently than those from the rest of Ukraine. Their understanding and mission of it was rooted in Lviv's historical experience in Western Ukraine that produced a different identity from the rest of the Republic's regions. Western Ukraine had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Polish rule; as a result, Ukrainians from this region looked towards Western Europe for their model of forming an independent society. They partook in the awakening of the nation and had a tradition of resisting assimilation and foreign regimes. Western Ukrainians did not have the subordinate mentality to Russia that the rest of Ukrainians had because they had not been under the rule of the Tsarist Empire and the first years of the Soviet Union. Western Ukrainian women, in this context, played a major role in the national struggle because, to a large extent, they preserved the Ukrainian identity in the private sphere of their homes. The identity in Western Ukraine was preserved through language, cultural traditions and the Greek Catholic faith. These components constructed the morality and spirit of a nation that had not yet come to fruition.

Under Communism, when the Greek Catholic Church was abolished and "bourgeoisie nationalism" repressed, many women continued to maintain this Ukrainian identity in the private sphere of their homes. They preserved cultural traditions through

the celebration of holidays such as Saint Nicholas' Day and were able to preserve their religion in an atheist society by teaching their children to attend church and how to pray. The historical national resistance and severe repressions were preserved in songs. Galician women saw themselves as supportive mothers, preservers of a broken nation and keepers of the hearth. Their anti-Communist struggle was rooted in their historical sense of identity. In the late 1980s women across the Ukrainian SSR suffered greatly. Besides the lack of civil liberties, the lack of basic goods and food contributed to their underpaid manual labor jobs and second shifts of household work. The double standard of family and fulltime careers further imprisoned the so-claimed liberated Soviet woman. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, pressing issues of the everyday struggle arose that could have dominated women's focus. In spite of this, Western Ukrainian women insisted on concentrating their efforts on reestablishing a national identity. Their nineteenth-century romantic nationalism is what separated them from the rest of women in Ukraine.

Politically active women in Lviv sought to establish a sense of national identity because they saw it as a form of anti-Soviet resistance, a unifying factor, and a sense of belonging to a group of people with the same past hardships and similar aspirations. Lviv's politically active women perceived the establishment of a common national identity as the first necessary stage of the independence movement and a base for nation building.

When the first attempts in 1988 for political opposition activism were repressed, women turned to cultural renovation and community work, bringing private family traditions and holidays into the public sphere. These tactics took the preserved Ukrainian identity of home and made it public. This was done through holidays, such as Saint

Nicholas' Day, and traditions, such as *Vertepy*. In addition, the establishment of private holidays that had Christian and cultural character was meant to shed the Communist installed fear from the public and encourage participation in the movement.

The interviewees' memories reveal that women's role in the independence movement was significant and irreplaceable regardless of their relatively small representation as compared to Lviv's male politicians. It appears that women were the think tank of radical ideas and organizers of demonstrations and anti-Communist projects. The history of the independence movement was reconsidered in the everyday practices of planning, organizing, supporting and consolidating the movement. When the Soviet regime suppressed the first political meetings women turned to prayer. A small women's organization, the Marian Society, worked behind the scenes on proposing actions and realizing them through event planning, which consisted of writing samizdats, distributions, announcements, phone calls, invitations of speakers, establishment of location and other programs. The Marian Society was the main driving force behind most prayer meetings for the resurgence of the Greek Catholic Church. Women initiated and set the stage for male presenters as they had in the past. The opposition movement was able to function throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even though most of its activists were in prison camps because women were the lifelines that promoted and supported the mostly male national dissidents. The work of women is undermined in such historical movements because it is done on the micro level and is largely kept from public perception. Only the performance of men is recognized and valued despite the fact that it was significantly arranged by women. As Oksana Kis, a women's historian, suggested, "women's work in Rukh was perhaps like the work of ants – invisible and

anonymous, but massive and important, and without that Rukh would never succeed.”<sup>140</sup>

The example of the Marian Society supports Kis’ statement; while their work was undoubtedly the catalyst for major historical events of the movement, I could only find one source that mentions it, a North American newspaper.

The interviewees perceived their role in politics as necessary. In the initial stages of democratic forces in power, under the leadership of Chornovil, many women regarded themselves more influential than male politicians because of their minority. They placed higher value on their positions because they perceived themselves as representing half of the population. Female politicians’ work was concentrated on reforming education and the army. By installing Ukrainian based curriculum, they managed to swiftly change the socialization of an entire generation, insuring a Ukrainian future. Women, like Oksana Hentosh, bravely attempted to confront the corrupt Communist based administrators and systems. Ukrainian women pushed for the formation of an independent army because they felt it would protect their sons, soldiers, from the abuses inflicted on them in the Soviet Armed Forces. A Lviv female politician took on the military system in regards to Ukrainian deserters and rehabilitated them as soldiers who have the right to serve on their Republic’s territories. Her actions were the first steps in the creation of an independent army. Women from Lviv also brought the Ukrainian identity to the Sovietized army with the reestablishment of cultural holidays providing a national base of loyalty and belonging to a national army that was not yet formed. Women were a minority amongst the male politicians, although their active work made up for their scarcity.

Female politicians have acknowledged that there was gender discrimination in politics due to their low numbers and male attitudes, however, they saw themselves as

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<sup>140</sup> E-mail for Kis

rising above these issues and did not seem to be too bothered under the leadership of Chornovil. Their primary concern was national democracy with gender issues becoming secondary. Because of this, until Ukraine reached independence, virtually no attention was given to women's problems.

This study of women's perception of their role in the independence movement reveals another side of its comprehension. Politically active women in Lviv had a predisposed private national identity, which they brought into the public and used as a cultural weapon to resist Communism and establish a base on which an independent movement could be mobilized and a nation constructed. Lviv women's perception on the independence movement is different from their male counterparts and the rest of Ukrainian women because they heavily relied on this cultural morality which was believed to set Ukrainians free from Communist corruption. I hope this thesis enriched the general history of the movement and contributed to the understanding of women as major players in a national independence struggle.



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