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THE ART OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN UKRAINE AND SLOVAKIA: COMPARATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE UKRAINIAN SICH RIFLEMEN'S ARTISTIC GROUP AND THE KOŠICE ARTISTIC CENTRE PHENOMENA

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Abstract. Purpose. *Analysing the cultural and artistic processes during the first third of the twentieth century in Ukraine and Slovakia, investigating the impact of the First World War on the art and demonstrating the common aesthetic pursuits of artists who had been working in Ukraine and Slovakia during that period.*

Methodology *of the performed research is based on the use of the complex scientific approach to study cultural and artistic phenomena, which combines comparative visual analysis with historical and cultural research methods.*

Results. *Implementing a comparative description of two artistic phenomena which were active during the First World War in Ukraine and Slovakia would allow to rethink the role of cultural traditions on those territories and open a new page in the study of Ukrainian-Slovak artistic connections. An analysis of the art pieces being made during the war and in the post-war period would help to assess how artists reacted on the crisis phenomena of the War's reality. Conducting a comparative study will identify common and distinctive features of the works by Ukrainian and Slovak artists in the context of European art at the XX century.*

Scientific novelty *lies in the fact that, for the first time, it carried out a comparative characterization of two equal meaningful artistic phenomena of Ukraine and Slovakia, which were formed under the influence of the events of the First World War – the artistic group of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (further – USR) and Košice modernism. However, it should be noted that this work is only the initial stage of delving into the specified topic and needs the further coverage.*

Practical relevance. *The results of this study could be used as educational materials for students studying art history both in Ukraine and in Slovakia. They can also be useful for professionals in this field. The research materials will be donated to libraries of educational institutions. This research has been written by financial support of the FPU ("Fond na podporu umenia") foundation, call no.101/2022, subprogram 3.8 "Research and critical reflection on art in exile (Š)".*

Key words: *First World War, artistic phenomena, Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, Košice modernism, art of the first third of the XX century.*

INTRODUCTION

On August 28, 1914, the First World War had begun, and the main front line in Ukraine was located on the territory of Eastern Galicia. After invasion of Russian troops to Lviv on September 3, 1914, the cultural and artistic life in the region had completely collapsed [14, p. 306]. The lands of Slovakia, as well as the territory of Western Ukraine, were the part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Ukraine this period is associated with active national liberation struggles, especially, the participation of the Volunteer Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukrainiński Sichovi Striltsi) in the ranks of the Austrian Army. The events of the First World War also influenced the cultural life in Slovakia where it was the period of intensification the Slovak national movement. Comparing the works by Ukrainian artists with the ones by the artists who had been working in Slovakia, especially, in Košice, under the influence of similar historical circumstances, is relevant and particularly important to get more precise definition of national characteristics and the contribution of each country to the overall picture of the art in the twentieth century.

ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

During the long Soviet period of Ukrainian history, any research related to the Ukrainian national liberation movement were banned, and most of the artworks were destroyed. The only mentions of the artists from the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen's artistic group were found in the studies by Ukrainian diaspora's scientists in the USA and Europe. Several research on this issue appeared only after Ukraine had gained independence in 1990. Among them it is worth noting the articles by Roman Yatsiv [26; 27]. His most recent publication about rifleman's creativity was the first monograph dedicated to the activities of the leader of the USSR artistic group Ivan Ivanets: – "Ivan Ivanets (1893–1946). Riflemen's memoirs, creative heritage" (2019) [6]. Among other monographic studies of the creativity of individual representatives the artistic group was the album by Andrii Kryzhanivskiy "Osyp Kurylas" [13], which collected about 520 reproductions of the artist's works and analysed separately his activities in the ranks of the USSR Legion. However, paying tribute to the detailed coverage of public and organizational activities of O. Kurylas, as well as his work in the genre of graphic caricature, the researcher didn't pay enough attention to artist's portraits and artworks on everyday topics. In 2008 an album of works by O. Sorokhtey was published. It contains the most complete catalogue of the artist's works, numbering 1069 items, as well as

published reproductions of almost all his available graphic works [21].

The first attempt to systematize the creativity of the members of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen's artistic group was the album "Ukrainian Sich Riflemen in battles and in the meantime: an artistic heritage", published in a small edition with the assistance of the Institute of Collection of Ukrainian Art Monuments at the National Museum of Art, National Museum of Art and the Slavic Library of the National Library of the Czech Republic in 2007 [25]. The unique value of this publication is that it contains reproductions of more than 200 works of Riflemen's artists, most of which are kept outside of Ukraine and in private collections.

At the same time, the phenomenon of Košice modernism is a well-researched artistic phenomenon. A collective monograph «Košice modernism: Košice art in the Nineteen-Twenties» was published in 2013 through the efforts of the East Slovak Gallery [9]. However, a comparison of Ukrainian artistic processes of the first half of the XXth century with Slovak ones has not been carried out before.

PURPOSE

The main goals for this research are to highlight the main cultural and artistic processes that were taking place in Eastern Galicia (primarily, in the territory of the front line) during the first third of the twentieth century, to compare them with the events of the same period in Slovakia, in particular, in Košice; to analyse the main program and organizational principles the functioning of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen's movement and Košice modernism; to define and to characterize the role of these phenomena in the development of artistic processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the arrival of the Russian occupation to Lviv on September, 1914, the policy of the newly appointed military governor-general of Galicia Heorhii Bobrynskyi was aimed at the destruction of everything Ukrainian. In accordance with his decrees, almost all Ukrainian cultural and scientific institutions (universities, libraries, publishing houses, newspapers, secondary and higher educational institutions were closed; strict censorship was implemented on the production of printed products, concerts, plays, film screenings, etc. Most local organizations and institutions, as well as administrative authorities, were evacuated to Vienna or had ceased their activities. The retreat of the Russian army led to another cultural devastation of Lviv – cultural values were taken out en masse, books were

burned, Ukrainian libraries, museums, galleries, schools were looted. Immediately after the liberation of Lviv, at the end of June 1915, the publishing house of the Ukrainian press was restored, which had become an impetus for the activation of national and cultural life [3, p. 42; 19, p. 444-446].

Shortly before the start of the war, on August 1, 1914, the representatives of all political parties in Lviv had formed the Main Ukrainian Council, which decided to create the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (LUSR) as a separate structural unit of the Austrian army [16]. It was a volunteer unit formally subordinated to the Austro-Hungarian military staff, but, it had become the national Ukrainian military formation. During the first days, 28,000 people volunteered to join the Legion, mostly young people, but the Austrian government had limited its number to 2,000 soldiers [14, p. 304-306].

The members of the most important youth sports and gymnastics societies that had been active in Galicia immediately before the war and had been playing a significant role in local public life also joined the LUSR. These societies at first had a cultural-educational and national character, and later, in accordance with the demands of the time and considering the political events in Europe in 1914, they began to carry out military training of their members and acquired a military training significance. The mandatory activity of these organizations was the opening of libraries, reading rooms, music institutions, theatre groups, amateur artistic ensembles, etc. [23, p. 126].

So, according to historical realities, after the start of the war, because of mass mobilization, the cultural and artistic potential of the Galician society had turned out to be concentrated among the USR members. To form their own artistic environment, they had the idea to create an underground cultural and artistic formation, known as the artistic group of the USS. It included patriotic intellectuals among which were such artists as Ivan Ivanets, Osyp Sorokhtei, Osyp Kurylas, Lev Getz, who ensured the continuity of the artistic process in Ukraine during the fighting. The contribution of the artists which were working as the part of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (USR) was not only they recorded the combat achievements of the First Ukrainian Army, but also accumulated the innovative features of the actual artistic trends during that time – elements of symbolism, impressionism, expressionism etc. The sources of the artists' creativity were, on the one hand, an active desire for European trends, on the

other – local socio-cultural features of activity [20, p. 52-53].

In Slovakia the first part of the XX century was the time of Košice modernism – phenomenon of the city on the periphery, where the multi-ethnic art scene of Košice had become the centre of the modern movement. The names of artists who created within this phenomenon – Anton Jasusch, Eugen Krón, František Foltýn, Gejza Schiller etc. The prologue to the emergence of the Košice modernism's phenomenon were also the historical events caused by the upheavals of the First World War. Košice and Eastern Slovakian lands were under the short-term occupation by the troops of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Another natural historical and cultural centre in Eastern Slovakia had become Prešov, where on June 16, 1919, for several weeks the Slovak Soviet Republic was proclaimed [1, p. 15]. The Hungarian Red Army captured the large part of Eastern Slovakia, almost to the border with Poland. In the cultural and artistic aspects, the Bolshevik episode had rather paradoxical consequences on Eastern Slovakia history [10, p. 37].

After the defeat of the Red Army in July 1919, Košice had become the part of the newly founded democratic Czechoslovakia and a refuge place for artists (mostly of a left-centred political orientation) escaping from the Hungarian fascist government, as well as contemporary German, Czech and Moravian artists. Košice, which could be called a "transit station", was playing an important role not only in the presence of avant-garde artists, but also in the creation and dissemination the program of the group, which today is called "Košice modernism". According to recent studies, Košice modernism had become the most powerful centre of the avant-garde art in the Central Europe after 1918.

The founding of the Czechoslovak Republic created a significant cultural ambiguity that lasted for several decades: to the internal tradition, to the artistic events in Budapest, new initiatives were trying to appear in the second most important city, which tried to find itself in Bratislava and Prague. In the 1920s, Košice received the status of permanent "metropolis of the East". It related to the need to find a city within the borders of Czechoslovakia, or Slovakia, and represented attempts to make Košice the second centre of culture and education in Slovakia. In this context, one can even talk about the symbolic peripheralization of the city, which turned out to be a city in the east, far from the capital [17, p. 259-269].

In the 1920s, the first institutions promoting Slovak culture had appeared in Košice

(associations, newspapers, magazines, theatre and radio). The new political situation demanded a new orientation, a recovery of active traditions on the one hand, and the development of an autonomous culture on the other.

Thus, for both compared artistic centres – the milieu of the military, who were part of the USR Legion on the territory of Eastern Galicia (Ukraine) and in Košice (Slovakia), the socio-political situation caused by the events of the First World War inevitably had become an impetus for the development of qualitatively new artistic processes.

As we mentioned before, after the beginning of the First World War, a lot of prominent figures of culture and art joined the ranks of USR Legion. In the conditions of military contests for state independence, there was a need to unite artists with the aim of forming their own artistic space. In February 1916, the Statute of their cultural organization had been approved, and the purpose of its activities was clearly formulated: "Members should present the image of the USR during the European war, which had begun in 1914... "Press Apartment" [the official name of the organisation – K. Rozhak-Lytvynenko] performs this work in the special room, when the Artistic Handful is located in the field and both of those societies complement each other in their work" [22]. So called "Press Apartment" was the chapter of the local artistic group responsible especially for publishing. They had founded several periodicals, which, in addition to national-patriotic, had a satirical and humorous direction: "Noviniada", "Samohotnyk", "Bomb", "Samopal", "Ususu", "Herald of the Press House", "Chervona Kalyna" ("Red Viburnum") [4, p. 158]. All notable events in the Riflemen's life were reflected in articles, literary works or in satirical notes [12, p. 113].

It is worth noting that the Press Apartment was the first such structure in the history of Europe. Similar institutions had begun to appear at the high level of the Austrian army staff later, at the end of 1915 [28, p. 381-382]. The organized forms of creative life were also established at European prisoner-of-war camps for propagandist purposes after the First World War. Among them, for example, were the intercamp literary and artistic associations of interned soldiers in Josefov (Czechoslovakia), Tarnów (Poland), Kalisz (Poland). However, the activity of these institutions, in comparison with the artistic group of the USR, was less systematic and had an episodic character [15, p. 55].

The artists who were working in the cultural institutions of the USR Legion (the Press Apartment and the Artistic Handhold) were at

the same time directly participated in the military operations. So, their primary task was to document the events of the First World War in relation to Ukrainian national liberation ideas and glorifying the victory of the warriors using artistic means. During the war the Press Apartment had become the organizational and governing chapter of the military and patriotic education of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the centre of spiritual and cultural life in the western Ukrainian lands.

An important aspect of the functioning of the artistic group was its exhibition activity. In 1917, at the military exhibition in Vienna, the USR Legion was represented by a separate pavilion [5, p. 150-158]. Unfortunately, at the beginning of August 1952, on the orders of Lavrentiy Beria, the workers of Lviv cultural institutions under the direct leadership of the first members of the Lviv regional committee of the CP(b)U barbarically destroyed (burned in boiler rooms libraries) almost 2,300 "nationalist" exhibits, including almost all paintings by artists of the USR artistic group and works dedicated to the history of Sich Riflemen. About fifty works by O. Kurylas had been burned. Among the destroyed works of I. Ivanets – fifteen oil paintings, sixty one graphic work, twenty albums of small graphics, watercolours and drawings, in total – 704 works [8]. A unique collection of survived Ukrainian graphics by USR artists (over 800 works) was found in 1998 in the classified funds of the Slavic Library – an independent division of the National Library in Prague [18].

The uniqueness of the USR artistic group was in gathering different artists by a common goal. Each member of the organization was formed in individual circumstances depending on the peculiarities of acquiring an artistic profession, previous creative practice, aesthetic preferences, etc. The process of their creative development had been interrupted by the start of the First World War, which also changed all their life and artistic plans. In this way, artists with different artistic concepts had found themselves in the ranks of a single army, and sometimes this was the only thing that was uniting them. Such simultaneity of solutions was a characteristic for modernism in Central Europe in the 1920s, which, together with the controversial reactions, had constituted the pluralism of the local artistic environment [20, p. 79].

A significant role in the formation of the Košice artistic centre was played by Josef Polák – the director of the Eastern Slovak Museum, who was trying to turn the metropolis of Eastern Slovakia into a huge cultural environment. After

the founding of Czechoslovakia, Polák was sent to Košice to contribute to the consolidation of artistic forces in the east of the newly formed republic. He quickly familiarized himself with the local situation and began to actively introduce modern concepts of culture and art among the public of Košice. J. Polák not only focused on the development of Slovak and Czech art, but also promoted German, Polish, Austrian, and Hungarian ones. He was opening exhibitions, holding the lectures, translating the literary works, and providing premises for the newly founded graphic school of Eugene Kron. Polák's desire to achieve the cultural diversity was crowned with success: thanks to his efforts, broad outlook and communicative abilities, the local visual art of the interwar period is known in the specialized art literature as the phenomenon of Košice modernism [11].

An important fact in Polák's biography was that he spent the beginning of the First World War as a volunteer member of the Twelfth Rifle Front on the Eastern Front. There he had been wounded and after recovery didn't return to the combat unit. Due to his health, he was released from active military service in 1915. A year later, in July 1916, he was recruited to work in the military hospital in Upper Hungary, which is nowadays the territory of modern Slovakia [24, p. 127].

In March 1919 J. Polák had become the director of the Košice Museum, which he had completely reformed. It was he who proposed to change the concept and name of the museum from the Rakoczi Museum to the East Slovak Museum in Košice. Modernism appeared in Košice thanks to J. Polák's work. During the time he was managing the East Slovak Museum, more than two hundred exhibitions were held there, with the involvement of progressive representatives of the international avant-garde movement. It was possible primarily due to many touring exhibitions. The number of stops during such exhibitions, which were travelling throughout the territory of whole Czechoslovakia, depended both on the wishes of the artists themselves and on the activities of the organising institutions.

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However, most of the exhibitions had been opened specifically for the residents of Košice and then were transferred to other institutions in Slovakia. Mostly, these were exhibitions and sales, which were the only source of income for many artists. Some works were purchased by the Polák for the collection of the East Slovakian Museum [24, p. 137].

He also offered an exhibition space to those artists who had found refuge in Košice after the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (János Kmetti, Eugen Kron, Alexander Bortniuk, Robert Berenyi, Karol Kernstock, Lajos Kassák, László Moholy-Nagy and others). The open city Košice, which was trying to achieve something exceptional and new, and was oriented towards further development, was a good place for the practical application of the latest artistic principles.

CONCLUSIONS

Having briefly analysed the organizational features of the functioning of the artistic phenomena of the creative group of the Ukrainian Ukrainian SSR and the Košice artistic centre, we can conclude that they both were developing under the influence of the events of the First World War. It was it what served as an impetus for the accidental concentration of creative personalities in a single spatial environment. Their efforts also developed in similar areas of artistic activity: exhibition work, collecting art pieces, opening cultural institutions, developing theatre and publishing activity. However, the most interesting phenomenon was the concentration of artists who displayed their artistic reflections in different directions and genres of art. Košice modernism of the 1920s was characterized by great diversity. In addition to the main modernist direction, a lot of more traditional artistic directions also were developing here. Surprisingly, different variations of artistic borrowings could also be found in the work of the same artist. We can trace the same stylistic qualities on the example of the work by the artists of the artistic group USSR. In more detail, we will focus on their comparative study in our future research.

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