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O B L I C Z A W O J N Y

TOM 7 • PRZED BITWĄ • ŁÓDŹ 2023

ISBN 978-83-8331-303-0 • s. 261-281

<https://doi.org/10.18778/8331-303-0.12>

# PRO-DEFENCE ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS DURING THE WARS FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POLISH BORDERS IN THE YEARS 1914–1921

**Summary.** The aim of the study is to show the levels on which Polish women joined the endeavour to regain independence after the period of the Partitions. Principally, the study covers the time period from 1914 to the end of the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1921. However, in order to fully present the background of the pro-defence activities of Polish women, the text also refers to a number of events from the period preceding the outbreak of World War I. The activity of female combatants in the struggle for independence and establishment of national borders during the Second Polish Republic is also discussed. The text consists of two parts: in the first part, the author presents the participation of women in paramilitary organisations and armed struggle during World War I and their participation in the Greater Poland Uprising and in the battles for Lviv in Eastern Galicia. She also discusses the activities of women in the Legions, the Polish Military Organisation, and the Voluntary Legion of Women. The second part of the study presents the contribution of civilian women's organisations, in particular the Polish White Cross, to help soldiers and civilians injured in combat. The author points to the role played by the Women's League for War Alert and the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia in securing the army's material base. Faced with the threat of the Bolshevik invasion, women not only actively supported the combatants, but also created a resilient defence propaganda machine in dozens of magazines. The author discusses the agitation campaign for joining the Volunteer Army. The activists of women's associations organised lotteries, festivities, and competitions, during which they raised funds to support the fighters. The sources of the paper are memoirs and the relevant period press, as well as contemporary monographs and scientific articles.

**Keywords:** Women's League for War Alert, League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia, Voluntary Legion of Women, Polish White Cross, World War I, feminism

## Introduction

Ever since the defeat of the January Uprising in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Polish women were actively involved in national liberation activities, mainly in the field of education and the patriotic upbringing of children. The approach of World War I, however, opened the possibility for young Polish women to participate in paramilitary organisations. Social activists associated with the feminist movement established civil organisations whose aim was to support the struggle for independence.

The author of the present text attempts to show some aspects of the participation of women's organisations in broadly defined 'pro-defence activity' in the period of the reconstruction of the Second Polish Republic. Women's struggle for independence and the establishment of the borders of the Polish state took many different forms: the most radical activities included active service in the Legions (Polish: *Legiony*), the Polish Military Organisation (Polish: *Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*, abbr.: POW), and the Voluntary Legion of Women (Polish: *Ochotnicza Legia Kobiet*, abbr.: OLK). The more conservative women's circles – who were not in favour of women's active military service – promoted the view that female patriotic service to the motherland involved, above all, promoting the idea of independence and operating behind the front line.

The study is presented chronologically and divided into two main parts. In the first part, the author discusses women's activities in paramilitary organisations and in the army, and in the second part describes the activities of women's civilian organisations, including the Women's League for War Alert (Polish: *Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego*, abbr.: LKPW), the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia (Polish: *Liga Kobiet Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego*) and the Polish White Cross (Polish: *Polski Biały Krzyż*, abbr.: PBK).

The time period covered by the study is from 1914 until the end of the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1921. Understanding the origins of the activities of women's pro-defence organisations and showing the continuation of women's participation in paramilitary organisations in times of peace required referring to some events beyond the covered time period. The study applies research methods that are relevant for historical sciences as well as those used in political science research – analysis of archival materials, the descriptive method, and the analysis of legal acts, in addition to the biographical method. The source basis of the paper are memoirs and relevant period press, as well as monographs and historical studies.

## Women's participation in paramilitary organisations and service in regular military formations

The implementation of the idea of an armed struggle for Polish independence was the creation of numerous paramilitary organisations: the Riflemen's Association (Polish: Związek Strzelecki), the Polish Rifle Squads (Polish: Polskie Drużyny Strzeleckie), the field brigades of the Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokół" (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokół"), and the Bartosz Brigade (Polish: Drużyny Bartoszwowe). Initially, these paramilitary organisations admitted only young men; however, due to the tense situation in Europe and the anticipation of an armed conflict between the superpowers, women were also admitted to military training. These young women, who mainly came from families of intelligentsia, were trained in the principles of military tactics, signalling, field studies, and military geography, and were taught to use weapons and explosives.<sup>1</sup> Aleksandra Szczerbińska<sup>2</sup> recalled the training effects as follows: "I remember that I knew the distinctions of all regiments of the Russian army by heart. If I am not mistaken, we were the first female auxiliary unit in the army of any country."<sup>3</sup>

Riflemen's organisations developed in three main city centres: in Lviv, Kraków and Warsaw. The training of women in the Riflemen's Association was initiated in the spring of 1912, with 55 female members participating in Kraków and 64 in Lviv. In the summer of 1912, the female section of the Riflemen's Association was established in Warsaw. In January 1913, a shortened

<sup>1</sup> A. PIŁSUDSKA, *Wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1989, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandra Piłsudska née Szczerbińska (1882–1963), an independence activist, the second wife of Józef Piłsudski. In 1904, she joined the Polish Socialist Party (Polish: Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, abbr.: PPS) and took part in many combat actions. In Lviv, she collaborated with the Riflemen's Association and co-founded the Society for the Welfare of Political Prisoners (Polish: Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami Politycznymi). After the outbreak of World War I, she served in the 1st Brigade of the Polish Legions. She was also active in the POW, for which she was arrested by the Germans in 1915, and interned in Szczypiorno. She was released in 1916. Having returned to Warsaw, she continued to work as a courier carrying explosives, and also conducted intelligence operations. In the interwar period, as the wife of J. Piłsudski, she was involved in social and honorary activities. After the outbreak of World War II, she was evacuated from the country and died in London. She was presented with many awards, including the Great Cordon of Polonia Restituta, the War Order of Virtuti Militari, and the Gold Cross of Merit.

<sup>3</sup> A. PIŁSUDSKA, *op. cit.*

non-commissioned officer school training for girls was conducted, which was attended by over a dozen students.<sup>4</sup>

Upon the outbreak of the war, the POW, which operated underground, was established by order of Józef Piłsudski. Within its structure the auxiliary Women's Unit was created, the core of which were the female members of the Riflemen's Association and the Rifle Squads. The Women's Unit included intelligence, distribution, commissary, and sanitary divisions. The unit also supervised the ammunition and weapons storehouse.<sup>5</sup> Some women, including Jadwiga Barthel de Weydenthal,<sup>6</sup> Zofia Szturm de Sztrem,<sup>7</sup> and Wanda Piekarska<sup>8</sup> served in the top secret Flying Squad of the POW, which conducted subversive activities behind enemy lines – blowing up bridges, destroying tracks and telegraph wires, and attacking Russian offices.

Upon the outbreak of World War I, there were approximately three hundred riflemen ready to be deployed. In the beginning of August of 1914, the Headquarters of the Riflemen's Association also established the recruitment

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<sup>4</sup> D. WANIEK, *Uczestnictwo kobiet w organizacjach militarnych i działaniach bojowych przed I wojną światową oraz w czasie jej trwania*, [in:] *Polki – bieg przez historię. Emancypantki, bojowniczkini, obywatelki*, ed. D. WANIEK, Warszawa–Kraków 2020, p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Jadwiga Barthel de Weydenthal (1884–1961) was a sculptor and an independence activist who joined the unit of the Polish Rifle Squads in Lviv in 1912. She studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, then in 1916–1919 at the Sculpture Department of the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw. From 1921, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. During World War I, she organised the Women's Unit of the Polish Military Organisation, becoming the head of the intelligence section. When Poland regained its independence, she edited the memoirs of people associated with the Legions. In 1935, she was chosen as godmother of the MS Batory passenger ship. During World War II, she participated in the Siege of Warsaw. She was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari.

<sup>7</sup> Zofia Szturm de Sztrem (1891–1965) graduated from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics in St. Petersburg. She was a member of the Union of Active Struggle and the Riflemen's Association. In the POW, she was the head of the Armoury Section responsible for storing weapons and ammunition. She was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari.

<sup>8</sup> Wanda Piekarska (1893–1972) was a sanitary non-commissioned officer of the Legions and the Polish Army. She studied chemistry at the University of Brno and the Jagiellonian University. From 1913, she was a member of the Rifle Squads and the Flying Squad of the POW. From 1915, she served in the Legions as a courier and in the intelligence service. After the end of the war, she studied at the Warsaw University of Technology. She worked, among others, as a laboratory technician at the Podlasie Aircraft Factory. During World War II, she was active in the Union of Armed Struggle (Polish: Związek Walki Zbrojnej). She was imprisoned by the Germans in the Ravenbrück camp. She was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari.

commission for the female unit. J. Piłsudski himself, however, was not an advocate of women's military service on the front line. In a conversation with one of the members of the Riflemen's Association, he expressed the following opinion: "I believe that work in strictly military formations is not suitable for women, but elsewhere in the back of the army, they can be used to replace a man in any job and thus join the ranks of the army."<sup>9</sup>

The task of the riflemen was mainly to help feed and equip the Polish Army. Some women decided to make radical changes to their appearance in order to be able to serve in the front line units on an equal footing with men: they cut their hair, wore male uniforms, and adopted male nicknames. In male disguise, women served mainly in the infantry of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade; among them were Ludwika Daszkiewicz<sup>10</sup> (aka Stanisław Kepisz) and Wanda Gertz<sup>11</sup> (aka Kazimierz Żuchowicz).

The service of riflemen in the Legions was very brief, with women being withdrawn from the front line units as early as at the beginning of September. The order to send them back to Kraków was given by J. Piłsudski himself on 10 September 1914, after the rifle squads had left Kielce. The removal of women from service in the Legions provoked their enormous resentment – only some of them managed to find another job directly related to the legionary movement, such as in a military hospital, or to get employment in the civilian bodies of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee (Polish: Departament Wojskowy Naczelnego Komitetu Narodowego).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Cit. per:* J. DUFRAT, *Kobiety w Legionach i kobiety związane z ideą Legionów*, [in:] *Legenda Legionów. Opowieść o Legionach oraz ludziach Józefa Piłsudskiego*, ed. W. SIENKIEWICZ, Warszawa 2008, p. 246.

<sup>10</sup> Ludwika Daszkiewicz (1882–1945) worked as a teacher at folk schools in the villages of Lesser Poland. In 1911, she joined the Rifle Squads and then the Military Treasury. Under a male surname, she served in the Legions, where she performed front-line medical service. From 1920, she participated in all retreats from the Berezina River and then in the Polish counteroffensive. During World War II, she served in the Army of General Władysław Anders. She died in Palestine. She was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari.

<sup>11</sup> Wanda Gertz (1896–1958) was an independence activist and a major of the Polish Army who served in the Artillery of the Brigade I of the Legions and in the communications platoon. She was the commander of the volunteer battalion of the OLK in Vilnius. In the interwar period, she worked at the General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces in Warsaw. During World War II, she fought first in the Siege of Warsaw and later organised and commanded the Dysk Home Army Unit, a sabotage and diversion women's unit. She carried out sentences on Gestapo collaborators. She took part in the Warsaw Uprising. She was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari and the Cross of Valour five times.

<sup>12</sup> J. DUFRAT, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–248.

The only exception was the elite Intelligence Unit, which was formed from August to September 1914. It turned out that stereotypes favoured this activity as women drew the attention of the Russian gendarmerie less and were generally not subject to detailed searches. The female agents varied greatly in terms of age and previous employment – the oldest was Waleria Golińska<sup>13</sup> (she was over sixty at the outbreak of the war). In the field of intelligence activities, women also played a significant role during the Polish-Bolshevik War.<sup>14</sup>

During the Greater Poland Uprising several hundred women were active in the anti-German activist organisation known as Skaut ('scout'), 1921 battle for Poznań distributing patriotic leaflets as well as spying on secret Prussian police officials and hiding conspirators. The liaison officers also took part in acquiring weapons and ammunition. Skaut trained over three hundred nurses who served as medical orderlies during the battle of Poznań, the capital of Greater Poland. The women also organised food deliveries for the insurgents and ran permanent kitchens at the Bazar hotel and the Grand Café restaurant.<sup>15</sup>

Women also fought on the eastern front during the Polish-Ukrainian conflict over Lviv, carrying orders, weapons, ammunition, and explosives, and some even defending individual premises in the city. In 1919, the female defenders of Lviv initiated the establishment of the Voluntary Legion of Women, who were in service during the entire war with Soviet Russia. The origins of the establishment of the OLK date back to 30 January 1918, when the local branch of the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia in Lviv merged with the Committee of Women's Civic Work (Polish: Komitet Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet), thus resulting in the establishment of the Civic Committee of Polish Women (Polish: Komitet Obywatelski Polek, abbr.: KOP).

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<sup>13</sup> Waleria Golińska née Raczyńska (1848–1921) was a member and activist of the PPS from 1905–1907. She ran a haberdashery warehouse which served as a weapons depot and the PPS information office. After the outbreak of World War I, despite her advanced age, she volunteered for the intelligence and courier service in the Flying Unit of the POW. In July 1915, she was arrested by the Tsarist authorities and sent deep into Russia. She did not return to Poland until independence was regained. Posthumously, she was awarded the War Order of Virtuti Militari in 1921 and the Cross of Independence with Swords in 1930.

<sup>14</sup> A. PEPLŃSKI, *Kobiety w wywiadzie Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej na Wschodzie*, [in:] *Kobiety w wojnach o niepodległość i granice 1918–1921*, ed. W. REZMER, Toruń 2012, pp. 63–73.

<sup>15</sup> H. LISIAK, *Kobiety w walce o granice II Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1921)*, [in:] *Obywatelki na obcasach. Kobiety w życiu publicznym (XIX–XXI w.)*, vol. 1, eds U. KOZŁOWSKA, T. SIKORSKI, A. WĄTOR, Radzymin–Warszawa 2016, pp. 102–104.

The Polish-Ukrainian War began on the night of 31 October – 1 November 1918, when the Ukrainians began taking over key civic and military premises in Lviv. During the fights for the city, criminals and depraved soldiers committed acts of violence and plundered the civilian population. At that time, the KOP came up with the idea to establish a female military formation. KOP activist Aleksandra Zagórska<sup>16</sup> obtained permission to organise a courier and intelligence unit subordinate to the Polish Army Recruiting Command. Initially, the unit had only seventeen members, whose task was to gather intelligence and recruit volunteers to fight in Lviv.<sup>17</sup> It was also on the initiative of A. Zagórska that the intelligence unit was armed and entrusted with the task of helping to maintain law and order in the city. In December 1918, the Women's Citizens Militia (Polish: *Milicja Obywatelska Kobiet*) was established as a sub-unit of the Municipal Civic Guard (Polish: *Miejska Straż Obywatelska*). The Women's Citizens Militia consisted of a combat group that could take part in military operations, a civic guard performing guard and patrol service, and a courier group responsible for the communication liaison between military commanders and the Municipal Civic Guard.<sup>18</sup> In late December 1918, the combat group was transformed into the regular military formation of the OLK. In February 1919, the OLK had about 350 female soldiers serving in four platoons. The number of female legionnaires in Lviv increased as volunteers arrived mainly from Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, and Sosnowiec. By mid-1919 the OLK has as many as 600 members.<sup>19</sup> The core of the OLK was an assault company of 70 female legionnaires, who participated, among others, in the battle of Zboiska near Lviv. Many legionnaires lost their lives while fighting for Lviv, with the exact number of the fallen currently being impossible to determine.<sup>20</sup> However, the victims

<sup>16</sup> Aleksandra Zagórska (1884–1965) was an independence activist and a lieutenant colonel of the Polish Army. She participated in the underground activities of the PPS. From 1905, she worked in a secret explosives laboratory in Warsaw. In 1908, she was imprisoned in the Pawiak prison. From 1911 she lived in Lviv, where she joined the Union of Active Struggle and the Riflemen's Association. She was the commander of the OLK. She was awarded the Cross of Independence with Swords twice.

<sup>17</sup> A. ŚWIĄTKOWSKA, *Kobiety w wojnach o niepodległość i granice 1918–1921*, [in:] *Kobiety w wojnach...*, pp. 16–18.

<sup>18</sup> J. KAPSA, *Jej opowieści. Rzecz o równouprawnieniu kobiet*, Częstochowa 2018, p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> J. DUFRAT, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy niepodległościowej. Od Ligi Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego do Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet (1908–1918/1919)*, Toruń 2001, p. 321.

<sup>20</sup> Michał Klimecki attempted to reconstruct the list of the fallen in the battle for Lviv. He identified thirty-four people, including nurses, doctors, OLK members, and civilians. M. KLIMECKI, *Lwów w listopadzie 1918 roku. Kobiety w obronie miasta*, [in:] *Kobiety w wojnach...*, pp. 61–62.

are still remembered, one of them being Helena Grabska,<sup>21</sup> a fifteen-year-old girl who died fighting for the Lviv Railway Station.

The activities of the OLK were of great importance for the recognition of women's ability to defend the country with weapons in hand. However, the real conditions of service in the formation cannot be idealised: as Anita Świątkowska emphasises, the OLK was rigorous and the legionnaires were carefully selected. From 1920, candidates were required to present a certificate of good conduct confirmed by their parish priest and the police, as well as the opinion of a social organisation, if the candidate belonged to one. The penalties for violating the rules were draconian – e.g., for insulting the uniform, a legionnaire could be whipped twenty-five times in front of the entire squad. The functioning of the OLK was hampered by numerous cases of desertion. Yet another problem was suicide, caused by the excessively strict system of penalties and limited passes, or even a complete ban on leaving the unit.<sup>22</sup>

The peace treaty with Soviet Russia having been signed, the process of the reorganisation of wartime structures ensued. On 1 February 1922, the OLK was dissolved. Some of the officers were concentrated in the Department for the Military Training of the Women's Reserves within the Department for the Military Training of the Reserves of the Third Division of the General Staff, which was responsible for training professional forces in the field of auxiliary services (sanitary, communication, and economic). The task of the trained, in the face of another war, would be to take over positions within the country, and thus increase the number of male troops on the frontline. The department was responsible for cooperation with women's associations that were active during the fight for independence, such as the Polish Women's Circle (Polish: Koło Polek), the PBK, the female units of the Riflemen's Association, and the Association of Girl Scouts (Polish: Organizacja Harcererek). This cooperation was supposed to result in the military training of women's reserves in the event of another war; however, successive bills on universal compulsory military training for the defence of the country did not provide for the military training of women. Thus, the 'Act on Universal Compulsory Military Service' of 23 May 1924 did not mention

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<sup>21</sup> Helena Grabska (1904–1919) was one of the Lviv Eaglets. She came from an old noble family. She studied at the Gymnasium and Lyceum of Hetmanowa Regina Żółkiewska in Płock. She was a volunteer in the battle for Lviv and a private in the OLK. She was only fifteen when she died at the Lviv Railway Station while on duty.

<sup>22</sup> A. ŚWIĄTKOWSKA, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–41.



women's military service at all.<sup>23</sup> Despite this omission, the veterans of the OLK conducted activities in the field of training and instruction throughout the interwar period. The activity of the Club of Senior Instructors for the Military Training of Women (Polish: Klub Starszych Instruktoerek Przysposobienia Wojskowego Kobiet), established in 1922, and the Organisation for the Training of Women for the Defence of the Country (Polish: Organizacja Przysposobienia Kobiet do Obrony Kraju), operating since 1928, should be noted here.<sup>24</sup>

### Pro-defence activities of civil women's organisations

Activists of the feminist movement in the Kingdom of Poland established the underground LKPW in Warsaw in 1913.<sup>25</sup> The founders of the organisation represented various political affiliations: Izabela Moszczeńska-Rzepecka (the first president of the LKPW)<sup>26</sup> and Jadwiga Marcinowska<sup>27</sup> were associated with the peasant movement, while Teresa Ciszkieviczowa<sup>28</sup> and Helena

<sup>23</sup> Ustawa z dnia 23 maja 1924 r. o powszechnym obowiązku służby wojskowej, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19240610609/O/D19240609.pdf> (access: 13 VI 2021).

<sup>24</sup> The activity of veterans of the fight for independence was successful only in the face of another war, when on 11 February 1939, the Organisation for the Military Training of Women was granted the status of an association of higher utility. It was granted the privilege of exclusive action throughout the country in the field of organising and conducting military training for women. M. SOŁTYSIAK, *Przysposobienie Wojskowe Kobiet jako jedno z następstw zaangażowania się kobiet w walkę o niepodległość w latach 1918–1921*, [in:] *Kobiety w wojnach...*, pp. 78–82.

<sup>25</sup> D. WANIEK, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–148.

<sup>26</sup> Izabela Moszczeńska-Rzepecka (1864–1941), the first president of the LKPW, was a journalist, an author of political and educational texts, and a feminist activist. Before World War I, she was a member of the PPS. After Poland regained independence she worked at the Military Publishing Institute. In 1927–1934 she was a member of the Warsaw City Council on behalf of the National Women's Organisation (Polish: Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet).

<sup>27</sup> Jadwiga Marcinowska (1877–1943) was an activist of the peasant and feminist movements, a writer, and the author of numerous press articles. She participated in the underground education in the Radom Governorate. During the revolution of 1905–1907, she organised the village clubs of the Polish Educational Society (Polish: Polska Macierz Szkolna). She was associated with the Polish Rifle Squads and was the founder of the Women's League for War Alert in the Lublin, Kielce, and Radom regions. She was a co-editor of the "Na Posterunku" magazine. In 1922–1938 she worked at the Polish Embassy in Washington, D. C. In 1931, she was awarded the Cross of Independence.

<sup>28</sup> Teresa Ciszkieviczowa (1848–1921), a doctor, political and educational activist, and feminist, graduated from University in Brno, Switzerland. She was a member of the Crown and Lithuania Women's Circle (Polish: Koło Kobiet Korony i Litwy) and was active in the Polish Educational

Ceysingerówna<sup>29</sup> were associated with the National League. They were involved in journalistic activities and organised underground education. They believed that women's work for independence should primarily consist in supporting the struggle for independence led by men, and were not in favour of female military service. Two years later, in 1915, on the initiative of the Supreme National Committee (abbr.: NKN) in Kraków, an organisation similar to the one in Warsaw was established under the name of the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia, whose members included Zofia Moraczewska,<sup>30</sup> Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska,<sup>31</sup> Helena Witkowska,<sup>32</sup> Cecylia Gumpłowiczowa,<sup>33</sup>

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Society (Polish: Polska Macierz Szkolna). During World War I, she worked for the Legions and collaborated with the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee. She was awarded the Cross of Independence with Swords, the Cross of Independence, and the Medal of Independence.

<sup>29</sup> Helena Ceysingerówna (1869–1950), a poet and a writer, a feminist and educational activist, sat in the central authorities of the Society of People's Education (Polish: Towarzystwo Oświaty Ludowej) associated with the PPS and later cooperated with the National League. She was a co-organiser of the LKPW. During the Polish-Bolshevik War, she served in the Polish Army, in which was a co-organiser and officer of the OLK. She completed her military service with the rank of Lieutenant. She collaborated with the "Bluszcz" and "Współczesna Kobieta" magazines. In 1928–1939 she was active in the Women Citizens' Work Association (Polish: Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet). In 1930 she was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and the Cross of Independence in 1933.

<sup>30</sup> Zofia Moraczewska (1873–1958), (wife of Jędrzej Moraczewski) was a social activist who co-created the riflemen's movement. During World War I, she worked in the Orderlies' Union (Polish: Związek Sanitariuszek). On behalf of the PPS, she held a parliamentary seat in the Legislative Sejm. From 1919, she edited materials published in "Głos Kobiet", the press organ of the Women's Department of the PPS. In 1931, she was awarded the Cross of Independence.

<sup>31</sup> Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska (1860–1934) was the first woman to obtain a doctoral degree in economics from the University of Zurich in 1891. She lectured at the Flying University in Warsaw. From 1899 she was a lecturer in economics at Adam Mickiewicz People's University in Kraków. She was one of the founders of the Progressive Women's Political Club (Polish: Klub Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych). In 1928–1930 she was a senator from the list of the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (Polish: Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem).

<sup>32</sup> Helena Witkowska (1870–1938) was a teacher, a creator of the concept of civic education, and a feminist activist. During World War I, she was a member of the Supreme Board of the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia. She was the editor-in-chief of the League's "Na Posterunku" magazine. After the May Coup of 1926, she was in the Sanation movement and was active in the Women Citizens' Work Association.

<sup>33</sup> Cecylia Gumpłowiczowa (1870–1930), a member of the PPS and an underground activist, was imprisoned many times by Tsarist authorities. In Kraków, from 1902, she published the "Robotnica" magazine that was the press organ of the leftist Women's Union. She supported the creation of the

Aniela Krzyżanowska,<sup>34</sup> and Dorota Kłuszyńska.<sup>35</sup> The League published the *Na Posterunku* weekly which was edited by the socialist Z. Daszyńska-Golińska and supported the activities of J. Piłsudski. The first issue of the magazine opened with the following declaration:

Polish women in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland stood on alert, from the moment the historical bell heralded the enormous struggle of nations from which independent Poland could emerge. Upon the war alert, Polish women got united in the Women's League to perform civil service for those who had gone to shed their blood for their homeland. (...) Polish women have never recognised the restrictions artificially imposed on them, they have not developed neighbourhood patriotism, have no ambitions for any of the districts, they only know Poland as their goal and the Polish military action that fights for it.<sup>36</sup>

Initially, the activities of the LKPW focused mainly on agitation and propaganda campaigns. They organised lectures on the history of Poland and talks at which the ideas of independence were promoted, and young men were encouraged to take up military service. The work of the founders of the LKPW enjoyed the full support of J. Piłsudski, who promoted the establishment of the League's clubs along the route of the planned march of the riflemen's units, e.g., in Jędrzejów, Kielce, and Olkusz, and later in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Częstochowa, and Piotrków. By May 1915, there were already twenty-eight such clubs in the Kingdom of Poland, whose members focused on supplying the legionnaires with food, sending them parcels with underwear, warm clothes, and other necessary

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Legions. From the autumn of 1914, she was active in the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia. She was posthumously awarded the Cross of Independence.

<sup>34</sup> Aniela Krzyżanowska (1883–1958) was a co-organiser of the women's Provisional Auxiliary Committee (Polish: Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocniczy) which supported first the riflemen's movement and later the Legions. From 1914, she was a member of the Polish Military Treasury, and from 1915, she was active in the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia. After Poland regained independence she joined the Progressive Women's Political Club. After the May Coup of 1926, she was associated with the Sanation movement and was active in the Women Citizens' Work Association.

<sup>35</sup> Dorota Kłuszyńska (1876–1952), a feminist and a social activist, was active in the League of Women of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia during World War I. She edited the "Głos Kobiet" magazine. In the Second Polish Republic, she was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the PPS. She was active in the Clinic of Conscious Motherhood (Polish: Poradnia Świadomego Macierzyństwa) which was founded by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński. After World War II she co-founded the Society of the Friends of Children (Polish: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci).

<sup>36</sup> *Deklaracja ideowa pisma*, "Na Posterunku" 1917, no. 1 (1), p. 1.

items to the frontline. The clubs were less involved in sanitary aid, although it is worth mentioning that the League's members took duty shifts in hospitals and sanitary facilities. The LKPW's members also looked after the legionnaires' families: they provided allowances, helped to find employment, and organised shelters for orphaned children.<sup>37</sup>

As Joanna Dufurat emphasises, both women's associations were founded on the belief that the Polish nation should fight for independence with weapons in hand and that it was women's duty to participate in this fight by helping to create the material base of the Polish Army, as well as actively shaping the public opinion.<sup>38</sup> The conclusion drawn by the researcher seems to be fully justified in the light of the memories of Leokadia Śliwińska,<sup>39</sup> who described the organisation's activities as follows:

Among the society, mostly indifferent, if not even hostile, to the Legions, the yet few clubs of the League have been overcoming the difficulties with unflagging enthusiasm to obtain the resources necessary to supply the Legions. Almost all of the League's clubs ran taverns, tea rooms, shelters, canteens at railway stations, sewing rooms, and laundries. Parcels with underwear, warm clothes, shoes and food were constantly sent to the frontline. (...) A soldier on leave got a cordial reception at the back of the frontline. Tea rooms, social gatherings, and evening parties made his moments of rest pleasant, and the shows, lectures, talks for soldiers, courses for the illiterate, and libraries satisfied his cultural desires.<sup>40</sup>

L. Śliwińska's account is a good illustration of the activities of both associations before their merger into the League of Polish Women (Polish: Liga Kobiet Polskich, abbr.: LKP) at the unification congress in December 1918. From that

<sup>37</sup> J. DUFRAT, *Kobiety w kręgu...*, pp. 147–156.

<sup>38</sup> EADEM, *Kobiety w Legionach...*, p. 260.

<sup>39</sup> Leokadia Śliwińska (1875–1949) was a socialist and an independence and feminist activist. A graduate of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Sorbonne University in Paris, she organised secret educational groups as part of the Flying University in Kyiv. From 1905 she was a member of the Borderlands Political Society (Polish: Kresowe Towarzystwo Polityczne) which sympathised with the PPS. She co-founded the LKPW and was also a member of the POW. After the May Coup of 1926, she was associated with the Sanation movement and was active in the Women Citizens' Work Association. During World War II, she was active in the underground, and after the Warsaw Uprising, she was imprisoned in the Pruszków camp, from which she managed to escape. After the war, she moved to Łódź. She was awarded the Cross of Independence.

<sup>40</sup> L. ŚLIWIŃSKA, *Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego*, [in:] *Służba Ojczyźnie. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1915–1918*, ed. A. PIŁSUDSKA, Warszawa 1929, pp. 157–158.

moment on, the League's activists did not hide their political ambitions, and preparations began for the Legislative Sejm election to be held on 26 January 1919. The LKP promoted equal rights for women and men in all spheres of public life. The event that most fully testifies to the political awareness of women on the threshold of regaining independence was undoubtedly the National Congress of Women<sup>41</sup> organised on 8–9 September 1917 in Warsaw on the initiative of the LKPW. The congress was opened by Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka,<sup>42</sup> a doctor and social activist, saying, among other things, that:

One of the issues that must be revised in the newly-built Poland is undoubtedly the so-called women's case. A Polish woman, drawn into (...) the consequences of the present war, suffers with a man, works with him and builds the future of the homeland. And wider and wider masses are rightly convinced that without the participation of women our social, economic, and mainly national life would not be able to survive. There is no field in which a woman does not work, no sufferings which she does not face, and no burdens which she would not bear; so the moment has come for the Polish woman to feel her strength, and to understand her own worth; she has begun to feel the civic dignity and the conviction that only such rights can be permanent that are just and the same for all. Rights that handicap

<sup>41</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, women's circles began to hold general congresses. The first three were held secretly in 1891, 1894, and 1899; it was only in 1905 that the first open general meeting of feminist circles was held in Kraków, called the 'I Congress of Polish Women.' The resolutions of the conventions prove that the women's movement tried to combine emancipation goals with national ones. J. SIKORSKA-KULESZA, *Trójjaborowe zjazdy kobiet na ziemiach polskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, [in:] *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*, eds A. JANIĄK-JASIŃSKA, K. SIERAKOWSKA, A. SZWARC, Warszawa 2008, pp. 81–82.

<sup>42</sup> Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (1867–1936) was a doctor, a socialist, and a social and feminist activist. She studied medicine in Paris. In 1895, she joined the Foreign Union of Polish Socialists (Polish: Związek Zagraniczny Socjalistów Polskich). After the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1905, she moved to Kraków with her husband Stanisław Tylicki, and later moved to Warszawa, where she worked as a doctor at the Holy Spirit Hospital. She was active in a number of societies, including the Society of Polish Culture (Polish: Towarzystwo Kultury Polskiej) and Bolesław Prus Society of Practical Hygiene (Polish: Towarzystwo Higieny Praktycznej im. Bolesława Prusa). During World War I, she ran a field hospital for soldiers. For some time, she also managed the Military Infectious Diseases Hospital in Pułtusk. She was active in the feminist movement and belonged to the Polish Women's Equal Rights Association (Polish: Związek Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich). She was also involved in the work of the LKPW. In 1922, she joined the PPS and became a member of the Central Women's Department of the PPS, of which she was the president from 1930. After the May Coup of 1926, she did not support the Sanation authorities. In 1931, she was arrested and sentenced to a year in prison, but the sentence was lifted after an appeal. She died suddenly in Warszawa.

half the nation solely on the basis of gender are based on a false assumption and cannot correspond to modern living conditions. The proper development of the nation can only be ensured if the broad masses are appointed to participate in the management of the country under the principle of universal suffrage *without distinction between the sexes*.<sup>43</sup>

The convention selected a delegation that first submitted a memorial on women's electoral rights to the Regency Council, and after J. Piłsudski's return from Magdeburg, J. Budzińska-Tylicka and Maria Chmieleńska<sup>44</sup> handed him a declaration demanding political equality for women.<sup>45</sup>

The idea of fighting for a sovereign state was alive among Poles who found themselves in exile; they saw the need to support fellow Poles fighting on Polish soil. The PBK, the core of which was mainly women, was established in exile. According to Aneta Niewęgłowska's research, the PBK was a civilian institution supporting the Polish Army. At the beginning, it was an institution which helped the victims of World War I and the wars for the borders of the reborn state, and during the Second Polish Republic, the activity of the PBK focused on supporting the Polish Army in the field of education, culture, and upbringing.

The origins of the PBK date back to the establishment of the Polish Central Rescue Committee (Polish: Polski Centralny Komitet Ratunkowy, abbr.: PCKR)<sup>46</sup> in the United States on 12 October 1914. Its main goal was to provide material, food, and sanitary aid to Polish society. Food and medicines

<sup>43</sup> J. BUDZIŃSKA-TYLICKA, *Słowo wstępne*, [in:] *Pamiętnik Zjazdu Kobiet Polskich w Warszawie w roku 1917*, ed. J. BUDZIŃSKA-TYLICKA, Warszawa 1918, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Maria Chmieleńska (1869–1945), a socialist and an independence and feminist activist. In her youth, she worked as a teacher. In 1898, she joined the PPS. Under the nickname *Klara*, she distributed illegal party's press. She was arrested by the Tsarist authorities in 1901 and imprisoned in the tenth Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel, then in 1903 she was sent to the Viatka Governorate. She was given an amnesty and in 1905 she returned to Warszawa, where she secretly worked for the PPS. In 1905, she was arrested again and this time imprisoned in the *Pawiak* prison. After the outbreak of the war, she joined the POW. At the same time, she participated in the work of the LKPW. Since 1918, she was active in the Central Committee for Women's Equal Rights. After regaining independence by Poland, she worked as a clerk at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. She was active in the PPS Central Women's Department and in the feminist movement. In the years 1919–1930 she was a member of the Progressive Women's Political Club. She spent World War II in Warsaw and died after the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising in one of the hospitals near Warsaw. She was awarded the Cross of Independence and the Silver Cross of Merit twice.

<sup>45</sup> D. WANIEK, *op. cit.*, s. 171; J. KAPSA, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>46</sup> A. CHWALBA, *Wielka Wojna Polaków 1914–1918*, Warszawa 2018, p. 244.

were shipped to Poland. Helena and Ignacy Jan Paderewski were the initiators of charity actions in North America. H. Paderewska<sup>47</sup> promoted the aid campaign among the Polish women living in the USA. She initiated the creation of a specialised humanitarian organisation (modelled on the activities of the Red Cross<sup>48</sup>) whose main goal was to support fighting soldiers and their families. The originator of the name, in turn, was I.J. Paderewski.<sup>49</sup> The symbol of the PBK was the reverse of the Red Cross emblem – a white cross on a red field.

The original goal of the PBK was to provide help and care to the paramedics serving in the Polish Army fighting in France. There were seven departments within the PBK: 1) Department of Propaganda and Collection of Gifts, 2) Department of Care for Soldiers, 3) Department of Dressing Materials, 4) Helena Paderewska Department of Polish Women's Organisation, 5) Department of Purchases, 6) Expeditionary Department, and 7) Department of Nurses.<sup>50</sup>

PBK branches were established in large numbers at parishes in the United States and Canada. Members of the PBK were obliged to participate in social work for the organisation, for example doing a monthly fundraiser with PBK donation boxes or making small gifts for soldiers for Christmas and Easter.<sup>51</sup>

With the increase in the number of wounded on the Western Front, there was a need to send qualified nurses to Europe. Therefore, in June 1918 the PBK launched a course for nurses in New York. After its completion on 16 July 1918, the women who completed the training were sent to France, where they were assigned to work in hospitals of the American Red Cross and at the Polish Army hospital in Le Perray.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Helena Paderewska (1856–1934), a social activist, the wife of the composer and Prime Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski. During World War I, she actively participated in humanitarian actions. She was the founder of the PBK and from 1919 – the chairman of its Supreme Council. In 1921, she was awarded the cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* by Pope Benedict XV. At the end of her life, she was seriously ill and died in Switzerland.

<sup>48</sup> It should be mentioned that during World War I, Poles did not have the right to create their own organisation called the Polish Red Cross.

<sup>49</sup> The name was officially approved on 2 February 1914. Before the adoption of the name coined by Paderewski, the organisation was known as Helena Paderewska Committee for the Aid to the Polish Army (Polish: Komitet Pomocy Armii Polskiej im. Heleny Paderewskiej).

<sup>50</sup> A. NIEWĘGŁOWSKA, *Polski Biały Krzyż a wojsko w latach 1919–1939*, Toruń 2005, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> T. RADZIK, *Działalność Polskiego Białego Krzyża i Sekcji Ratunkowej Polek w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki w latach 1918–1920*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1990, issue 1 (55), p. 102.

After the Paderewski family left the USA, American authorities did not allow the PBK to continue to operate in the country, claiming that PBK infringed the competence of the American Red Cross.<sup>53</sup> The activities of the PBK in America were supported by the Polish Women's Rescue Section (Polish: Sekcja Ratunkowa Polek) established by the Polish National Department (Polish: Wydział Narodowy Polski). In practice, the Section took control of the PBK membership base and continued to organise material aid for its compatriots.

The history of the PBK in Europe began with its reactivation on 1 March 1918 in the territory of France. With the consent of the French authorities, its operation was combined with the activities of the Committee for the Aid to Injured Poles (Polish: Komitet Pomocy Rannym Polakom) in Paris, whose president was Count Mikołaj Potocki. The creation of a hospital for wounded soldiers was an extremely important initiative. The French stage of the PBK operation ended on 1 June 1919, when the soldiers of the Army of General Józef Haller were finally transported to Poland.<sup>54</sup>

The foundation of the PBK in the reborn Polish state took place in 1919 at the initiative of its creator H. Paderewska and her husband. H. Paderewska encouraged the entire society, not only women, to join. The social organisations which had operated in the former partitions were invited to co-create the PBK in the rebuilding state. In total, the PBK patronage covered 106 different clubs and institutions.<sup>55</sup>

The official statute of the PBK was passed in 1919. It defined the structure and the directions of further activities. Initially, the PBK's activities focused mainly on medical and charitable aid for the army. In Warsaw, a hospital for soldiers was established at 67 Dzielna Street. An equally important initiative was the creation of a warehouse that supplied the fighters with underwear, food, cigarettes, and writing paper. The PBK ran three types of canteens: unit canteens, garrison canteens, and mobile canteens, which were closest to the frontline. In 1919, the PBK launched the so-called sanitary train, which supplied the soldiers with underwear and wound dressing materials, and which was also used to transport the wounded from the frontline.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 102–103.

<sup>54</sup> A. NIEWĘGŁOWSKA, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.



After the borders of the reborn Polish state were stabilised, the White Cross conducted further general and vocational training for soldiers as well as specialist, methodological, and instructional courses. An important aspect of the PBK's activities during the peace period was the fight against illiteracy in the army, supporting libraries and soldiers' reading rooms. The institution also ran military clubs, was in charge of the artistic movement, and financially supported the organisation of cultural events.<sup>56</sup>

Faced with the threat of the Bolshevik invasion, women not only actively supported the fighters, but also created a resilient machine of defence propaganda in dozens of magazines. Women's organisations and their most famous activists signed up to the appeals and calls to join the Volunteer Army. In magazines such as "Bluszcz", "Orędownik", "Gazeta Warszawska", and "Dziennik Ludowy", they asked women to condemn all passivity and unpatriotic attitudes. Calls were made for an end to internal disputes and for society to unite in the face of the threat to Poland's newly regained statehood. One leaflet from this period stated:

If each of you really loves someone, then you should not only not dissuade him, but order him to go to the front. And if he does not listen, despise him as a coward, as a wicked fraud (...). If you love him, do not expose him to disgrace and being pointed at later when our victorious troops return home, so that after many years his own children will suffer with shame for his weakness.<sup>57</sup>

During the days of fighting for Warsaw, during the so-called 'raids' on cafes, restaurants and cinemas, men who remained in the cities despite being able to serve in the army were ridiculed. As Henryk Lisiak noticed, the behaviour of groups of girls stopping men in the street, asking the simple question "Why are you not wearing a uniform yet, young man?" caused pressure and undermined manly honour and, as you can imagine, such 'knights' avoided meetings with the women's troops to say the least.<sup>58</sup> In order to raise morale, the women's circles organised solemn farewell parties for soldiers going to the front.

The participation of women in the Committees of National Defence (Polish: Komitety Obrony Narodowej, abbr.: KONs) which were established to build the

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<sup>56</sup> *Vide*: E.J. KRYŃSKA, *Polski Biały Krzyż 1918–1961*, Białystok 1997.

<sup>57</sup> *Cit. per*: H. LISIAK, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

country's defence front, was visible. Hundreds of such committees were formed at various levels, from the central to the parish and village level. The KONs were, among other things, involved in fundraising activities, announced lotteries, and obtained clothes and food. On 7 July 1920, the National Women's Service (Polish: Narodowa Służba Kobiet) was established, which united 47 women's associations and unions. Individual committees were responsible for the registration of social forces that could be entrusted by the state and local government authorities with tasks auxiliary to the fighting army.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The great determination of the women involved in the fight for Poland's independence must be emphasised. The patriotic work of women took place at various levels: during Poland's struggle to regain a sovereign state and stabilise its borders, women's organisations made a significant contribution to the act of helping soldiers and civilian victims of the war. Young women did not hesitate to fight with weapons in hand, often paying the highest price. Their dedication was appreciated, and a number of women were awarded the War Order of *Virtuti Militari*. Among them were members of the POW and the OLK, as well as nurses who died helping wounded soldiers.

The period of the struggle for independence was the time when the women's desire for complete equality with men fully matured. Many activists of the women's organisations, as well as those actively participating in the struggle for independence and borders, entered the political scene of the Second Polish Republic (e.g., Zofia Moraczewska, who was a member of the Legislative Sejm). In conclusion, it should be noted that the period of the parliamentary government was a time of dashed hopes for many women. After the end of the Polish-Bolshevik War, women began to be removed from military service and jobs that were traditionally dominated by men. The combatants of the fight for independence, however, did not lay down their arms. Their stubbornness and determination finally resulted in the defence training of the next generation of women who, after September 1939, were also to experience the atrocities of the war.

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<sup>59</sup> M.M. DROZDOWSKI, *Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1921 z warszawskiej perspektywy*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 221–222.

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Urszula Kurcewicz

## **DZIAŁALNOŚĆ PROOBRONNĄ ORGANIZACJI KOBIECYCH W OKRESIE WOJEN O NIEPODLEGŁOŚĆ I GRANICE POLSKI W LATACH 1914–1921**

**Streszczenie.** Celem opracowania było ukazanie płaszczyzn, na których Polki włączyły się w dzieło odzyskania niepodległości po okresie zaborów. Zasadnicze cezury czasowe obejmują okres od 1914 r. do zakończenia wojny polsko-bolszewickiej. Jednakże w celu pełnego ukazania tła działalności proobronnej Polek w tekście przywołano szereg wydarzeń z okresu poprzedzającego wybuch I wojny światowej. Omówiona została również działalność kombatantek walk o niepodległość i granice w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej. Tekst składa się z dwóch części. W pierwszej części autorka przedstawiła udział kobiet w organizacjach paramilitarnych i walce zbrojnej podczas I wojny światowej, ich uczestnictwo w Powstaniu Wielkopolskim i w walkach w Galicji Wschodniej o Lwów. Omówiona została działalność kobiet m.in. w Legionach, Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej i Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet. Druga część opracowania prezentuje wkład cywilnych organizacji kobiecych, w szczególności Polskiego Białego Krzyża, w dzieło niesienia pomocy poszkodowanym w walkach żołnierzom i cywilom. Autorka wskazała na rolę, jaką odegrały Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego oraz Liga Kobiet Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego w zabezpieczeniu materialnego zaplecza armii. W obliczu zagrożenia inwazją bolszewicką kobiety nie tylko czynnie wspierały walczących, ale stworzyły także prężną maszynę propagandy obronnej na łamach dziesiątków pism. Autorka omawia akcję agitacyjną na rzecz wstępowania do Armii Ochotniczej. Działaczki stowarzyszeń kobiecych organizowały loterie, festyny, konkursy, podczas których zbierały środki na wsparcie walczących. Podstawą źródłową opracowania są wspomnienia, prasa z epoki oraz współczesne monografie i artykuły naukowe.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego, Liga Kobiet Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego, Ochotnicza Legia Kobiet, Polski Biały Krzyż, I wojna światowa, feminizm

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## ОБОРОННАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ЖЕНСКИХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЙ ВО ВРЕМЯ ВОЙН ЗА НЕЗАВИСИМОСТЬ И ГРАНИЦЫ ПОЛЬШИ В 1914–1921 ГГ.

**Аннотация.** Цель исследования состоит в том, чтобы показать области, в которых польские женщины включились в работу по восстановлению независимости после периода разделов. Основные переломные моменты охватывают период с 1914 г. до окончания польско-большевистской войны. Однако, чтобы в полной мере показать подоплеку оборонной деятельности польских женщин, в тексте упоминается ряд событий периода, предшествовавшего началу Первой мировой войны. Обсуждается также деятельность комбатантов, сражавшихся за независимость и границы во время Второй Польской Республики. Текст состоит из двух частей. В первой части автор представил участие женщин в военизированных организациях и вооруженной борьбе в годы Первой мировой войны, их участие в Великопольском восстании и в боях в Восточной Галиции за Львов. Обговаривается также деятельность женщин в легионах, Польской военной организации и Женском добровольческом легионе. Во второй части исследования представлен вклад гражданских женских организаций, в частности Польского Белого Креста, в работу по оказанию помощи солдатам и гражданским лицам, пострадавшим в ходе боевых действий. Автор подчеркивает ту роль, которую сыграли *Женская лига Военной скорой помощи* и Женский союз Галиции и Тешинской Силезии в обеспечении материальной базы армии. Перед лицом угрозы большевистского вторжения женщины не только активно поддерживали бойцов, но и запустили отлаженную машину оборонной пропаганды на страницах десятков газет. Автор обсуждает агитационную кампанию за вступление в Добровольческую армию. Активистки женских объединений устраивали лотереи, фестивали, конкурсы, в ходе которых собирали средства для поддержки бойцов. Источниковой базой исследования являются мемуары, периодическая печать и современные монографии и научные статьи.

**Ключевые слова:** Женский союз скорой помощи, Женский союз Галиции и Тешинской Силезии, Женский добровольческий легион, Польский Белый Крест, Первая мировая война, феминизм