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THE MAIN FEATURES OF ESTONIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT (1920—1940)

The 1930s in Estonia are characterized by a variety of different self-initiative movements and groups which had emerged after the independent state of Estonia was proclaimed in 1918. An outstanding phenomenon in the activities of Estonian society was the women's movement which consisted of various women's societies with different trends of activities. The more important of these societies were associated with analogical international women's organizations and supported by the Government. The full analysis and generalization of the Estonian Women's Movement is yet to be made. We still lack the scientific conception, for the social activities of the independence-era were not a permitted topic for surveying during the Soviet period. In this paper only main women's societies of the period of the independent state (1918—1940) are treated.

Introduction

The beginnings of the Estonian Women's Movement can be found in the second half of the 19th century, from the time of National Awakening, where Estonian woman first appears together with Estonian man. One of the symbols of our awakening is the poetess Lydia Koidula (1843—1886) — “All the inspiration, pathos and heroism which characterize that spring-time of Estonian nationalism comes out in her personality and poems.”

Lilli Suburg (1841—1923) has been called the first suffragette in Estonia, who, as a journalist and founder of the first girls' school in 1880 in Pärnu, tried to teach and educate Estonian women to think for themselves and seek a better education. The *Linda* journal which was first published in 1887 in Viljandi, stimulated national self-consciousness in women.

Women have actually been organized since the 1880s when local Women's Committees of the Alexander School organization were active, collecting money for that Estonian School.

The idea of organized women's movement was taken up and carried on by the **Tartu Women's Society** (TWS; *Tartu Naiselts*) established in 1907. One can read in their first statutes that “the Society will try to be useful in organizing meetings and lectures in order to discuss such problems which concern the women's situation and to spread useful knowledge among women. It has the right to open a library, a reading room, and to publish a newspaper. In order to develop women's skills the Society has the right to open sewing and housekeeping schools, organize courses, open sales outlets, workshops, stores for schoolchildren and the

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poor, as well as to open hostels for working women, labour markets for unemployed and poor people, found hospices and give aid to the old, the sick and the disabled.”¹ The TWS spoke out about many problems — political rights, equal work and pay, education for women, the need to learn and develop the skills needed in everyday life. More often than not, practical enterprises proved to be more successful than just inspiring and encouraging the search for national identity, such as, for example, courses and open exhibitions of handicrafts, housekeeping, and home economy. All kinds of welfare work and assistance were included in the Society’s activities in the form of either making presents for the army, organizing aid for hospitals or collections for charity.²

The journals of the Society, *Käsitöö* (Handicraft), first published on the initiative of the Rural Society in 1907, and later belonging to the Tartu Women’s Society from 1911, as well as *Naiste Töö ja Elu* (Women’s Work and Life) published since 1911, gave practical hints and also served as a mediator for the ideals and aspirations of the women’s movement.

During the first decade of this century, a union of Estonian women was established far away from homeland. The **Estonian Women’s Society** (*Peterburi Eesti Naisselts — St. Peterburi Eesti Vastastikku Häätegev Naisühisus*) was founded in St. Petersburg and despite its limited scope tried to support the women of Estonia. “The Women’s Society has taken up the education of Estonian females living in St. Petersburg, supporting them materially, mentally, as well as ethically. The Union will help to find work, give food, medical care and financial support; it will help provide living quarters, teach handicrafts and other skills, organize general as well as special lectures and courses, conversations and meetings.”³

Years 1920—1940

The new wave of the women’s movement and the rapid growth in the number of women’s societies started in 1917 together with striving for the independence of Estonian State. As an affirmation, the first Women’s Congress met on the initiative of the Tartu Women’s Society on May 27th—28th, 1917, in Tartu, where a demand was made for Estonia to be an independent republic within the Russian Federation. The main report was on women’s social rights: “The Estonian woman must unite in the cause of Estonian matters without fear. The Estonian woman should work and progress together with men, yet she cannot forget her special feminine interests. Women must have equal rights with men, including rights to property...”⁴ The scope of problems under discussion was fairly wide — the women’s part in the temperance movement, the protection of children and women, the situation of working women, of women in marriage and professional work, manual and field work, also housekeeping schools, cottage industry and artistic handicrafts, etc. Women were called upon to join a union of women’s organizations, but an all-Estonian women’s union had not yet been attained.⁵

The following troubled years gave no opportunities for the women to unite, and instead of the success, previously hoped for, the number of

¹ Täiendused Eesti Naisterahva Seltsi põhjuskirja juurde. «Postimehe» trükk. Tartu, 1910.

² Tartu Naisselts 1907—1937. Tartu Naisseltsi kirjastus, Tartu, 1937, 3—7.

³ St. Peterburi Eesti Vastastikku Häätegeva Naisühisuse Põhjuskiri. «Postimehe» trükikoda Tartus, 1909, 5—6.

⁴ Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liidu aastaraamat I. Tallinn, 1924, 132.

⁵ Ibid., 132—135.

members as well as the number of societies diminished. Lots of new societies cropped up in 1917 the aim of which was to express the desire for independence, but they could not define the aims of their societies and developed into merely charitable organizations, ignoring all matters concerning women's development.

A new wave of women's movements began in the '20s, and at the second all-Estonian Congress of Women in 1920 the **Union of Estonian Women's Organizations** (*Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liit*) was founded (renamed as the **Estonian Women's Union** — *Eesti Naisliit* — in 1930). The Estonian Women's Union (EWU) set themselves the goal of uniting all women, to develop and ensure the juridical, economic, intellectual and physical well-being of women as well as to promote all their socially useful enterprises. The Congress confirmed the statutes and passed a resolution to join the International Women's League. The first board was elected as well as the chairman, Marie Reisik, who is considered to be the founder and ideologist of the Estonian Women's Movement, and who was the leader of the movement until her imprisonment in 1940.

The Congress also passed resolutions on the reform of family law, on mothers and children, women's professional education, and on prostitution and abstinence. The positive effect of founding a central women's organization was obvious. The guiding principle was that in an independent state the women, having attained equal political rights, should also become conscious and informed citizens, free both mentally and materially. The importance of professional work was stressed in raising the status of women as well as in building up a new state. Thence the important task of creating a system of women's vocational education.⁶

Three main directions prevailed in the work of EWU: juridical matters (family law, citizens' rights etc.), vocational education (a network of housekeeping schools), social questions (charity and welfare).

Great attention was paid to women's rights in legislation. The outdated Baltic Private Law according to which women were wards of men, was condemned. No difference was made between the two sexes in the democratic constitution. Women jurists got the right to participate in the process of working out the family law, and some progress was made — housekeeping and mother's work was began to be looked upon as a profession. Important changes were also made in other paragraphs concerning the property relations of the spouses.

Memoranda were sent to many institutions: one concerning the creation of social welfare laws to the Ministry of Social Affairs, another to the Tallinn City Council and the Health Department on the appointment of a female doctor and Head of Control of Prostitution. It was taken for granted that the Heads of Nurseries and Mothers' Homes should be female doctors.

The EWU Health Commission worked out a plan for health-care courses, also, advisory centres were opened for women and children in several towns. The courses for mothers started in 1923 in Tallinn, and were much appreciated. Through EWU children from orphanages were given to families to be adopted. In conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs a Centre for Minors was opened in 1921, where girls without custody could stay and learn some professional skills which would enable them to work for their living in the future.

The Vocational Commission considered weaving, handicrafts and household skills as the most important things to be taught to girls. EWU was the first organizer of local courses and vocational education.

⁶ Ibid., 5—12.

The first issue of the EWU journal *Naiste Hääl* (The Voice of Women) was published in December, 1926, and the principles of the women's movement were introduced there. Enough space was given to household tips and handicraft. The journal closed down in the autumn of 1932 due to financial difficulties.⁷

The Union took on the task of organizing a Women's Congress every five years. In 1925 the third congress was held in Tallinn where women's rights, vocational education and the organization of social work were discussed. The women's movement developed consistently, and was supported in most townships. The congress pointed out that besides organizational work in social affairs and arranging courses, the Union had initiated and supported vocational schools, orphanages, advisory services, and nurseries.

At the fourth congress, in 1930, the central theme discussed was the family draft. At the last congress of independence period, in 1935, main stress was laid on home and educational problems.⁸

Following the establishment of EWU, the Estonian women's movement developed in various directions; lots of central associations were founded some of which belonged to the EWU. Different women's unions have been in co-operation with one another, they have joined their forces in their strife for major goals; however, differences in viewpoints and misunderstandings have always existed there as well.

The Second Estonian Women's Congress was convened in 1920. 21 women's organizations with 5000 members took part in it. By the year 1940 the Union comprised 90 organizations with 10,000 members.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA; *Noorte Naiste Kristlik Ühing*) was founded as early as 1920, first as a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, later as a separate organization which relied on international experience from the very first days of its existence. The all-world principles were propagated among Estonian young women in order to give them proper education and bring them up in Christian ways. Thus, the organization made an attempt to change the ethical principles of young Estonians which had considerably dropped during the war. The women's department in Tallinn applied for instruction and economic assistance to the international organizations. Representatives of American Christian organizations came to instruct organizational work in Estonia already in 1920. The first independent organization was founded in Tallinn in 1921; shortly after that such organizations were founded in Tartu and other Estonian towns. Thanks to the assistance from the international organizations, Estonian women could participate in world conferences, summer schools and make study tours. Useful textbooks were sent to the organization to direct essential points in their work.

Estonian YWCA accepted members from among young women regardless of their origin, profession, education, nationality, and world outlook. Russian and German groups started their work later. A woman belonging to this organization had to improve her mind, take care of her health and commend herself to God. The symbol of the organization was the badge in the form of a blue triangle, each angle of which had to signify three sides of a human being—body, soul and reason. By developing all these sides, one was supposed to gain harmony.

On the initiative of the Tallinn and Tartu organizations, the foundation of an all-Estonian League was considered. This came into being in 1931, the first chairwoman was Eleonore Hünerson, and the highest body

⁷ Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liidu aastaraamat II. Tallinn, 1926; Kümme aastat Eesti Naisliitu. Tallinn, 1930.

⁸ *Poska-Grünthal, V. Naine ja naisliikumine*. Tartu, 1936.

was the Congress with a Council co-ordinating work between the Congresses.

The League of YWCA set as its goal to unite Christian women's organizations in Estonia in order to promote mental, intellectual, moral, social, and health interests of young women, to found new societies and uphold the aims set by the international association.

The leading Council of the League founded local societies, clubs, study groups, organized conferences, training schools, courses, lectures and study tours, opened libraries and reading rooms, even its own orphanages.⁹

The League managed to convene five congresses during its existence where resolutions were passed to propagate the ideas of the organization to the public at large, also, the Ministry for Education was asked for an official recognition of this youth organization. The League also solved problems of social welfare and stressed the necessity to co-operate with the Young Men's Christian Association.

The roots of Estonian temperance movement go back to the 19th century. In the '20s, the women participating in the temperance movement convened. They had been induced to do so by the 1921 Helsinki Conference of Women's Temperance. The idea had come from North America, and a white metal band called the "White Band" became the uniting symbol of the movement.

In the autumn of 1922 the central committee of Estonian Temperance Movement discussed the foundation of a Women's Temperance League and the celebration of the Women's Temperance Day. The decision to found a **Women's Temperance League** (WTL; *Naiste Karuskusliit*) was passed in March, 1923, in Tartu at the first Women's Temperance Day.

Already at the end of 1923 a congress was held in Valga, where the statutes were confirmed and the first board with Helmi Pöld as the leader was elected. The WTL undertook as its task to become a consolidator and directing organ to all women's organizations in Estonia fighting against alcoholism. Those who signed the pledge had the right to wear the "White Band". The pledge ran as follows: "I am aware that the intoxicants and other narcotic stuff used by men are creating trouble and misery, they break up families and destroy the future of children. Therefore I will never use this poisonous stuff nor offer it to others."

The aim of the WTL was to spread temperance knowledge and propagate abstinent life style among women. Already from its very first days the popularization of temperance ideas was connected with home and education problems. In the '30s the importance of "home training" gained more and more ground in women's temperance movement and was firmly supported by the ideology adopted by the state.

One of the leaders of the society, Helmi Mäelo, considered the ideas of organizing a special course for mothers and celebrating Mother's Day as a particularly important undertaking.¹⁰

Mother's courses were organized in all subsidiaries of the organization from the beginning up to the closing day, and the participation was always numerous. During 20—34 one-hour lectures the main stress was laid on women's health and home training.

The celebration of Mother's Day started in 1908 in America. Estonia has had much influence from Finland, where in 1918 the first public celebration of the Day was held. The first festive celebration of Mother's Day in Estonia was organized in Uderna school-house in spring, 1923. The following year, more than 20 women's organizations made prepara-

⁹ Kristliku Noorte Naisühingu klubitöö. Kristlike Noorte Naisühingute Liidu Kirjastus Tallinnas, 1931.

¹⁰ Mäelo, H. Eesti Naine läbi aegade. Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, Lund, 1957, 201—203.

tions for the Day. Already in 1924 Mother's Day was celebrated all over Estonia. In a short time this special Sunday became popular, and the second Sunday of May became the second important holiday after the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia.

Besides alcohol problems, other objects of interest have been on the agenda of women's temperance movement, like healthy provisioning and introducing new ways of provisioning.

The WTL published its magazine *Eesti Naine* (Estonian Woman) in 1924—1940. The journal was compiled mainly to propagate temperance, but usually larger problems of women's life and home were discussed. In 1925—1937 an additional issue for children called *Väikeste Sõber* (Friend of the Little Ones) was published. The magazine was very popular, the number of copies reached 10,000 in some years. The women's temperance organization published lots of other issues as well to propagate temperance ideas.

The WTL had relations with women's temperance societies of the world and was a member of the World Women's Christian Temperance Union. The representatives of Estonian WTL took part in international congresses in Edinburgh (1925), Stockholm (1934) and Washington (1937).

The start of **Women's Home Guard** (WHG; *Naiskodukaitse*) in Estonia is considered the united action of Estonian women during the War for Independence in 1918—19 where women had to take care of the wounded, help with supplies, sew clothes and knit mittens. After the end of the War for Independence, when the Defence League (DL; *Kaitseliit*) quit, the women's organization broke off as well. After the communist revolt on December 1, 1924, in Tallinn, the units of DL were formed again. Soon it appeared that the DL needed women's assistance during the times of peace as well, to sew bandages, organize charity collections, lotteries and parties to raise money for the DL. Women took part in the training camps of the DL, preparing food and giving medical aid. The women's units formed at the DL were called Women's Committees, Women's Defence Union etc. The women's units were established at the DL's administrative units and were called accordingly.

The willingness of Estonian women to help men form armed forces, and the effective functioning of the Finnish well-organized women's organization Lotta-Svärd, made the DL seriously consider forming a women's organization.

At Defence League's Day organized in 1927 in Tartu, the main principles of Women's Home Guard were formulated — "to propagate the views of the Defence Union, to deepen national feelings, to help DL to safeguard our homes and security."¹¹ Already from the very first years the WHG, with Mari Raamot as the leader, tried to become independent from the DL, yet subversion had been avoided. However, it had not always worked, and since 1934, with the adoption of new statutes, the rights of the DL became considerably enlarged, especially as far as appointing leaders to the WHG went.¹²

The highest body of the WHG — its first congress — met in 1928 and defined an extremely large scale of activities. Already from the very first years the central society looked for possibilities of organizing house-keeping courses and lectures in its subsidiaries. On the other hand, they immediately started to train new staff — in 1928 the first 'flying school' for educating chairwomen in regions was opened, where lectures were held on propaganda, on planning parties and on exercising oral skills;

¹¹ *Naiskodukaitse* 1925—1933. Tallinn, 1933, 7.

¹² *Raamot, M.* Minu mälestused kodutarest okupatsiooni vanglani. K/Ü Loodus, Tartu, 1937, 311—312, 321—326.

the following year new subjects like management, book-keeping, etc. combined with training trips were added.

In 1931 all-Estonian summer courses were founded. The scope of lectures was very large here: gas defence, fire service, holding a feast, developing social co-operation between organizations, revival of national traditions and their application to the revival of WHG movement. Practical training was given in sanitary and gas defence. In the years to come, new themes were introduced which in a way dictated the activities of the DL as well as the all-Estonian activities.

Already before becoming an all-Estonian organization, the WHG dealt with supplies for the DL, making flags, arm badges and other outfit. The income came from parties, lotteries, collections, mainly depending on the benevolence of people. A part of the income also came from sales of handicraft, things with the WHG emblem, writing materials, make-up and tableware.

One of the most important fields of activities of the WHG was considered to be physical training which was not aimed at training top sportsmen but tried to take its members out of doors to bring them into immediate contact with Nature. The WHG units were members of the DL's sports clubs, where also calisthenics, rhythmic gymnastics, and national dances were propagated.

Along with the tasks of an assistant body to the DL, much attention has been paid in the WHG to national culture. The aim of the parties and festive meetings has been to point out the originality and value of Estonian ethnic culture. Making and wearing national costumes was propagated, it had always been allowed to wear a national costume next to the uniform. Courses for sewing national costumes were organized. The WHG units had consistently tried to revive old traditions: Martinmas, Catherine's Day and Shrove Tuesday were celebrated, not to mention Christmas. National dishes had been served on these days, old song-games played, even whole plays based on national subjects were performed with success.

The WHG had been co-operating with most of the organizations existing in Estonia, and helped with carrying out nation-wide enterprises, delegating its members to all-Estonian and local committees. In 1936 a home and its environment decorating campaign was launched, starting with putting one's own home and environment in order and finishing with taking care of the tombs of famous cultural figures and of those fallen in the War for Independence.¹³

The WHG supported all the undertakings of the temperance movement — the parties and other events of the Home Guard had to be held without alcohol. Raamot recalls in her memoirs that "... the participation of women had a morally favourable effect on the DL — there was no heavy drinking any more. The roughness and purely military behaviour changed once the younger leaders who had been brought up in Estonia, took the lead."¹⁴

The activities of the women in blue dresses was successful not only at the stockpots of the DL or running about with collection boxes. Its sequence was guaranteed by a girls' organization *Kodutütred* which proved the strength of the organization and secured a new generation to take over, including involvement of new branches. Only an organization having a very large scale could boast such participation numbers: in 1927, the organization had 3,000 members, in 1938, 14,710 and in 1939, already 15,978.

¹³ Naiskodukaitse tegevuse ülevaade algupäevist kuni 1938. aastani. Tallinn, 1939.

¹⁴ Raamot, M. Minu mälestused kodutarest okupatsiooni vanglani, 313.

The WHG, more than any other women's organizations, was influenced in its activities by the state structures and government ideology.

Estonian Women Student's Society (*Eesti Naisüliõpilaste Selts*) was founded in 1911 in Tartu. In the '20s the wish to establish a corporation of women students grew among them and in 1920, Rector of Tartu University, Peeter Põld, founded the first women's corporation *Filiae Patriae* which tried to insist on the idea that an intelligent and well-educated woman can act in a feminine way as well. Women corporations *Indla*, *Amicitia* and *Lembela* were founded in 1924.

On the initiative of the alumnae of Estonian Women Student's Society, the **Estonian Academic Women's Association** (EAWA; *Eesti Akadeemiliste Naiste Ühing*) was brought to life in 1926; it set as its main aims to raise the prestige of women's labour, to improve women's social and economic position, to promote the scientific work of its members. Already in the same year this association was accepted as a member of International Academic Women's League (IAWL), founded in 1919, and had close contacts with its board and its associations in other countries. The international league considered its main task to develop friendship and understanding between different nations as well as to protect women with academic education in all parts of the world. The IAWL distributed annual scholarships for which Estonian women were often successfully put up as candidates.

The EAWA had two departments — one in Tallinn and the other in Tartu. The activities of the EAWA were divided between different committees for legal, educational, mental work, committee of women-doctors, and others. The best-known committee was the legal committee, where over a hundred jurists participated as members; they were also members of the International Women's Legal Society. Its systematic work since 1928 at the reform of family law is worth mentioning, also the fact that one of its members was elected deputy to the Family Law Commission in 1929.

The society published in Estonian, Finnish and Swedish family laws as models for the equal rights of men and women. Other bills were discussed too, for example, the health insurance bill. The aim of the society was also to improve the employment opportunities and social and economic conditions of women.

For a long period of time the committee solved the problems of discharging married women from the civil service and published articles on the matters in all the newspapers. In 1936, general education and vocational education problems were included in the agenda of the association meetings due to the prospective education reform.

The association had been especially successful in dealing with the reform of the legal state of illegitimate children.

The association had also tried to promote students' scientific work by grants; lots of competitions on various subjects had been announced, like "The Basic Features of Spouses' Early Intercourse" in 1932, "International Women's Movement as a Factor of Nations' Approach" in 1933, "The Woman Student and Academic Studies at Tartu University" in 1936.

Club evenings and lectures also belonged to the spheres of activity of the academical women where they made reports on various subjects, organized professional as well as general excursions. The association also participated in the undertakings of other organizations and published several useful books bearing women in mind.

The EAWA began with 33 members, its branches were opened in Tallinn and Tartu. From the report of 1934 we learn that it had one hundred members already then. In 1936, there were 1500 women with higher education. By the end of its ten years of action, the association had as

many as 140 members. The first chairwoman of the association was Alma Miller, who was later replaced by L. Poska-Teiss.¹⁵

The formation of a central body for countrywomen took longer than all other women's societies, although it became the biggest women's society in number of members as it comprised 140,000 Estonian farmer's wives. "The movement of countrywomen with their particular interests, their specific seriousness and specific problems comes into blossom like late spring," wrote Mäelo, one of the leaders of women's temperance, in her memoirs.

The Estonian Central Farmer's Society played a significant role in organizing countrywomen. It spread housekeeping advice through its branch societies. Already from the beginning of this century housekeeping, handicraft and weaving courses for women were actively organized, but the Societies could not meet all the needs of countrywomen for housekeeping advice. The most active women understood that if housewives saw better households, exchanged experiences and learned something about good taste, they could better organize their farms and make their living conditions more comfortable.

The publication of *Taluperenaine* (Farmer's Housewife) started in 1927 by the Academic Agricultural Society, gave a good start to the movement of countrywomen in Estonia. It became a journal of the countrywomen's movement with the biggest number of copies. It had a big impact on the movement. **The Estonian Countrywomen's Central Society** (ECCS; *Maanaiste Keskselts*) was registered in 1928. The ECCS's main goal was to promote housewifery in the country, improve the cultural and economic condition of countrywomen. According to the statutes, all the societies of housewives who had similar aims could become members of the central society.

Liis Käbin was the leader of the movement from the start, and bore the responsibility up to the liquidation of the society in 1940, being at the same time the editor of the magazine *Taluperenaine*.

From the last report of the society before its liquidation we learn that Estonia had 459 local countrywomen's societies (in 1939 the number was 445) while 445 of these societies were also members of the central society (in 1939: 425).¹⁶

During these years, the central society initiated several plans for the country women's and housewife's societies by organizing advisory services, courses, competitions and standing rules, demonstrations and other activities.

Countrywomen could get practical advice mostly by participating in special courses. In the booklet¹⁷ published for the centenary of the ECCS, the most popular courses had been named as those in catering, preservation of horticultural products and beef, gardening, weaving, knitting, crosheing, darning, sewing national costumes and clothes, health-care and home education, woodwork and painting, felt-boot making, cattle-breeding, pig-breeding, sheep-breeding, poultry farming, also play-acting and national dances. In ten years, the most popular field was catering and everything connected with it, also handicraft and housekeeping. These courses traditionally ended with parties or festive get-togethers where everybody could demonstrate what she had learned. Undoubtedly these courses were important for Estonian countrywomen, as the latter could be considered the bearers of our home culture in the country.

The countrywomen's societies and the housewives' societies tried to

¹⁵ Vaba Eesti, 1936, Oct. 29.

¹⁶ Eesti Maanaiste Keskseltsi 1939/40 a. tegevuse ülevaade. Tallinn, 1940, 2.

¹⁷ Eesti Maanaiste Keskselts 1928—1938. Tartu, 1938.

develop social life in villages. Along with housekeeping advice they had always pointed out the importance of interesting meetings. Speeches or reports were held, demonstrations and competitions were organized during the parties or meetings. Choirs and folk-dance groups of the societies were very popular. The central association encouraged people to wear national costumes, they taught how to prepare national dishes. Estonian national holidays were held at the instigation of the societies.

The housekeeping exhibitions organized by the central association and the local societies were extremely popular and acted as good propaganda for housewife societies. On the other hand, one could get good advice and wonderful ideas from such exhibitions, always encouraging women to try their hand at something new.

From the first years of their existence, the societies organized all-Estonian Countrywomen's Summer Days. At the beginning there were about 200 participants, in 1937 the number was already 5,000. Later, organization was rather different due to the rapid growth of the number of participants, so more room was left for entertainment and for people to enjoy exhibitions. Different local societies offered various performances by choirs and folk-dancers. The 1938 report reads: "The Summer Days have always been one of the most impressive and beautiful demonstrations of countrywomen's feelings of togetherness. They give a good incentive for housewives to go on with their everyday work at home as well as in the society. It is interesting to note that such women who have once been to these Days do not want to miss them any more. There have been lots of quite experienced housewives among the participants."

Organizing joint "Home Culture Days" from the autumn of 1932 by all the countrywomen of a region had a strong influence on keeping Estonian farms and the surroundings in order. The organizers of these Days were seeking for great popularity, so as many people as possible from the local villages were called upon to participate.

Already from the first years, international co-operation was encouraged. In 1929 the ECCS was accepted as a member of the International Countrywomen's League "Countrywomen of the World". Estonian representatives participated in international congresses in London, 1929; in Vienna, 1930; in Stockholm, 1933. Estonian handicraft was displayed at London International Countrywomen's League in 1929. In a book published by the League "What Are the Countrywomen of the World Doing", photos of Estonian countrywomen's societies and housekeeping schools had been printed, illustrating the articles about Estonia and its national traditions.

In a relatively short period the movement of countrywomen gathered around the ECCS had brought about remarkable achievements in carrying out its main principle — countrywoman for her family and home. This movement was highly appreciated by the Government and got state support for hiring consultants.

Liis Käbin once said that "the secret for the success of the countrywomen's movement has been in self-sacrificing work for their homes, their families, and the prosperity of their homeland."

The highest public and legal representation of women's movement was the **Chamber of Domestic Economy** (CDE; *Kodumajanduskoda*), founded in 1936. In the '30s, professional chambers were established in Estonia: people of the same profession were gathered into organizations, and a central body was founded to protect, support and give assistance to the profession as much as possible. The CDE worked as a professional organization of housewives. The chairwoman Linda Eenpalu had said that the chamber was trying to help all housewives and teach them how to use their knowledge in "home culture" and people's education.¹⁸

¹⁸ Estonian State Archives, archival fund 2636.

The 50 members of CDE were elected by the Countrywomen's Central Society and the Women's Union, while 10 members were invited from among experts of various professions. The main task of the CDE was to develop domestic economy as a profession, and unite the organizations dealing with domestic economy one way or another, to protect the profession and give consultations in every possible way, that is in catering, clothes-making, children's education, health-care, home design, keeping home in order, etc. CDE supported vocational schools, experimental groups, workshops and other institutions dealing with domestic economy, also developed better use and sale of domestic production.

The confirmation of the Chamber of Domestic Economy by the President's decree actually meant that women's domestic work had been recognized as a profession in its own right.

All the participants in housewives' courses became members of the CDE. The main task of the CDE was not only to unite all women, but to establish a centre where women could receive a certificate for having been trained in housekeeping. Neither academic women as such, nor the members of Home Guard were part of it.

One of the most important tasks of the CDE was advisory work at individual advisory service centres or courses. The Chamber had its own Advisory Service Centre, a library and a reading room.

The CDE published literature for housewives on several different topics, also weekly radio lectures were held. The Days of Advice were held in 1937 in order to instruct women in housekeeping and establish a better relation between the advisors who were expected to be experts in all the works needed in a household of a farm and elsewhere. The instructions offered at the Advisory Service Centre had to be down-to-earth and adjustable to all kinds of homes.

The greatest undertaking of the CDE was all-Estonian Home Culture Days. During the 1939 Days in Tallinn, 6 reports were rendered on home culture, national culture, home training, catering, taking care of living quarters in town and in the country, most immediate tasks of economizing in domestic economy, on home and housewife in the society. The sphere of matters offered by the CDE had been wide and aroused great interest, particularly as there were discussions after the reports. The Home Culture Days became popular and were organized in co-operation with other women's organizations.

Exhibitions, competitions and festive evenings were organized in various parts of Estonia. The biggest newspapers published articles on domestic health care, education, catering, order, beauty in general, etc. The main event of the day was a radio broadcast covering some festive ceremony together with an address by the President of the Republic.

The all-Estonian campaign of tidying up could be mentioned as one of the major events which was held in 1938. All other urgent tasks had to be postponed and the whole families had to go out and tidy their homes and its surroundings. The radio broadcasts and newspapers also devoted a lot of space to tidying up homes.

Beside courses and advisory services, the CDE took part in preparing the laws and projects in domestic economy.¹⁹

In the independent Estonian Republic a very positive change took place both in political and social status of Estonian women, including greater political rights given to them. But there were problems hard to manage and demanding perpetual care from the women's organizations; among them, the low birth rate was one of the most serious ones. The active and successful work of the main women's organizations was one

¹⁹ Kodumajanduskoja tegevus I, II ja III tegevusaastal. Tallinn, 1937—1939.

of the factors that contributed to the advancement of women's legal position, education, cultural level, better housekeeping, etc. The activities of the women's movement between the 1920s and 1940s can be regarded as a unique phenomenon in the development of a young state. Of course, the submission of the women's movement to the prevailing ideology and their close relations with corresponding international organizations must not be overlooked either. In 1940, as a result of the Soviet occupation, the women's unions established during the period of independence were abolished.

Epilogue

From June 1940, women's activities were controlled directly by the Communist Party (CP) which had brought to life a women-proletarians movement earlier, in 1921—23. In 1923 an all-Estonian women-proletarians' congress was organized by the women's committees.

A quick formation of women's committees started again in 1940—41. According to the orders of the CP, Olga Lauristin became the leader of the women's movement. The magazine *Naistöoline* (Woman Worker) was published in these years.

The women's movement during the Soviet period was as contradictory as the position of women in the society in general. Formally, women had all the rights. It can be described as a "coercive emancipation" — women were encouraged to work on equal teams with men in all professions. Women's work and social activities took them further away from their homes. Practically, Soviet women had to bear a double burden: there was no equality. The women's movement existed formally and was led from the top. However, an unprompted strive for deeper consideration of women's situation, stressing the importance of the family and development of women's, housewives' and mother's skills could be observed in Estonia.

The Fifth Women's Congress of the Soviet Period held in April, 1989, finished the era of directing by the CP. All women's councils closed down and the **Estonian Women's League** was founded at the same time on new principles. The programme of "Estonian Woman Today and Tomorrow" was adopted.

In May 1989 the **Women's Union** was re-established in Tartu as a successor to the first independent league. The main task of the Union was to take care of our mother-tongue and homeland as well as to join all Estonian-women's forces in the effort of achieving independence in Estonia.

About a hundred academic women re-established the **Estonian Union of Academic Women** in 1991, based on legal succession. In addition to the re-established organizations, a lot of new women's societies emerged affiliated to the international women's organizations.

Presented by P. Järve

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EESTI NAISLIIKUMISE PÕHIJOOINI AASTAIL 1920—1940

1930. aastaid Eestis iseloomustab liikumiste ja omaalgatuslike rühmituste mitmekesisus, millele pandi alus omariikluse väljakuulutamisega 1918. Arvestatavaks nähtuseks eesti seltsielus oli naisliikumine, mis erinevate naisorganisatsioonide kaudu oli seotud ka rahvusvahelise naisliikumisega. Eesti naisorganisatsioonid said toetust ka valitsuselt. Mitmed Eesti Vabariigi ajal toimunud positiivsed nihked naise positsiooni paranemises, kaasa arvatud poliitiliste õiguste suurenemine, olid naisorganisatsioonide järjekindla töö tulemus. Peamiste naisorganisatsioonide aktiivne ja edukas tegevus oli oluline faktor, mis soodustas naiste haridus- ja kultuuritaseme (sh. kodukultuuri) tõusu. Samas tuleb tähele panna, et mitmetele olulistele naisi otseselt puudutavatele probleemidele, nagu seda oli madal sündivus, jäid ka naisorganisatsioonid alla. Käesolevas artiklis on vaatluse all olulisemate naisorganisatsioonide tegevus 20.—40. aastatel.

Eestis sai 1907 ametliku tunnustuse Tartu Naisselts. Seltsi poolt õeldi esmakordselt avalikkusele välja paljud naisõigusega seonduvad küsimused (poliitilised õigused, ühesugune töö ja tasu jne.), räägiti naise kui mõtleva isiku kasvatamisest, vajadusest ennast arendada ja argielus vajaminevate oskuste omandamisest. Naisseltsi häälekandjaisid said aastal 1911 ajakiri «Käsitöö» (hakkas ilmuma 1907 Eesti Põllumeeste Seltsi algatusel) ning «Naiste Töö ja Elu».

Eesti naisliikumise uus laine, naisseltside kiire kasv, langes aastale 1917, mil tekkis reaalne püüdlus Eesti iseseisvusele. Tartu Naisseltsi algatusel kutsuti mais 1917 kokku I Eesti naiskongress, kus seati üles nõudmine, et Eesti peab olema iseseisev vabariik Vene Föderatsioonis.

Põhiettekanne oli naise sotsiaalsetest õigustest. Märgiti, et eesti naine peab ühise Eesti asja eest võitlemiseks julgesti välja astuma. Eesti naine töötab ja sammub koos mehega, ta ei tohi aga unustada oma erinaishuvisid. Naisel peavad olema ühesugused õigused meestega, ka maaküsimuses peavad naised ühed õigused omandama meestega.

1920. aastal Tallinnas toimunud II ülemaailisel naiskongressil loodi Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liit (ENL; alates 1930 Eesti Naisliit). ENL seadis eesmärgiks kõigi naiste koondamise ühiseks tööks, mis edendaks ja kindlustaks naiste õiguslikku, majanduslikku, vaimlist ja tervislikku seisukorda, aitaks igati kaasa ühiskonnakasulikele ettevõtmistele. Kongressil võeti vastu resolutsioon Rahvusvahelisse Naisliitu astumise kohta. Esimeseks juhatajaks valiti Marie Reisik, keda võib pidada teadliku Eesti naisliikumise alusepanijaks ja ideoloogiks. 1926—1932 ilmus häälekandja «Naiste Hääle».

Pärast ENL-i loomist hakkas Eesti naisliikumine mitmekesistuma eri tegevussuundadega keskkoondestega, millest osa kuulus ka ENL-i koosseisu. Eesti naisteühendused on aegade jooksul teinud koostööd, ühendanud oma jõud suuremate eesmärkide saavutamiseks, ent samas on ette tulnud ka erimeelsust ja mittemõistmist.

1920 alustas Noorte Meeste Kristliku Ühingu juurde moodustatud naisosakonnana tegevust Kristlik Noorte Naiste Ühing (KNNÜ). Algusest peale toetuti Ülemaailmse KNNÜ kogemusele, levitati tema põhimõtteid ja edendati noorte naiste igakülgset kasvatamist ja arendamist kristlikus vaimus. Kristlike põhimõtete organisatsiooni loomisega taheti muuta ka Eesti noorte kõlbelisi tõekspidamisi, mis raskete sõjaaastatega üsna madalale olid langenud.

1923 registreeriti Naiste Karskusliit (NK), kus põhieesmärgiks seati karskuslaste teadmiste levitamine ja karskete eluviiside propageerimine naiste hulgas. Viimane oli seotud kodu- ja kasvatusküsimustega. NK oli emadepäeva algataja Eestis. 1924—1940 andis NK välja oma ajakirja «Eesti Naine» ja 1925—1937 ilmus lastele mõeldud kaasaanne «Väikeste Sõber».

Naiskodukaitse (NKK) alguseks võib pidada tuhandete naiste tegutsemist Vabadussõja ajal ellukutsutud «Ühistöös», kus tuli hoolitseda haavatute eest, abistada tootlustuse organiseerimisel, õmmelda riideid, kududa kindaid. 1925 üle maa Kaitseliidu juurde tekkinud rühmitusi nimetati naiskomiteedeks ja naiskaitseliiduks. 1927 määratleti Soome *Lotta Svärdi* põhikirjale toetudes naiskodukaitse põhiülesanne «propageerida Kaitseliidu vaateid, süvendada rahvustunnet, aidata Kaitseliitu kodu kaitsmisel ja julgeoleku kindlustamisel». Juba algusaastatest peale püüdis NKK eesotsas oma juhi Mari Raamotiga

saavutada iseseisvust ja sõltumatust Kaitseliidust. Oma tegevuses oli NKK siiski kõige enam seotud riigistruktuuridega ja otseselt mõjutatud valitsevast ideoloogiast.

1911 loodud Naisüliõpilaste Seltsi vilistlaste algatusel asutati 1926 Eesti Akadeemiliste Naiste Ühing (EANÜ), mille peasihiks oli naiste töö väärilise tunnustamise nõue, naiste sotsiaalse ja majandusliku olukorra parandamine, liikmete teadusliku töö edendamine. Asutamisaastal võeti EANÜ vastu Rahvusvahelise Akadeemiliste Naiste Ühingu liikmeks.

1928 formeerunud Eesti Maanaiste Keskselts (EMK) seadis oma peaülesandeks kodumajanduse igakülgse arendamise maal, naiste kultuurilise ning majandusliku olukorra parandamise. Maanaiste liikumise eesotsas ja kodumajandusajakirja «Talupere-naine» (hakkas ilmuma 1927) toimetaja seisuses oli algusest peale Liis Käbin.

Naisliikumise kõrgeim avalik-õiguslik esindus oli 1936 loodud Kodumajanduskoda (KMK), mis tegutses koduperenaiste kutsetöökongressina. KMK ülesanne oli kodumajanduse kui kutse esindamine ja igakülgne arendamine ning sellel alal tegutsevate organisatsioonide koondamine ja kodumajanduse kutseühvide kaitsmine: nõu- ja abiandmine kõikidel kodumajandusega seotud aladel. KMK toetas kutsekoole, katsekodasid, õppetöökodasid ning teisi kodumajandusele kasulikke asutusi. Oluliseks tegevuseks oli kodumajandusega seonduvate seaduseelnõude ja projektide läbivaatamine.

Iseseisvusperioodi lõppemine tõi kaasa kõikide seltside likvideerimise, seniste tökspidamiste kummutamise. Naisliikumine oli nõukogude ajal ülimalt vastuoluline, nagu ka naiste positsioon (näiliselt olid naistel kõik õigused); sundemantsipatsiooniga püüti naiste tööd viia kõigile elualadele. Naisliikumine oli suuremalt osalt formaalne ja ülalt juhitud, ometi võib täheldada ka omaalgatuslikkust: püütakse naise olukorda tõeliselt vaagida, rõhutada perekonna tähtsust, arendada naise, perenaise ja ema kutseoskusi.

V nõukogude naiste kongress lõpetas 1989 EKP poolt juhitud naisliikumise etapi. Loodi Eesti Naiste Ühendus ja võeti vastu programm «Eesti naine täna ja homme».

1989 taastati Tartus Eesti Naisliit ja 1991 Akadeemiliste Naiste Ühing.

Лийви СООВА

ОБЩАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА ЖЕНСКОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ В ЭСТОНИИ (1920—1940)

30-е годы в Эстонской Республике характеризовались многообразием различных общественных движений и самоорганизаций, что стало возможным благодаря провозглашению государственности Эстонии в 1918 г.

Свое достойное место в общественной жизни Эстонии заняло женское движение. Женские организации при финансовой и моральной поддержке правительства Эстонской Республики многое сделали для улучшения общественного положения женщин, расширения их политических прав, повышения образовательного и культурного уровня (особенно домашней культуры).

Первым официальное признание в Эстонии получило в 1907 г. Тартуское женское общество. Оно первым поставило перед общественностью многие вопросы, связанные с правами женщин (политические права, равная с мужчинами заработная плата и т. д.). В 1911 г. стали выходить журналы этого общества — «Käsitöö» («Рукоделие») и «Naiste Töö ja Elu» («Жизнь и труд женщин»).

Новая волна женского движения в Эстонии поднялась в 1917 г., когда открылись реальные перспективы обретения независимости. Тартуское женское общество созвало в мае 1917 г. I Эстонский женский съезд, где было выдвинуто требование предоставления Эстонии самостоятельности в составе Российской Федерации. Основной доклад был посвящен социальным правам женщин. Прозвучали требования о равных правах с мужчинами, в том числе и в вопросах владения землей.

На II общэстонском съезде женщин в 1920 г. в Таллине был создан Союз женских организаций (с 1930 г. — Женский союз Эстонии). Союз ставил своей целью объединить всех женщин и направить их деятельность на улучшение своего положения в правовой, экономической, духовной и оздоровительной сфере. На съезде была принята резолюция о вступлении союза в состав Международного женского союза.

Первым председателем была избрана Марие Рейзик, которую можно считать основоположником и идеологом женского движения в Эстонии. Печатным органом Женского союза Эстонии был журнал «Naiste Hääl» («Голос женщин», 1926—1932).

В 1920 г. при Обществе молодых христиан начало свою деятельность Общество молодых христианок, опираясь на опыт аналогичного Всемирного общества. Общество проповедовало идеи всестороннего развития и воспитания женщины в духе христианской морали.

В 1923 г. был зарегистрирован Женский союз трезвенниц, который вел среди женщин пропаганду здорового образа жизни. Этот союз выступил инициатором празднования в Эстонии Дня матери. В 1924—1940 гг. он издавал журнал «Eesti Naine» («Эстонская женщина») и 1925—1937 гг. — приложение для детей «Väikeste Sõber» («Друг малышей»).

Женский союз защиты дома начал свою деятельность во время Освободительной войны (1918—1920). Тысячи женщин ухаживали за ранеными, готовили солдатам пищу, шили обмундирование, вязали варежки. В 1925 г. возникшие при Союзе обороны женские организации стали называться женскими комитетами и Женским союзом обороны. На их деятельность большое влияние оказала государственная идеология.

В 1926 г. по инициативе членов Женского студенческого общества (основано в 1911 г.) было создано Академическое женское общество. Оно выдвигало требования уважительного отношения к женскому труду, улучшения социального и экономического положения женщин, содействия научной деятельности его членов. Уже в год своего основания общество было принято в члены Международного академического женского общества.

Учрежденный в 1928 г. Центральный союз сельских женщин обращал главным образом внимание на развитие домашней культуры на селе, стоял за улучшение экономического положения, улучшения условий труда. Бессменным руководителем этого движения, а также редактором журнала «Taluperenaine» («Хуторянка») была Лийс Кэбин.

В 1936 г. начала свою деятельность Палата домоводства — наиболее представительная организация женского движения, своего рода университет для домашних хозяек. Здесь ведение домашнего хозяйства было возведено в ранг профессии, здесь можно было получить компетентные рекомендации по всем вопросам, касающимся ведения домашнего хозяйства. Палата держала в поле зрения все профессиональные училища, кружки, курсы, где женщины постигали искусство содержать дом в чистоте и порядке. Палата ставила своей целью воспитание культуры быта и всячески отстаивала интересы домохозяек.

С окончанием периода независимости Эстонии прекратили свою деятельность все женские союзы и общества. В советский период женское движение было крайне противоречивым, как и положение женщины в обществе. Формально она имела все права, проводилась даже «принудительная эмансипация» — женский труд пытались использовать во всех сферах. Направляемое сверху женское движение стало формальным, суть его была выхолощена. Тем не менее довольно много делалось по собственной инициативе, без подсказки свыше; анализировалось истинное положение женщин в обществе, уделялось много внимания женщине в плане пополнения ее знаний и умений как матери, жены, хранительницы домашнего очага.

Эпоха руководства Коммунистической партии Эстонии женским движением завершилась в 1989 г. на V конгрессе советских женщин. Там же было создано Объединение женщин Эстонии и принята программа «Эстонская женщина сегодня и завтра».

В 1989 г. в Тарту был восстановлен Союз женщин Эстонии и в 1991 г. — Академическое женское общество.