

Orest T. Martynowych. *Social Structure, Religious Institutions, and Mass Organizations*. 2016. *Ukrainians in Canada: The Interwar Years*, book 1, CIUS P, 2016- . 2 books planned. xxiv, 650 pp., 46 pp. of illustrations. Tables. Notes. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. \$59.95, cloth.

Orest T. Martynowych, in this sequel to the general history of the Ukrainians in Canada (that is, his earlier monograph *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891-1924*), reveals himself as the most knowledgeable author to have written on the subject to date. He is clearly a master of the varied, often polemic, and sometimes highly unreliable literature on Ukrainian Canadians. He also makes expert use of archival sources, relying on them extensively. He is a tireless reader of Ukrainian-language and general Canadian press of the period and is able to digest and recount its content with wide authority and discernment. Martynowych has thoroughly familiarized himself with the principal public figures of the time through close readings of their public statements and related press articles, personal correspondence, and unpublished notes. Consequently, he is able not only to judge their various political positions on important questions of the day but also to explain their personalities and special quirks—and he does so extensively throughout this extremely interesting book.

In this book on the interwar years of the twentieth century, Martynowych tackles new territory—thus far little treated by Ukrainian Canadian historians, who have expended most of their scholarly efforts on describing the pioneer era prior to 1914. And even those efforts are few and far between. The monograph under review is the first book of two planned on this period, and it is restricted to describing the social structure, religious institutions, and organizational life of the Ukrainians in Canada. Presumably, a second book will follow on Ukrainian participation in Canadian political, social, and cultural life, and on cultural achievements within the community itself.

The book begins with a general description of interwar Ukrainian immigration to Canada and some remarks about Ukrainian Canadian society of that time. Martynowych notes that somewhat unlike the pioneer immigration, the wave of new immigrants after 1918 contained an overwhelming preponderance of single males. In other words, in contrast to the pioneer period, after 1914 the immigration of entire families, and even of husband and wife pairs, was relatively rare. With regard to the wave's profile, a great many of these new immigrants came during the 1920s period of the Railway Agreement between the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Poland. And they were mostly Greek Catholics from the southeastern corner of Poland—the eastern part of old Austrian Galicia, which at that time was

officially renamed “Eastern Little Poland” by the Polish government. That government wanted to weaken and decapitate the Ukrainian national movement, the members of which, in 1918-19, had fought a war for the independence of their land against the Poles but had been militarily defeated. Those Ukrainians continued to pursue their dream of independence, even after military defeat. Consequently, the victorious Polish government, in order to weaken Ukrainian society in the Polish state, encouraged, rather than hindered, Ukrainian emigration to Canada. Although most of these emigrants moved simply for economic reasons, some were veterans of the aforementioned war, and almost all of them had significantly more education than their pioneer predecessors. Accordingly, their national consciousness was much higher, and this deeply affected the social, cultural, and political activities that they undertook in the New Country. Martynowych notes that, in all, some 82.6 percent (36) of all Ukrainian immigrants to Canada during the interwar era were born in what he calls “Polish territory” (36)—most of them in Austrian Galicia before that territory was incorporated into the Polish state.

In Poland, most of these emigrants travelled by train to the new Polish port of Gdynia (or perhaps in some cases to the Free City of Danzig) and from there, on Polish ships to Liverpool, where they boarded larger ocean-going ships to Canada. From eastern Canada, the bulk of them headed straight for the Prairie Provinces, where a well-established Ukrainian Canadian society already existed, complete with established farms, businesses, churches, and social and political organizations of various sorts. Manitoba was a chief magnet, and many immigrants headed there before going on to Saskatchewan and Alberta. By the early 1920s, the best lands in Manitoba had already been taken, and those country folks who tried homesteading there found themselves on marginal land, which was sometimes too rocky or swampy to turn into profitable farms. Consequently, new farmers in Saskatchewan and Alberta tended to be richer than those who stayed in Manitoba. Winnipeg, which had the largest Ukrainian population of any Canadian city during the interwar period (over 28,000, according to the 1941 census [52]), remained the political and cultural capital of Ukrainian Canadians throughout the period, although other Prairie cities, like the much smaller Saskatoon and Edmonton, also saw some important developments. Saskatoon, in particular, became a major centre of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada (UGOC), which was established during the period. This was where Julian Stechishin, one of the most important Ukrainian Canadians of the time (and, indeed, in the entire history of the Ukrainians in Canada), made his residence. A generally higher fertility rate among Ukrainian Canadian women, who often married quite young, ensured

that Ukrainian Canadian society in the Prairies grew rapidly throughout the period and even during the Great Depression, when economic factors put a brake to the process in Canadian society overall.

As for the political and social organizations, although that era witnessed many extremes, Ukrainian Canadian society was even more polarized than Canadian society was as a whole. This may have been owing to the fact that the Great Depression hit Ukrainian Canadians very hard: while all of Canada felt some of the effects of the Great Depression, the Prairies, where Ukrainian Canadians were concentrated, felt the greatest impact and endured the most harm. Also, Ukrainian Canadians were more directly affected by the Russian Revolution abroad and the International Communist Movement, both of which dominated life in their European homeland, even having a profound effect on its western parts under Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Thus, the pro-Communist Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) came to dominate the Ukrainian Left in Canada and was probably the largest such political organization in the country. Its paper *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* (*Ukrainian Labour News* [Winnipeg]) was one of the most widely distributed Ukrainian newspapers. And its Winnipeg headquarters, the Winnipeg Labour Temple, was a most impressive building, although it was certainly outclassed by numerous very important churches that were located throughout the Prairies. During this period, the ULFTA was a firm Communist Party supporter, and together with a parallel Finnish organization, it formed the financial and organizational backbone of the Party. Those two organizations and some smaller ones were referred to by other Communists as their "language federations" (246). The Party leadership, including Tim Buck, around whom a "cult of personality" (306) eventually developed, seemed to resent the autonomy of those organizations and their concern for preserving their cultural programs and their substantial properties. More ideologically inclined Communist purists believed that this autonomy was to the detriment of purely ideological, especially revolutionary, imperatives. The period of the "Bolshevization" of cadres was especially hard on those "progressive" Ukrainians (that is, those in the Labour Temple organizations; these organizations, of course, were only progressive in certain ways and not in other ways).

Among non-Communist political organizations, the populist Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (USRL), which was allied with the UGOC, and the Ukrainian National Federation (UNF), which adopted an integral nationalist program and supported the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Europe, were the most important. For a time in the 1920s, Stechishin and other Orthodox activists tried to take the lead in Ukrainian Canadian society and harboured some dreams of co-operation with the integral nationalists in

Europe. Many of the latter, including Ievhen Konovalts' and Roman Sushko, visited Canada and held secret talks with future USRL leaders. But by the 1930s, the nationalist collaboration with Nazi Germany and the USRL's own positive attitude toward the British Empire and Canadian patriotism split the two movements.

The two new organizations, the USRL and the UNF, went their separate ways, eventually becoming bitter enemies. Martynowych argues that Ukrainian war veterans from Europe led the push toward militant nationalism and sympathy for Nazi Germany within the UNF. He also identifies Michael Pohorecky, the editor of the UNF newspaper, *Novyi shliakh* (*The New Pathway* [Edmonton-Saskatoon]), as the principal advocate of the push. Pohorecky, to some degree, was opposed by Wolodymyr Kossar, who retained a more cautious and pro-British position, and it was Kossar, not Pohorecky, who eventually emerged as the unquestioned UNF president.

Other important Ukrainian Canadian leaders of the period included Wasyl Swystun, who was extremely active in both politics and education, and Myroslav Stechishin, the long-time editor of the USRL newspaper, *Ukrains'kyi holos* (*The Ukrainian Voice* [Winnipeg]), who stuck firmly to democratic principles throughout the period. There were also the Communist leaders Matthew Popovich and John Navis, who, with some difficulties, had to "swallow Stalin" (for the phrase, see 317-18, note 177) from 1930 on, and other Party leaders, such as Danylo Lobay and John Boychuk, who eventually left the Party to become democratic socialists. Winnipeg politician William Kolisnyk was for a time the only Communist elected official in North America. Martynowych includes an interesting old photograph of Kolisnyk's campaign headquarters in the city, where one can see the campaign sign printed not only in English but also in Ukrainian and Yiddish (see illustration 45).

There were, of course, other important Ukrainian political organizations during this period, but in numbers or perhaps even enthusiasm, none of them could rival the pro-Communist ULFTA, the liberal-democratic USFL, or the nationalist UNF. For example, there were the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood (UCB) and a conservative monarchist Hetmanite Sich organization. By the beginning of World War II, the Catholics had allied themselves with the UNF, and the Hetmanites, with the USRL. Meanwhile, on the Left, in the face of ever more rigid Stalinism, the defection of Lobay and his group from the Communist Party saved the honour of democratic socialism among Ukrainian Canadians.

Martynowych's detailed account of all of these maneuverings makes for interesting reading for anyone who enjoys the political history of the interwar period. At times, however, the book seems a bit too dense and is somewhat overwhelming. Also, the author tries to explicitly explain both

Canadian history to European and American readers and Ukrainian history to inexperienced Canadian readers. This is a very big job, and in the opinion of this reviewer, it was a mistake as the author underestimates the general educational level of his potential readership. On a different level, in places Martynowych also follows the untoward example of certain Ukrainian American authors in differentiating the democratic “nationalists,” such as the members of the USRL, from the “integral nationalists” of the UNF by using a capital *N* for the latter and a lower-case *n* for the former. This unappealing quirk is unknown to the general reading public; it might even be too rigid an approach since there was a certain range of opinion, even within these two camps themselves.

After studying the interwar period in some depth myself, I formed the opinion that the “pro-Communists” (as they are conventionally referred to in the existing literature), or the “progressives” (as their supporters refer to them), aside from the church organizations were by far the largest and most powerful political organization within Ukrainian Canadian society at the time. There were even some people who dutifully went to church every Sunday but when an election came voted Communist! This attraction that Communists seem to have had at that time was true, I think, even though only about ten per cent of Ukrainian society pledged allegiance to them. The majority of Ukrainian Canadians remained politically little involved and at times even inert. Some of them actively participated in Canadian society as business people, cultural activists, and so on, but they often did so as individuals, not as direct representatives of “the Ukrainian Canadian community.” It may be that these particular biases in the historical literature are partly owing to the post-1945 desire of Ukrainian Canadian historians and politicians to distance themselves from Communism and to promote a clearly positive picture of their group. This phenomenon is conventionally called “filiopietism” by various sociologists and scholars interested in North American ethnic history.

Martynowych’s book, happily, is free of this untoward attitude, but it nevertheless (in what I believe comes across as his partial underestimation of the strength of the Communist movement among the Ukrainians in 1930s Canada) falls victim to some of its long-term effects on the current scholarly environment. But then again, the author of a general history such as this one was bound to present the great variety of Ukrainian Canadian opinion during the period and, in doing so, was simply compelled to devote the bulk of his book to those varied opinions, even though some of them were held by very small groups, indeed—the Hetmanites are but one case in point.

Finally, it also should be noted that the author provides us with no conclusions to this first half of his story. For those, we must wait for his

second, follow-up book. However, we await it with enthusiasm and anticipation because Martynowych, in taking his story this far, has provided us with an excellent and professionally conceived and executed history, one that will doubtlessly be consulted by scholars for generations to come.

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Work Cited

Martynowych, Orest T. *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891-1924*. CIUS P, 1991.