“COMRADES! I AM FAR FROM YOU, BUT I AM WITH YOU”: UKRAINIAN WORKING WOMEN, TRANSNATIONALISM, AND THE SOVIET CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN WINNIPEG, 1928

BY

KAROLYA HUTNIAK VARGSCARR

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

University of Manitoba

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History

Joint Masters Program

University of Manitoba & University of Winnipeg

Winnipeg, Manitoba

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 24: *Robitnytsia* Vol. 12 cover, published June 15, 1928

Figure 25: *Robitnytsia* Vol. 14 cover, published July 14, 1928

Figure 26: *Robitnytsia* Vol. 18 cover, published September 15, 1928

Figure 27: *Robitnytsia* Vol. 24 cover, published January 1, 1928

CONTEXT

The history of progressive politics in Winnipeg and, in an even wider context, in Canada, was largely built upon the work of Ukrainian émigrés. These newcomers to Canada erected the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple (ULFTA) and maintained the building's facilities for publishing papers and journals, programming recreational and cultural activities, and organizing working class Winnipeggers in the early twentieth-century.

Winnipeg's Ukrainian working class minority was a demographic both ethnically and socially marginalized; this identity and experience led to a particularly intersectional publication of the ULFTA Women's Section called *Robitnytsia;* in English, 'The Workingwoman'. *Robitnytsia* was published from 1924-1937 and contributed to the body of work on Winnipeg's labour activities and cooperative initiatives, community planning, and literacy campaigns. There has been speculation in the field of Ukrainian Canadian history regarding the more progressive Ukrainian Left, of which the readership of *Robitnysia* is a part, and a perceived or imagined Communist connection to the Soviet Union. In an attempt to find a potential link, I examined the letters submitted by the readership of *Robitnytsia* during a particularly radical and disparate year of Soviet governance, the Cultural Revolution of 1928.

INTRODUCTION

After the unsuccessful social revolution of 1905 in Russia, Canadian socialists and radicals shared the widespread view that the tsarist regime was a symbol of oppression, and expressed solidarity with Russia's subjects as victims of an exploitative system.[1] The progressive Ukrainian movement that became the ULFTA was built upon the experiences of this disenfranchised and disillusioned migrant perspective. Refugees from western sections of the Russian empire received a warm welcome in Canadian socialist circles – most of whom were emigrant settlers themselves from present day Finland, Poland, Belarus, Hungary, and Ukraine; settling in Montreal, Toronto, northern Ontario, and Winnipeg.[2] These newcomers to Canada had a background connected to the conditions of work in Russia and after the Russian revolutions of 1905, and the radical actions of workers and peasants in Russia that followed inspired these socially progressive refugees living abroad and, as a result, the socialist movement was sparked in Canada.[3]

Using local primary sources, this work answers two questions. Firstly, is there a transnational political connection, reflected ideologically or materially, between the readership of *Robitnytsia* in Winnipeg and the Soviet Union in 1928? Secondly, what are the interests of the readership of *Robitnytsia,* as reflected in the Letters section? The answers to these questions are relevant to social historians because their focus is on content generated by the female readership of the journal, not the content generated by the male activists and political leaders who both contributed to and edited it. This work also highlights the value of *Robitnytsia* as a historical source of Canada, labour, gender, women's, and transnational histories; one that has been under-utilized to date and is readily available to researchers in Winnipeg

1 Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto, 1975), 7.
2 Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada [...]*, 7.
3 Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada [...]*, 9.

and other cities across Canada.

To evaluate and provide an analysis of *Robitnytsia* as a source of primary evidence, a brief introduction to the ULFTA, *Robitnytsia*, and the Soviet Cultural Revolution is helpful to the reader. After addressing the relevant historiography, the three chapters that follow provide analysis and the relevant context for the source work, including photographs and illustrations from the journal. Photographs featured on the covers of *Robitnytsia* provide insight into the imagery of the journal, as well as to the rhetoric associated with well-known images and icons within the working class Ukrainian community in Winnipeg.

Discovering the answer to the second question posed in this work was straightforward, as the priorities and interests of the working women in Winnipeg were highly localized and specific, including recognizable and accessible priorities to even those readers who are not familiar with the work of the ULFTA. These interests included basic literacy, education, labour organization, and participation in political and social activities. The evidence regarding a transnational link to the Soviet Union, the first question of this work, was even more clear: at the grassroots level, there was no such transnational link between the Ukrainian Left in Winnipeg and the Soviet Union in 1928.

While there are commentaries and memorials in the articles of the issues regarding Lenin and the work of *tovaryshky,* in English “lady comrades”, the Letters section of *Robitnytsia* the Ukrainian working women of Winnipeg did not reflect an interest, nor any engagement with, the larger, international labour community or other worker solidarity movements. The Ukrainian workingwomen of Winnipeg were primarily occupied with education and public health, both for themselves and their communities, as well as the continued organization of labour and social organizations in Winnipeg with which they could engage at different points in their lives, with different goals.

Gender played much less of a role in this work than hypothesized, though a noted gender imbalance is

noted. The women of the ULFTA Women's Sections believed that they were “beyond feminism” as workers in the labour movement, concerned only with issues “belonging to all workers” regardless of geographic location. Though topics such as Soviet and Canadian politics, Ukrainian nationalism, and inter-Ukrainian Canadian feuds between the Left and the Right in Winnipeg provide just some of the context for this study, the timing of their absence or presence is always framed by the experience of gender, and the notion that a Women’s Section had different needs, like literacy, family health, and dealing with intersecting types of exploitation in the work place, speak strongly to that.

Canadian historian Joan Sangster has worked extensively with *Robitnytsia* and contributed heavily to “The Woman Question”, a specific debate amongst Ukrainian progressives in which the question was levelled, “Do Women Need an Organization?” and heatedly debated over multiple issues by readers and contributors, both male and female.[4] “Porcupinism” was a euphemism used to relay the messages of a particularly “prickly” male contributor and largely traditional Ukrainian patriarchal perspective which espoused the message that not only did women not need their own labour organization, they needed to continue to be excluded from all labour organizations; this was due to women’s perceived inability to meaningfully participate due to their lack of intelligence and political sophistication.[5] There is a notion that the head “Porcupine” writing the letters and engaging in the debate about women having access to labour organizations was intended to call women out of hiding and to push them into participation as a form of retaliation to the Porcupinism debate, but that claim was never proven or disproven.

A very active English-language equivalent to *Robitnytsia* existed called *The Woman Worker*, with a strong female editor who was also a well-known activist and organizer in Anglo-Canadian mobilization

[4] See Joan Sangster, “*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism debate': Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930.” Labour/*le Travail*, Vol. 56 (Fall, 2005), pp. 51-89.
[5] Sangster, 51-89.

efforts: Florence Custance.[6] *The Woman Worker* was published between 1926-1929, a convenient overarching timeline of the year of inquiry for *Robitnytsia*, 1928. Inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917, the 1919 creation of the Comintern (the new Communist International), and general social uprisings that followed the armistice and the newly formed Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), there was a a revival and growth of worker press that occurred in tandem with the creation of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).[7] While *The Woman Worker* paper died with its editor in 1929, the result was what Sangster and Hobbs have referred to as, "a short-lived but significant socialist-feminist venture quite unparalleled for many years to come."[8] Though *The Woman Worker* was published for a much shorter time than *Robitnytsia*, its leadership was almost exclusively female, and aimed to "stimulate Women's revolutionary consciousness."[9]

The Woman Worker had a similar section to the Letters section of *Robitnytsia* titled "We hear from our correspondents," and issues were the same price: ten cents per issue, or a dollar for a one-year subscription.[10] *The Woman Worker* aimed to plan and coordinate the mobility of the women's departments and journals; and were created to emulate the Soviet Union's *Zhenotdel*.[11] *Robitnytsia,* however, never had a female editor due to a lack of strong female leadership on the Ukrainian Left in western Canada. The first letters ever published by the Women's Section in a journal called *Holos robitnytsi* (in English, 'The Voice of the Workingwoman') were submitted by Lena Skehar (Calgary, Alberta), Anna Babiy (Toronto, Ontario), Mary Kuchurian (Lethbridge, Alberta), Anna Moisiuk (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Helen Shmon (Regina, Saskatchewan), and Anna Ambrosniak (Portage la

---

6 Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991* (Toronto, 1992), 16.

7 Previously the Workers' Party of Canada. See Hobbs and Sangster, eds. *The Woman Worker, 1926-1929* (St. John's, 1999), p. 9.

8 Hobbs and Sangster, eds. p. 12

9 Hobbs and Sangster, eds. p. 9.

10 Hobbs and Sangster, eds. p. 15

11 Hobbs and Sangster, eds. p. 9. *Zhenotdel* (original Russian: Женотдел) translates to "women's departments" and was the women's section of the Bolshevik Party in the 1920s.

Prairie).

Organizing as workers was intended to curb the exploitative circumstances in which many of the *Robitnytsia* readership lived and worked, regardless of gender. The progressive Ukrainian workers of the Women's Section appeared to draw strength from the international labour movement generally, but the link to the Soviet Union was tenuous and symbolic at best; poetry and song reflected ritual and symbol in a superficial way that was in no way substantiated. Use of symbols, songs, and gestures that appear to reflect Ukrainian worker solidarity and encouragement of a Soviet, or Communist, perspective did not, in this study, translate to knowledge of the directives of the Central Committee of the Communist International on the part of the readership, nor of the desire to follow, mirror, or expand the scope of Marxist Leninist ideology, Communism, or Collectivization in Canada.

In the absence of a transnational connection that reflected the importance of the Cultural Revolution in Soviet Ukraine, the illustrated covers of the 1928 issues were analyzed in search of a transnational link. Soviet imagery is depicted in the majority of the 1928 issues, with moderate affirmation of symbolic influence reflected in the content of the journals, which were not translated or analyzed in this study. No evidence was found to support a meaningful connection regarding politics, but the microcosm of the Women's Section in Winnipeg, and in Canada, is revealed in a small way with the translation of these letters, the content that has shaped the chapters of this work.

Throughout this work Ukrainians associated with the ULFTA and various socialist parties are referred to as "progressive," not "communist" or "pro-Communist." This choice mirrors the example of social historian and ULFTA specialist, Rhonda Hinther, whose avoidance of the terms "communist" and "pro-communist" is attributed to their simplistic, loaded, and obscure larger meaning and significance.[12]

[12] Rhonda L. Hinther, "Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings: Progressive Ukrainians in Twentieth Century Canada" (MA Thesis, McMaster University, February, 2005)

Hinther highlights the importance of the term Communist as effectively obscuring the experiences of those who did not identify as such, a point which is particularly relevant to the Women's Section of the ULFTA. Women's lack of identification with the label "Communist" was in large part due to the fact that women were much less likely to be card-carrying members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). They did not participate in an official political capacity anywhere near the extent of male organizers and activists within the movement or the party.[13]

[13] See Peter Krawchuk, *Our History: The Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Movement in Canada, 1907-1991* (Toronto, 1996), 308. Krawchuk discusses the Women's Section as a grassroots campaign based on charity work providing relief to famine victims in present day southern Ukraine, and specifies that in 1923, the first year that the precursor to *Robitnytsia*, *Holos robitnytsi* ('Voice of the Working Woman') was published, there were 17 branches of the Women's Section throughout Canada, and 550 members, the majority of whom were not party members.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Social historians have recently created an enclave in Canadian scholarship for more varied Ukrainian immigrant experiences in the twentieth-century, experiences that fall outside of traditional male-privileged spaces and institutional frameworks. Most notably in 2005, Rhonda Hinther, then of McMaster University, completed a doctoral thesis which examined the experiences of progressive women, men, and youth and how each constituency shaped the progressive Ukrainian movement in Canada.[14] Hinther articulated two major issues within the historiography. First, that the topic had received limited attention from historians; and secondly, that attention given was frequently directed at narrow political or institutional frameworks which excluded women and youth. To redress this balance, Hinther used oral interviews with ULFTA community members, RCMP files, labour newspapers (including *Robitnytsia* and the youth journal, *Svit molodi*), as well as multiple archival fonds, including the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) and the National Archives of Canada holdings, in order to access letters, meeting minutes, and information on political activity.

Hinther's work not only contributes knowledge that reveals a diversified experience inclusive of women, men, and youth, it also directs attention to the way ethnicity shaped class politics, and class politics shaped ethnicity, a process which she argues is particularly marked on the Ukrainian Left.[15] Hinther concludes that women, men, and youth were responsible for shaping the movement, and that each group expressed their political and cultural commitments differently.[16] This social perspective draws attention to a complex community of diverse experiences, and pushes back against earlier interpretations that present largely universal and constricted Ukrainian immigrant experiences in

[14] Hinther, “Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings […]”
[15] Hinther, “Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings” [...], 277.
[16] Hinther, 282.

Canada.

It would be problematic to discuss interwar Canadian history in broad terms, when the interwar Ukrainian experience in Canada was so varied by geographical region, political affiliation, gender, ethnicity, and age. Along with historian Jim Mochoruk, Hinther has edited a collection of essays entitled, *Re-imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity*, in which multiple social historians promote the study of ethnic "hyphenated histories", and assert their importance and relevance to major currents in mainstream Canadian history.[17] This work builds upon that of Sangster and Hinther by providing English-language translation and inroads to potential uses of the letters section of *Robitnytsia* for recent Canadian academics.

John Kolasky, the late Ukrainian Canadian expert and a specialist in Ukrainian settlements of Ontario, produced two significant works on the Ukrainian Canadian Left and its connection to the Soviet Union. These works highlighted the richness of source material in the field, and also the limitations of a more traditional focus on political institutions and state actors, rather than social or educational institutions that may include experiences outside of the male social sphere. Kolasky ignored the unrealized potential of "Ukrainian Communism" in Canada, and focused, instead, on cultural and ethnic issues in the USSR, the "pro-communist" press, and the formation of pro-communist organizations in Canada.[18] While Kolasky's work does not claim to be comprehensive, the actors and agitators presented in his work are exclusively male. Leaders and key participants in these organizations were literate, Ukrainian men, which creates a uni-faceted picture when looking at the Left in Ukrainian Canadian communities.

---

[17] See Rhonda Hinther and Jim Mochoruk, eds. *Re-imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity* (Toronto, 2011) Examples of work include pieces on public history, Soviet relations, philanthropy, crime, literature, Aboriginal Ukrainians, Canada's postwar Ukrainian Left, and War Veteran politics in Canada.

[18] John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto, 1979) and *Prophets & Proletarians: Documents on the History of the Rise and Decline of Ukrainian Communism in Canada* (Edmonton, 1990)

This is a shortfall of the political movement amongst Ukrainian workers in Canada, and is not limited to the historiography. While the course of the Ukrainian working class community's involvement with the CPC (Communist Party of Canada) is tangible and traceable, social historians have only recently broadened the idea of what being a progressive Ukrainian meant in interwar Canada beyond membership to specific political parties or universal immigration experiences.

In 1998 Canadian feminist and social historian Franca Iacovetta, of the University of Toronto, articulated that immigrant recruitment and settlement in Canada was contingent upon the displacement and continued subjugation of Canada's First Nations.[19] While this study does not address Canadian colonialism, nor the subjugation of First Nations people in Canada, this fact is acknowledged as hugely problematic and part of a larger, and more insidious, cultural trend within the field both to minimize the colonial experience of First Nations people in Canada, and to prioritize colonial experiences of racism that are Euro-centric. Iacovetta was also one of the first Canadian social historians to focus on communities of working women in Canada, and highlighted the discriminatory nature of official Canadian immigration policies and their related formal procedures and documents. Iacovetta has shown how Canadian nation-building is predicated on the view that certain races were better suited for citizenship than others, and that the Canadian workingwoman often “wore a foreign face”, while being neglected in political communities.[20]

Along with Donna Gabaccia of the University of Pittsburgh, and Fraser Ottanelli of the University of South Florida, Iacovetta produced another pivotal work on this research, one which focused on the

[19] Franca Iacovetta et al eds., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* (Toronto, 1998), xii.
[20] Iacovetta et al., ix-xii.

mobility of Italian immigrant workers to and from multiethnic nation states.[21] Gabaccia, Ottanelli, and Iacovetta highlighted that the question "why study labour transnationally?" no longer needs to be asked, by stating that every multiethnic nation understands its historiography in a profoundly national way, and that working class labourers relate almost as much to being non-citizen "foreigners" as they do to being working class.[22] In studying the migration patterns of Italian migrant workers, more than 26 million workers over two centuries, the global trajectories and movements are traced, as well as work and labour activism in five continents, in support of these academic claims.

The kind of empirical research completed by Iacovetta *et al.* has led to new research publications regarding labour radicalism, migration, and the making of multiethnic states.[23] In this thesis, the process of analysis and evaluation is much more simple and qualitative, highlighting one facet of a local scene at a very specific time in Winnipeg's history, in an only slightly larger transnational context. Similar studies to the Italian project of Gabaccia *et al.* have never been carried out on that scale, and Ukrainian migration patterns and mobile labour from eastern Europe have been traced to Paraguay, Hawaii, the United States, Canada, and other countries. Studies regarding these experiences and trajectories have very recently been charted in relation to cultural preservation and linguistics.[24]
In studying *Robitnytsia* and searching for transnational connections and exchanges with and from the Soviet Union, there is a desire to reconcile the historiography; to narrow the political, and broaden the social and transnational. Searching for links between the progressive Ukrainian community in Canada and the Soviet Union is not new, and has been discredited as a fruitful endeavour, but this is an attempt to clear any preconceived notions of what that connection may have been at a local level, and an

[21] Donna Gabaccia et al., "Laboring Across National Borders: Class, Gender, and Militancy in the Proletarian Mass Migrations", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 66, New Approaches to Global Labor History (Fall, 2004), pp.57-77.
[22] Gabaccia et al., 57.
[23] Gabaccia et al., 58.
[24] See Andriy Nahachewsky's work on Ukrainian traditional dance preservation in Brazil, *Ukrainian Dance: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2012)

opportunity to ask the question of a specific source, the Letter's section of *Robitnytsia,* 'What We Write.' The answers to the questions posed are not profound, but they contribute a very specific piece of information to the social historian's sphere of knowledge regarding the experiences of the working class Ukrainian Left in Winnipeg. What working women put pen to paper about in 1928 and whether or not the Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union was reflected, is not the most important question; but it is an interesting question on the intersecting identities of ethnicity, class, and political ideology that is grounded in revealing another facet of the unexplored progressive Ukrainian experience; and is nonetheless answered.

Local and Transnational Context

The intention of *Robitnytsia* as a journal was to educate women by providing specific information to Ukrainian women that was relevant to their interests as progressive workers.[25] The first journal of the ULFTA Women's Section, *Holos robitnytsi*, outlined the intention of the Women's Section journal by answering the question of whether working women needed to be organized. Working women did need to be organized, for the purpose of fulfilling the following aims, as stated in 1923 in its first issue:[26]

> To print light articles explaining the situation of women workers in the capitalist system.
>
> To expose the lives of indolent bourgeois women.
>
> To write about the class struggle and the participation of working women.
>
> To publish scientific articles in order to educate women which, through no fault of their own, they have been unable to acquire.
>
> To carry articles and correspondence about the organizational life of Canadian working women.
>
> To faithfully serve the interests of working women and proletarian culture.

[25] Myroslav Irchan, who is discussed in later sections of this work.
[26] Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 308. From *Holos robitnytsi*, January-February, 1923.

With the aims of the Women's Section journal laid out in this way, it is reasonable to assume that the Letters section would contain reflections on interactions with this kind of material and these ideas. While there is no direct link to the Soviet Union there is a tenable reaction against capitalism in service of the interests of working people, all while fostering a “proletarian culture”. This proletarian culture

Figure 1

implies a connection to the worker revolutions of Russia and to the building of class consciousness in Winnipeg based on those transnational concepts that were intrinsic to the international labour movement.

The roots of progressive Ukrainian organizations in Winnipeg can be traced to 1903 with the creation of the Taras Shevchenko Reading Club by three Ukrainian émigres from the same village.[27] The Taras Shevchenko Reading Club focused on cultural endeavours that would be meaningful to Ukrainians in Canada and, as such, organized the first Ukrainian language music concert and theatrical productions in Canada. The productions of the Shevchenko Reading Club were met with such enthusiasm that many new Ukrainian organizations were created in its wake. The table below outlines the earliest beginnings

[27] Their names were Kyrylo Genyk, Ivan Bodrug and Ivan Negrych. For details see Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 3.

Year	Location	Organization	Contribution
1903	Winnipeg, MB	Shevchenko Reading Club	- First Ukrainian language concert in Canada. - First Ukrainian language theatrical production performed in Canada.
1904	Lethbridge, AB	Progress	United Ukrainian and Slavic coal miners.
1906	Winnipeg, MB	Ukrainian Freethinkers Federation	Published the first secular Ukrainian text in Canada, a book called *Nationalism and National Traditions*.
1907	Winnipeg, MB Portage la Prairie, MB Nanaimo, BC	Shevchenko Scientific Society (previously the Ukrainian Freethinkers Federation)	- Established the first Ukrainian branches of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), in all three locations. - Organized the first socialist newspaper in Canada, *Chervonyi prapor*.[73] - Conducted community based political and social activities in accordance with the SPC's platform.
1909	Winnipeg, MB	Ukrainian Socialist Publishing Company	Created the newspaper *Robochyi narod*, "the organ of Ukrainian socialists in Canada and the United States."[74]
1909	Winnipeg, MB	Secretaries of the SPC Manitoba Executive Committee	- Led the First Ukrainian Canadian Socialist Convention organized by the editor of *Robochyi narod* and the national organizer of the SPC. - Formed the Federation of Ukrainian Social-Democrats in Canada (FUSD).
1910	Edmonton, AB	Canadian Social Democratic Party (CSDP)	- Held an FUSD convention to unite after three language branches (Ukrainian, German, Jewish) left the SPC due to negative attitudes toward the ethnic language branches. - Decided to aid the Ukrainian liberation movement in Eastern Europe. - Decided to publish *Robochyi narod* weekly instead of monthly.
1914	Montréal, QC	Federation of Ukrainian Social-Democrats in Canada (FUSD)	- Changes its name to the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada (USDP). - USDP worked to mobilize unemployed working class Ukrainians. - USDP maintained a vehemently anti-war stance.
1915	Winnipeg, MB	Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada (USDP)	- Due to the disintegration of many branches due to economic hardship, decided to keep *Robochyi narod* published in Winnipeg, limited to one publication per month.

Figure 1

of the movement, up to the igniting moment of the socio-political Russian revolutions of 1917.[28]

Figure 1 charts the early years forming the backdrop for the period examined in this study – the progressive clubs of the turn of the century which led to the creation of the ULFTA; and organizations during the period leading up to the 1920s, which in Winnipeg meant the creation of periodicals for the Women's Section.[29] The ULFTA was the community centre and meeting place of workers, many of whom were associated with the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (USDP).

Transnational Political Context

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the USDP was distressed by the fragmentation of the Ukrainian population in Canada after the Bolshevik takeover in Russia. There was a distinct tension between reconciling the USDP's concerns over the class issue, which was the liberation of those subjugated to the Russian empire under Tsar Nicholas II as serfs, and to the cultural and ethnic issues of the friction between the prioritizing a transnational class consciousness over the project of Ukrainian nation-building. This nation-building project was close to the consciousness of recent émigres in Canada, and a political motivation for the Ukrainian working class in Canada.

The toppling of capitalism *via* the disruption of the Russian autocracy was viewed by the USDP as the event that would lead to the freedom of more than 30 million Ukrainians in the Russian empire, an important first step to realizing the establishment of Ukraine as a sovereign nation. In this way the solution to both issues was paired rather elegantly. These two goals, class and nationalism, stand alone in curious paradox; a transnational goal being used to realize a highly nationalist goal, but this is just

[28] Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 4.

[29] First called the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association (ULTA), until 1924 when the name was officially changed to the the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA). Table compiled with information and appendices provided by Krawchuk.

part of the unique circumstance in which the Ukrainian left built a resistance in Winnipeg, a response to perhaps their experiences in two countries as both an exploited class majority and persecuted ethnic minority.

In support of these two goals, a resolution was read aloud at a USDP meeting in February of 1917 supporting the worker revolutionaries of Russia, while reinforcing endorsement of the Ukrainian liberation movement. Worker correspondent and key organizer, Matthew Popovych, read the following resolution:[30]

> We, Ukrainian workers gathered at a mass meeting in Winnipeg extend our fraternal greetings to the Russian worker-revolutionaries on the world victory of their revolution over autocratic tsarism and the collapse of the prison-house of nations, from which, without a doubt, Ukraine's 30,000,000 people will be freed.

This was a bold assertion. Modern day Ukraine had not been a sovereign nation at any point in recorded history at this time, and that realizing the nationalist goals of the empire's largest non-Russian ethnic group and territory would likely not be a priority for the new government working towards socialism.

Similar resolutions followed at USDP meetings, whose membership grew substantially following the successful revolutions in Russia, and Ukrainians were not the only ethnic group in Winnipeg that built a transnational resistance to class and ethnicity based oppressions. Hinther provides evidence of the same radical, political, and cultural activity amongst progressive Jewish, Finnish, and Hungarian populations at the same time.[31] Resolutions on 'The National Question' and 'The Future of Ukraine' were discussed at USDP meetings and at length in the progressive Ukrainian press. These resolutions expressed hope that the newly realized Ukrainian working class could secure democratic rights of their

---

[30] Translated from an issue of *Robochyi narod*, February, 1917. See Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 216.

[31] Rhonda Hinther, “Raised in the Spirit of Class Struggle: Children, Youth, and the Interwar Ukrainian Left in Canada,” *Labour/le Travail*, 60 (Fall 2007), pp.43-76, 49.

own as a nation of ethnically homogenous citizens, while upholding international solidarity with the revolutionary proletariat of the world. This is the type of political commentary and engagement that was sought in the pages of *Robitnytsia*, but in the Letter section, none were found.

Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association

The work of the progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg culminated in the ULFTA, an organization that did more than fill gaps in social services that were not addressed by the governing structures of the time.[32] The Ukrainian Labour Temple was built by donations and volunteer labour in Winnipeg in May of 1918 and served multiple functions. Not only was the hall a meeting place to read books and newspapers, listen to lectures and speeches, engage with different aspects of the organizational effort such as the press or related co-ops like the Worker's Benevolent Association; the ULFTA hall was a place in which working class Ukrainians fostered a sense of ethnic identity rooted in Ukrainian language and culture. Children learned to play musical instruments and studied Ukrainian language and literature, and adults improved or built literacy skills in Ukrainian and English. The labour temple fostered a sense of working class consciousness and solidarity within its walls.

The ULFTA Women's Section was the result of a grassroots relief campaign of sub-committees established to provide aid to the famine victims of modern day southern Ukraine in the early 1920s.[33] *Robitnytsia* was the journal of the Women's Section from 1924, called *Holos robitnytsi* in 1923, its first year of publication.[34] Winnipeg activist Mary Yarova presented a case for the importance of a women's periodical at the ULFTA's Fourth Convention in 1922, arguing that it was a logical option for mobilizing women at a time when the cost of travel was high and when few women could travel as

[32] Hinther, “Raised in the Spirit of Class Struggle [...]”, 50.
[33] Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 307.
[34] *Robitnytsia*, in English, 'The Workingwoman'. *Holos robitnytsi*, in English, 'Voice of the Workingwoman'

organizers in such a role.[35] There was a notable growth in the membership numbers in these committees that became the Women's Section during the mobilization effort for famine relief between 1921-1923, wherein the membership in the sub-committees rose from 60 to 123, culminating in 17 branches of the Women's Section for a total of 550 members.[36] Of those 150 members, approximately one third were members of the CPC.[37] Outside of the Letters section, the content of *Robitnytsia* focused distinctly on cultural offerings such as poetry and literature by Ukrainian authors, proletarian writers, and North American progressive politicians.[38]

In a gendered society, gendered labour journals made sense. Life for working class Ukrainian immigrant women in Winnipeg was onerous, and many worked in highly exploitative roles that were specific to women, the most common of which were: as maids, doing housework for much wealthier families and working long hours for miserly wages; as farm hands, working in harsh weather conditions for long hours; as well as in positions in restaurants, hotels, and the textile industry.[39] According to Myroslav Irchan, the editor of *Robitnytsia*, overcoming illiteracy was the first step in the involvement of women in the ULFTA, as illiteracy and semi-literacy were common amongst Ukrainian émigres. Evening classes were offered a the ULFTA, thereby enabling many working women to participate more actively and to engage with organizational efforts by achieving basic literacy skills.[40]

Beginning in March of 1924, *Robitnytsia* was printed and disseminated from the ULFTA in Winnipeg for thirteen consecutive years. It had five editors in its time: Myroslav Irchan (1924-1928), Michael Lenartovich (1929-1933), Peter Prokop (1933-1935), Philip Lysets (1935-1936), and Peter Chaikivsky

35 Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'[...]', 64.
36 Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'[...]', 59.
37 Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'[...]', 59.
38 Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'[...]', 69.
39 Krawchuk, *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan* (Edmonton, 1988), 11.
40 Krawchuk, *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan*, 11.

(1936-1937).[41] The first editor of *Robitnytsia*, Irchan, actively supported and encouraged the continuous growth of the Women's Section, which he observed as responding energetically to the cultural and educational activities coordinated by the organization. Not only was Irchan a major contributor to the literary section, he was also the periodical's sole editor and proof-reader, putting in long hours in service of the periodical's aims, as well as contributing substantially to the Literature section as an author.[42]

Irchan sometimes wrote letters to *Robitnytsia* under the female pseudonym Natalia Vesnaya, in which he provided advice for the readership relating to the Women's Section as an important part of the greater organization. This advice included relevant skills such as public speaking tips, and how to conducting meetings.[43] While it is safe to say that working class labour was universally exploited in North America at this time, it was particularly severe for female workers, whom Irchan recognized as suffering unique exploitation, and whom he encouraged, *en masse*, to organize to fight for their rights as workers in the pages of *Robitnytsia*.[44] Women experienced the reality of multiple and intersecting discrimination that was not limited to ethnicity and class, the predominant features of the Ukrainian left, but to patriarchy, misogyny, and infantilization as well, due to their perceived gender as women.

The ULFTA and the CPC held the dominant interpretation of women's work and the role it would play in the development of working class consciousness - a political activist that was one part helper to male workers in their political aims, one part revolutionary domestic, the bringer of these concepts to home

---

41 Krawchuk, *Our History [...]*, 309.

42 Literary contributions by Irchan to *Robitnytsia* include 'Dark Destiny', 'For Blood', 'Mother', 'Destinies', 'Canadian Spring', 'On the Farm', 'A Mother's Letter', 'A Meeting with an Unemployed Woman', 'Worker's Children', 'A Holiday of Labour and Hope', 'A Letter to a Brother', and 'Remember Them'. See Krawchuk, *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan*, 13.

43 Krawchuk, *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan*, 12.

44 Krawchuk, *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan,* 11.

life and daily routine.[45] *Robitnytsia* was an important vehicle with the power to expand and unify that consciousness, as well as to imbue it with new meaning. Though discriminatory and gendered in its own ways, the ULFTA and the CPC recognized women as potential advocates and members, not as female wage earners particularly, but due to their potential to be radicalized by the immediacy of their lived experiences as exploited workers; all couched in the social context of their roles as mothers, wives, and childminders.[46] The potential for radical awakening in the everyday experience of being female is explored in depth in the first chapter of this thesis.

Despite its male editorship, the Reader's Section of *Robitnytsia*, 'What We Write', is valuable because it is a source to better understand how Ukrainian women workers in Winnipeg perceived their lives and position in society, and the ways in which they chose to engage politically, socially, and transnationally during a time of significant cultural shift in the USSR.

Soviet Transnational Context

The framework of this study is largely transnational, though localized to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Transnational history applies to the period since the emergence of nation states as important phenomena in world history, to the interwar period - and the twentieth-century more generally - which is rich for this type of inquiry.[47] Viewing the labour movement in Winnipeg as a transnational movement opens relationships and bonds between the working class in different nation states and allows the historian to view national and nationalist policies and actions as being defined and re-defined perpetually, unstable and reacting in response to not only other nation states, but to the socio-

[45] Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'...", 73.
[46] Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate'...", 73.
[47] See Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997)

political activity within its own borders. A transnational perspective situates the nation is never stable, nor fixed, but in a state of constant flux.

In American history, Ian Tyrell has asserted that the transnational construction of the United States occurred through a variety of selected "externals" - from immigration controls and health quarantines, to state memorialization projects – but that, importantly, the denaturalization of the state is among the most important tasks of transnational history.[48] In searching for a meaningful transnational link between the Winnipeg-based ULFTA Women's Section periodical *Robitnytsia*, and the activity and rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union, both states are denaturalized and understood to be in a constant state of flux, acting and re-acting in response to, and in retaliation against, external factors and internal variables. Denaturalizing the state removes the presumption and imposition of a state on a land and people, which is critical in re-imagining postcolonial Canada, and in reframing immigrant experiences in Canada.

An in-depth discussion of Ukrainian history and national identity in the USSR is relevant to this analysis but falls outside the scope of this study. The years 1917-1923 were some of the worst in Ukrainian history, as historians have supported with compelling evidence. After the Russian revolutions ,communications in modern day Ukraine collapsed and cities emptied into the countryside; villages barricaded themselves off from strangers and outsiders, and some cities and regions were completely cut-off from each other due to military invasions.[49] Pogroms killed an estimated 35,000 - 50,000 Jewish Ukrainians between 1919-1920, and the city of Kyiv changed hands more than five times in 1919, with

[48] "What is transnational history?" blog post, http://iantyrell.wordpress.com/what-is-transnational-history/ , last accessed March 11, 2013. Notes compiled from a conference in Paris in 2007 including social historians such as David Thelen, Thomas Bender, and Ian Tyrell.

[49] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York, 1988), 208.

several symbolic demonstrations of sovereignty, including the declaration of the Ukrainian National Republic with the West Ukrainian National Republic.[50]

The national awakening inspired by the Civil War led to an enormous upsurge of Ukrainian cultural activity in the early twenties, including literature, education, scholarship, and ecclesiastical activity.[51] The ethnically homogenous and specific efforts which grew amongst Ukrainians in the western regions of the old Russian empire formed a significant barrier to the Bolshevik attempt at a pan-Slavic, universal, proletarian culture for the USSR. The Comintern effectively suppressed interethnic conflict by promoting a policy of Russification under the banner of socialism, which was a defining feature of the Comintern's conscious construction of an overarching Soviet nationalism, one ethno-republic pocket of solidarity at a time.[52]

In Russia, the revolution produced four major groups into which the intelligentsia could be classified, the vast majority of whom opposed the Bolsheviks and had little sympathy for the Party. The community of old Russian intelligentsia can be divided into the following groups: i) those who supported the Party and remained in the USSR; ii) those "internal émigres" who stayed put geographically but did not sympathize with the Party; iii) those who temporarily immigrated, or were deported, but returned when the Soviet system stabilized; iv) those who left the USSR, or were exiled, and never returned.[53]

---

[50] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A Short History* (UTP, 2005), 379. On the pogroms of 1919-1920 Subtelny cites Peter Kenez, a specialist in Ukraine and south Russia during the Civil War, who argues that each army was responsible for the killing of Jews during the pogroms, including the Bolsheviks; but the majority were killed by the Volunteer Army (the Whites or anti-Bolshevik Russians), and pogroms were also the work of the Ukrainian peasantry. Kenez argues that the three types of murderer reinforced each other. See Subtelny, 362-63.

[51] Subtelny, 394.

[52] Lubomyr Hajda, "Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in the USSR and the Post-Soviet States," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 2, RACE, GENDER & ETHNICITY: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES (1993), pp. 193-278, 193.

[53] Suny, 195.

1928 marks the first year of what would be called the Cultural Revolution in Soviet history, but it was also an important part of the USSR's New Economic Policy (NEP), which meant a decline of central state funding for schools, and a shift to technical training and political education.[54] When Lenin postulated the terms of a Cultural Revolution, the concept was based upon the idea that a literate society with a unified class consciousness would move towards the shift, not a forced shift from above based on economics and military expansion of the state.[55]

In line with changes to the education system in the USSR, in April of 1928 the Bolsheviks initiated radical reforms in the Academy of Sciences, insisting on increasing the number of members and creating new chairs in Socioeconomics, Technological Sciences, and Philosophy. Qualified Marxist scholars were brought in and the Party established political dominance over this academic institution.[56] In December of 1928 the Cultural Committee mobilized the intelligentsia to produce work, such as literature and other publications, in service of current Party policy, including the aims of the Five Year Plan.[57] This Cultural Revolution was completely state-directed, and clashed with Lenin's initial aims of increasing basic literacy and class awareness, before changing over to a new economic system and cultural values.[58]

Russification throughout the move toward socialism in the USSR created an interesting tension within progressive Ukrainians circles in Canada at the same time. The ripple effect of Soviet rule in modern day Ukraine caused a major dispute within the USDP in Canada and a convergence of opinion about the goal of the Central Council in Kyiv arose, a conflict that led to a referendum and the eventual

54 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1937* (Bloomington, 1984)
55 Fitzpatrick, 2.
56 Suny, 211. Notable Marxist scholars include Bukharin, Deborin, and Pokrovski.
57 Suny, 212.
58 Suny, 213.

dissolution of the USDP branch in Toronto.[59] The ULFTA, on the other hand, had a pre-existing tendency to carry out its activism in a multifaceted way, fusing both political and cultural issues; Hinther has demonstrated this in her research on the relatively low numbers of ULFTA members who were also members of the CPC.[60] While many members of the ULFTA identified as "communist", they would not join the CPC due to the very real threat of deportation based on political affiliation.

In the twenties in Winnipeg and the USSR there were upsurges of Ukrainian nationalism through cultural production and preservation; *Holos robitnytsi* and *Robitnytsia* came into existence, joining the many other Ukrainian-language North American labour press publications already in existence. The ULFTA immigrant-based working class community grappled with the issues of cultural preservation and class solidarity both publicly and privately, while providing social services to Winnipeggers and supporting nation-building and working class efforts in Soviet Ukraine through displays of transnational, ethno-republic solidarity.[61]

Despite the importance of cultural production and preservation amongst the Ukrainian left in Winnipeg, no reflection on, or even commentary of, the changing conditions of education and state directives in the USSR were levelled. Distinguished Soviet historian Sheila Fitzpatrick has called the first Five Year Plan and its impact on the Cultural Revolution a "period of contradictions"; a similar state in which progressive Ukrainians in Canada existed, with intersectional identity politics surrounding ethnicity, class, and gender conflict in a supportive and socially-minded immigrant community.

In the twenties in Winnipeg and the USSR there was an upsurge in Ukrainian nationalism and cultural

---

59 Krawchuk, *Our History,* 30.

60 Hinther, "Raised in the Spirit of Class Struggle [...]", 52-3.

61 For additional context on ethnic and class conflict in Canada after the Russian revolution of 1917, see Donald Avery, "Ethnic and Class Tensions in Canada, 1918-1920: Anglo-Canadians and the Alien Worker," in *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War* (Edmonton, 1983), edited by Frances Swyripa and John Herd Thompson, pp. 79-98.

production and preservation; *Holos robitnytsi* and *Robitnytsia* began publication, joining the many other North American labour press publications already in existence. The ULFTA immigrant-based working class community grappled with the issues of cultural preservation and class solidarity both publicly and privately, while providing social services to Winnipeggers and supporting nation-building and working class efforts in Soviet Ukraine.[62] Given the importance of cultural production and preservation amongst the Ukrainian left in Winnipeg, some reflection or commentary upon, the changing conditions of education and state directives in the USSR might be expected in the women's letters. Yet, there is no evidence of interest in these events among Winnipeg's Ukrainian women. This suggests the limits of transnationalism, and the relative importance among women of the local situation and its impact upon their lives and politics.

Research Context

Research for this thesis is based on the twenty published letters from Winnipeg contributors submitted in that year, spanning all twenty-four issues of *Robitnytsia* in 1928. The letters section is called *Shcho nam pyshut'*, in English 'What We Write'. Irchan edited and selected these letters for publication, and each letter was published in Ukrainian-language in 1928. These letters were translated and interpreted for this thesis in 2014. Letters were grouped into one of two categories: International or Local, the former tending towards ideological unification of working class culture, the latter of increased participation and organization in the ULFTA in Winnipeg. The International category letters also contain elements of cultural and political significance such as political ties with international labour organizations and Ukrainian communities, while the letters in the Local grouping contain content more closely related to matters of social education, such as literacy, physical health, and family logistics.

[62] For additional context on ethnic and class conflict in Canada after the Russian revolution of 1917, see Donald Avery, "Ethnic and Class Tensions in Canada, 1918-1920: Anglo-Canadians and the Alien Worker," in *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War* (Edmonton, 1983), edited by Frances Swyripa and John Herd Thompson, pp. 79-98.

This study interrogates the content of each letter as an individual primary source in a wider context of secondary literature on the progressive Ukrainian left in Winnipeg, including minutes from ULFTA conventions and meetings. The primary source work quantity was restricted purposefully, in order to ensure a higher quality interpretation, as a larger study spanning multiple years would include much more primary source work. Original copies of *Robitnytsia* were accessed and digitally photographed at three Winnipeg locations: The *Oseredok* Archives at the Ukrainian Cultural & Educational Centre, the Ivan Franko Archives at the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) Headquarters, and the personal collection of Dr. Rhonda Hinther of the University of Brandon.

The chapters are broken down by source category. The first chapter showcases evidence of the radicalizing every day experiences and concerns of Winnipeg working women on a local scale, and provides insights into their concerns and activities within the ULFTA . The second chapter contains the International grouping of letters in a transnational context and shows that there is no visible connection between the Cultural Revolution in the USSR and the progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg. The third chapter provides an analysis of the covers of *Robitnytsia* from 1928, to familiarize the reader with the culture of the magazine, and to further interrogate the notion of a transnational community being built and reinforced by the Women's Section journal based on the content of the imagery.

Ukrainian language names and places are transliterated using the Library of Congress Transliteration Table for Ukrainian, 2011.[63] The table can be found in the first appendix. Remaining at 591 Pritchard Avenue in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the (Winnipeg) ULFTA hall is a national historic site and now serves as the national office of the AUUC and the Winnipeg branch, whose volunteer efforts maintain the Ivan

[63] Library of Congress Transliteration Table – Ukrainian, 2011. Accessed https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/ukrainia.pdf , March 3, 2016, 7:16 p.m.

Franko archives, library, and museum.

A literal approach was taken to translations in an attempt to capture something of the original language in which it was published. Double-negative grammar structure is common and correct in Ukrainian language, and therefore it has not been adjusted to reflect English language grammar and style. Atypical punctuation and many typos are also preserved, as in the original text.

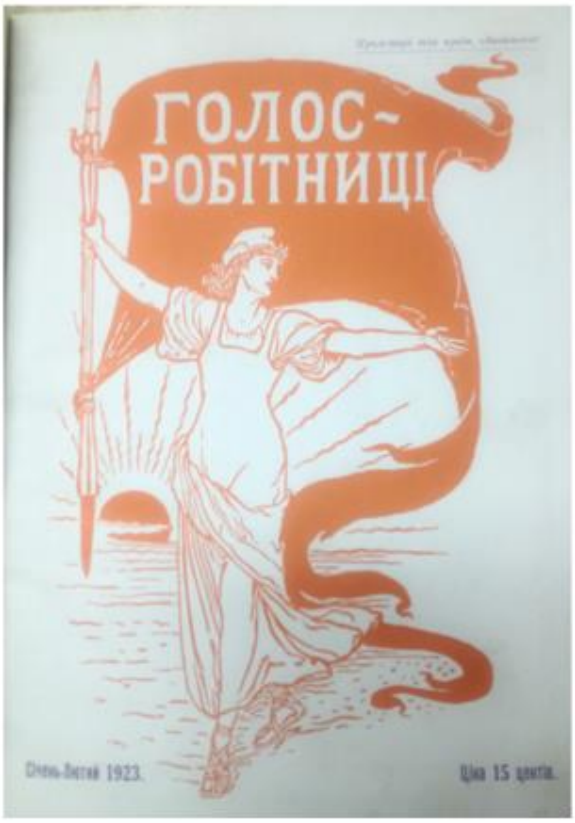

Figure 2

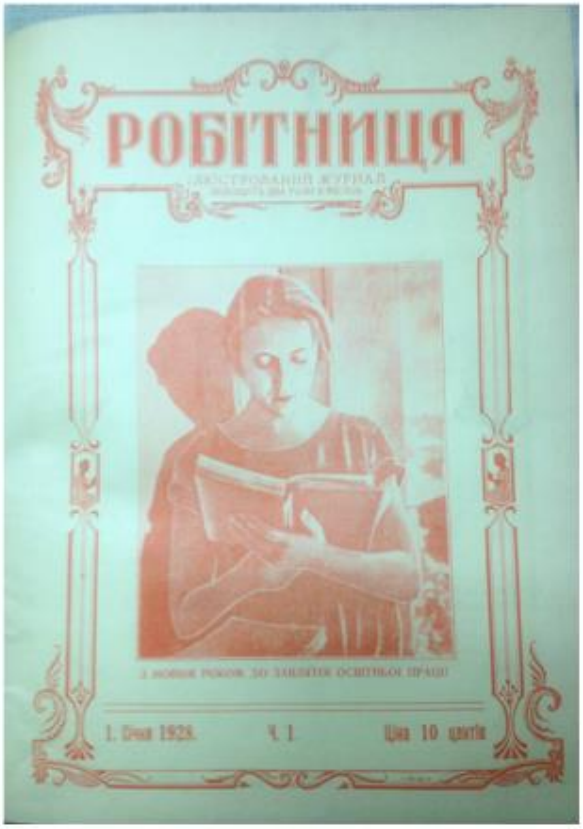

Figure 3

(***Figure 2)*** *Cover of the first issue of the 'Voice of the Working Woman', dated January-February 1923. The bottom right corner of the cover shows the price of the issue, fifteen cents, and the top right corner reads "Пролетарі всіх країн, єднайтеся!", or "Workers of the world, unite!". 'Voice of the Working Woman' became 'The Working Woman' in 1924. Photograph of original accessed at the Ivan Franko Museum archives, with the generous assistance of AUUC representative and library volunteer, Mrs. Olga Shatulsky.*

(***Figure 3)*** *Cover of the first 1928 issue of 'The Working Woman', dated January 1, 1928. The price is listed in the bottom right corner as ten cents, and the caption beneath the cover illustration reads, "З новим роком до завзятої освітньої праці!", or "A happy new year of persistent educational work!". Under the title of the periodical in bold font at the top, the smaller text reads, "Ілюстрований журнал виходить два рази в місяць", or "Illustrated magazine published twice a month." Photograph of original accessed at the Ivan Franko Museum archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

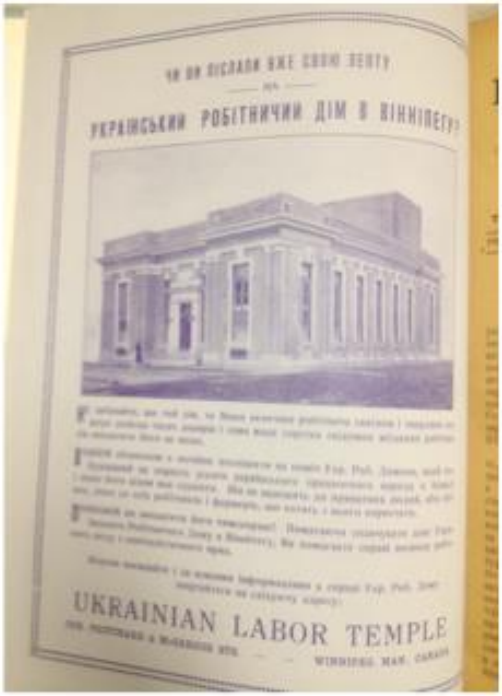

Figure 4

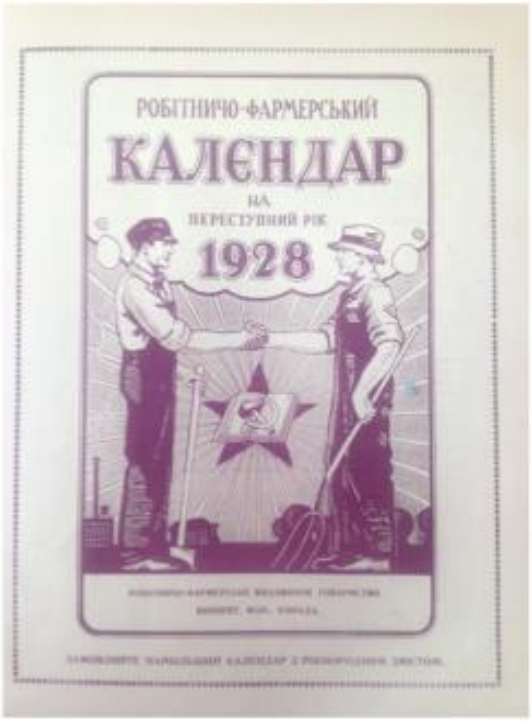

Figure 5

(Figure 4) *Popular inside cover of many issues of 'The Working Woman' featuring the newly constructed Ukrainian Labour Temple (direct translation from Ukrainian:"Ukrainian Worker Home"). The Labour Temple was built primarily by volunteer labour and member donations. Photograph of original accessed at the Ivan Franko Museum archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

(Figure 5) *Full page feature of the ULFTA advertisement for its calendar/almanac for the year studied. This image also functions as the organization's logo on many of the ULFTA's publications, and was stamped on the back cover of most issues of 'The Working Woman'. Photograph of original accessed at the Ivan Franko Museum archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

CHAPTER 1

Radicalized by "Paltry Things": The Experiences of Winnipeg's *Robitnytsi*[64]

The General Secretary of the CPC from 1929 to 1940 was a man named Tim Buck. Buck argued that the strengths of pro-communist parties laid largely in their ability to politicize "little" daily problems and link them to the greater class struggle.[65] Said Buck, "There is a tendency of most of us to hesitate, a fear that we might be dealing with trifles and paltry things." In *Robitnytsia* there is evidence that Ukrainian working class women were radicalized and mobilized in response to these so-called "paltry things", aspects of daily working class life that were easy to overlook without knowledge of class privilege and the opportunities and experiences that it creates. This chapter answers the second question posed to the Winnipeg letter submissions to *Robitnytsia* in 1928: What did organized women in Winnipeg write about in the letters section? What were their priorities and on what issues were they radicalized?

The letters from 1928 show that Winnipeg's progressive Ukrainian working women had three main interests in their participation with the ULFTA Women's Section: i) Supporting the labour press with subscriptions; ii) Contributing to and taking advantage of worker benefit cooperatives; and iii) Prioritizing education, particularly in scientific and political fields. The letters analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that the organizers and activists in Winnipeg that wrote to *Robitnytsia* were pragmatic in their approach to radicalizing the everyday experiences of working class women. The contributors to 'What We Write' achieved this by being direct and clear about the topics around which they sought to mobilize workers, and by selecting topics and causes around which most working people could relate,

---

[64] *Robitnytsi,* in English "working women", is the plural form of *Robitnytsia*, in English "working woman".
[65] Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto, 1975), 95.

not exclusively the more radical and politically savvy readers of the membership.

Supporting Labour Organizations

One of the most active topics in this year of publication regarded the Ukrainian Press in North America, generally. There was a focus on supporting other Ukrainian worker publications through subscriptions, but there was also a tangible sense of competition, in moments. One of the most heatedly debated incidents on the topic of Ukrainian labour press was a perceived slight by a subscriber of *Robitnytsia*, against a writer from another journal, the Ukrainian Daily News.

Comrade Yaroslava of the Ukrainian Daily News (UDN) published strong criticisms of *Robitnytsia* regarding uncollected subscription fees, inciting two separate responses in the Letters section. Both *Robitnytsia* writers asserted that this was an internal communication that should never have been discussed publicly, and that the "attack" by Comrade Yaroslava was without merit, serving the more innocuous and serious outcome of dividing the two journals and the two communities of working class Ukrainian Canadians they serve.[66] This simple miscommunication regarding two uncollected dollars from Winnipeg subscribers led to pages of rhetoric from UDN's "Comrade Yaroslava", who was admonished by readers Anna Moisiuk and Anna Sydor regarding the importance of using the press to raise class consciousness and education, not to make personal attacks. Wrote Moisiuk,[67]

> "To my mind, there is not one word in her write-up which would blight our organization. However, if there are
>
> members mentioned by comrade Yaroslava in her write-up about the society adding 'slander', 'nonsense', 'stupidity', et. cetera – her duty was to address this issue in our organization, not in public or in the press. There is no important business in this matter."

Moisiuk concluded her letter by advising the readership of *Robitnytsia* to support both journals,

---

66 Anna Moisiuk, "Indeed it Must Be Done", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182; and Anna Sydor, "The Question of Children", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182.

67 Anna Moisiuk, "Indeed it Must Be Done", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182.

ostensibly, not to choose sides,

> "Because it testifies to our comrades the best understanding of our duties toward the labour press, and indicates that the general line of liberation is to fight for the working class [...] To us, workers and workwomen need mutual understanding [...] Such fragmentation is not conducive to harmonious work [...]"

Sydor politicized the criticism from the UDN in a similar way, stating that comrade Yaroslava's slander was potentially a valid criticism, but that the Ukrainian working women of *Robitnytsia* should support the UDN nonetheless, and the English-language labour Fnewspapers as well, due to their dedication to the same political cause.[68] Wrote Sydor,

> "If we listened to her advice to go out and harm 'U.D.N.', our enemies would benefit, to their amusement. In our work we must know no boundaries. We all need to read and support our labour newspapers and magazines, particularly where they are not distributed. They are generally all of ours. And not only Ukrainian, we also read English labour newspapers and magazines, we must support them, because really do they not serve our labour cause? Our comrades are not only surprised by such questions produced in the pages of 'U.D.N.', but also perturbed. Behind the attention of Yaroslava, at the end of such a write- up, is enemy press."

Both Moisuk and Sydor's responses to Yaroslava's ideas communicate the importance of transforming indignation into compromise with other labour organizations in support of more civil relations and partnerships for work that is held in common. This tension reflects a common challenge in transnational civil societies – the challenge of bridging the gap between difference in access to resources, power, culture, language, and expectations, in service of reaching consensus on priorities and strategies of importune to both groups.[69]

The desire to overcome differences and disagreements is manifest in the letters. The scarcity of resources and perpetual financial challenges faced by the labour press often led to a competitive atmosphere, particularly regarding subscriptions; but maintaining cooperation between labour

---

68 Anna Sydor, "The Question of Children", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182.

69 This idea of transnational civil society and its challenges comes from Srilatha Batliwala and L. David Brown, eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction* (Bloomington, 2006)

organizations is identified as a priority throughout this exchange. The importance of collaborating with other labour organizations and supporting them comes through in these letters, and likely stems from one of the basic underpinnings of the international labour movement: that working towards international solidarity is necessary because the achievement of socialism remains under threat as long as injustice and oppression exist anywhere.[70] A healthy labour press in any community would be beneficial to the movement as whole.

Contributing to Worker Benefit Cooperatives

The ULFTA operated on volunteer labour; indeed, the construction of the Winnipeg hall itself was completely reliant on volunteer labour until it was completed in 1918. Within its walls the ULFTA ran the Workers' Benevolent Association, the associated press, an education association, a library, a youth organization, a women's organization, and a theatre.

Due to its reliance on volunteer labour and membership fees, the ULFTA would have been deeply affected by dips in support *via* human labour, press subscription fees, donations, concert attendance, and a host of other sources. The more participation and support that could be generated in all of the programs and cooperatives of the ULFTA, the more solidly its cause and vision for society could be communicated, and potentially enacted, on a larger scale.

There is evidence of this priority in a letter from Stefania Stutska of Winnipeg, who submitted a letter to *Robitnytsia* describing her experience of the Workers' Benevolent Association and its importance in her life as a working woman.[71] Stutska wrote,

> "I offer sincere gratitude [...] for helping me pay the sum of $27.75, after my time of illness. Thanks also to the local leaders of the choir that visited me.
>
> Every reader of 'The Working Woman' must do their duty to work-in the Working

[70] Batliwala and Brown, 6.
[71] Stefania Stutska, "Gratitude of P.Z.T.," *Robitnytsia*, 1 April 1928, 218.

> Remembrance of Comrades, not put it aside because you now feel healthy. After all, when you will be met illness or injury, it can already be too late. Often so, it happens that in a house not a cent is even available for a doctor to visit; but when members are organized, if you are willing, it will help you always."

The experience outlined in this letter is a reminder to contribute and assist with the worker benefit cooperatives in order to have access to resources when they are needed, and also highlights a perceived gap in social services in Winnipeg at that time. The gap in Canadian social services was being articulated in other pockets of Left leaning Anglo-Canadians at this time as well. At a Social Services Congress of Canada conference of 1914, Helen MacMurchy, a Canadian doctor and pioneer in the medical field regarding infant mortality, articulated the need for medical inspection and the restriction of immigrants in order to decrease the number of immigrants who "drift into institutions for the neuropathic, feeble-minded, and insane in great number", thus increasing the "national burden of pauperism, vice, crime, and insanity" in Canada.[72] Rather than addressing this lack of social services, immigrant populations were blamed, and MacMurchy's appointment as "inspector of the feeble-minded" in 1914 led to the wrongful sterilization of many immigrants.

In reality, a forty-three percent increase in the Canadian population was responsible for the stress on social services, not the mental wellness of newcomers to Canada. The general population grew substantially in a relatively short period of time.[73] It is interesting to observe immigrant communities creating resources for themselves through worker cooperatives in Winnipeg, and advertising them.

The discrimination inherent in MacMurchy's request to stem the flow of immigration in order to protect Canadian social services was consistent with the dominant society; it is well-documented that in

---

[72] Angus McLaren, "Stemming the Flood of Defective Aliens," in Barrington Walker, ed. *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto, 2008), 189.

[73] McLaren in Walker, 189.

Canada European immigrants of Anglo-Saxon descent considered themselves racially superior, and immigrants to Canada were measured against their deviation from this perceived ideal. The order of "desirability" from most desirable to least desirable immigrant groups are enshrined in Canadian Immigration Policy, which outline the list thusly: (1) British and Americans, (2) Northern and Western Europeans, (3) Central and Eastern Europeans, (4) Asians and Blacks.[74] Creating social programs to benefit working class Ukrainians through the ULFTA worker co-ops in Winnipeg was therefore a pragmatic solution to a very real and highly politicized deficiency in Canada's social services at the time.

Education, Politics, Health and the Sciences

Education was valued at the ULFTA, beginning with basic literacy, as evidenced by the hall's language and literacy classes, educational programming, school program for children, and library, but it was of particular importance in the development of a thriving Women's Section. Building a basic level of literacy and political theory in the Women's Section of the ULFTA allowed for greater numbers of women becoming involved, and of more meaningful participation. Myroslav Irchan, the *Robitnytsia* editor throughout 1928, wrote about the difficulties of getting more women involved in the journal itself, and the importance of literacy and general participation increasing. Irchan wrote,[75]

> "It is very difficult at first to get answers from our women comrades to questions that naturally trouble editors: does the journal write about matters that interest the readers? Do they understand everything that they read in the journal? [...] To such and similar questions the typical response was that everything is satisfactory [...] On the one hand this revealed an enthusiasm about the journal, but on the other hand it showed [...] the underdevelopment of critical thought in general. But soon all this changed for the better. The women comrades not only ensured that the journal was disseminated and financially secure but [...] it became noticeable how some comrades were learning from the mistakes of their submissions which the editor had corrected, trying not to repeat them [...] It became evident that [...] the class consciousness of readers and their correct understanding of the tasks of their organization

74 McLaren in Walker, 190.
75 Krawchuk, *Our History* [...], 73.

and of the whole revolutionary workers' movement was steadily growing and deepening."

The literary, letters, and science sections in particular sought to provide working women with the development of greater critical thinking skills and political knowledge. In 1928, three letters focused specifically on women's participation in educational lectures and their relevance to the working class Ukrainian community in Winnipeg. Two letters related to the lectures of a Dr. Chasniy, the first on venereal disease, for a female audience only; and the second on the topic of raising children. Both letters were submitted by contributor M. Hotsuliak in two separate issues. The first letter was formal and informative, reporting the relevant information. Hotsuliak writes,[76]

> "On Monday evening of 12 March, at the hall of the Ukrainian Worker House, branches of the Women's Section met to get answers from an instructive lecture about venereal illnesses, given by Dr. Chasniy. The lecture was for women only and a very large number of workwomen arrived to hear it. To be inoffensive, the lecturer used light sketches when he gave explanations. After that the comrades put out questions, to which Dr. Chasniy answered. The lecture was extremely informative, and comrades benefited very much from it. From our branch of the Women's Section I offer Dr.-comrade Chasniy sincere gratitude."

Hotsuliak's second letter regarding the Chasniy lecture was politicized for a different purpose, to link the way a child is raised with the health of its family. This could simply have been an individual expression, but it is more likely that Hotsuliak strove to make the lecture relevant to the general readership, potentially reaching out to readers who may not consider themselves involved or educated enough to attend such lectures. Of this second lecture by Dr. Chasniy, Hotsuliak writes,[77]

> "By effort of the branch of the Women's Section, on 23 April during the day at the Ukr. Labour House a very interesting and informative lecture took place with Dr. Chasniy. The hall was almost filled with workwomen who were interested in the theme of the lecture: "How to Educate Children".
>
> Dr. Chasniy spoke about children's illnesses, and how to protect children from them. The lecture paid attention to relatives who were not healthy as children, as the family must be healthy. For a child in the choir, they must not develop a condition. It is very bad to frighten children, because

[76] M. Hotsuliak, "Lecture of Dr. Chasniy," *Robitnytsia*, 1 April 1928, 221.
[77] M. Hotsuliak, "Second Lecture with Chasniy," *Robitnytsia*, 15 May 1928, 318-319.

> from that they grow timid and then more timid. Further, said the lecturer, every child must become good at science, and cherish it, above every other treasure.
>
> There were questions the listeners came to ask, and Dr. Chasniy answered them. It was well not to go pale since we had such a useful lecture. It is already the second such informative lecture of Dr. Chasniy in our Ukr. Worker House and I trust that it brought a large benefit to all comrades present. From the branch of the Women's Section, I bear sincere gratitude for Dr. Chasniy."

The importance of increased literacy levels and increased levels of education and political awareness was at the forefront of the Women's Section letters. In August of 1928 Hotsuliak submitted a write-up updating the readership of the activities of the Women's Section, emphasizing the importance of participation through reading publications and participating in meetings and other activities.[78]

> "Work in our women's section goes pretty well. Though in the summer months it is harder to come by meetings, which are limited, ignoring last night, but come along to meetings and carry out the work like how it was in winter. Our meetings take place every Monday, with readings once or twice per month, but unfortunately very few comrades write on it. It would be nice if comrades tried to submit a bit more writing. We have had several very informative lectures [...]"

Participation waned further in the summer months, which the ULFTA viewed as a wasted opportunity in the Women's and Youth sections. A letter submitted by the Central Committee of the Women's Section encouraged the *Robitnytsia* readership to work throughout the summer and direct youth to the Central Committee for referrals to different organizations and activities in which they may participate.[79]

> "Dear Comrades!
>
> Summer, in which our organizational work for the months is so neglected, has already passed. Fall is coming and with it the long winter evening when every comrade will have sufficient spare time. We need to get down to work, so that this time will not pass in vain, but that we will use it to chip away at distribution of our educational work.
>
> Comrades! Prepare to settle in for general reading, lectures, and mass meetings. Everywhere and always try to join and organize those groups of workwomen which yet stand apart from the

[78] M. Hotsuliak, "Something About Our Work," *Robitnytsia*, 1 September, 1928, 1928, 574.
[79] Central Committee of the Women's Section, "To All Branches of the Women's Section of TURF House in Canada," *Robitnytsia*, 1 September 1928, 574. [Bold emphasis in original]

> organization. By this method you simplify work in branches, which will also increase the ranks of class-conscious working women.
>
> Every comrade must execute work, which is imposed by the organization, but not renounce it as has often been the case until now. If you value the organization, you must do everything in your power to support it and prevent its decline. Your zeal will become an example for the unorganized woman and she will join our ranks, and together with us fight for the best life for all workers.
>
> **At branches where youth are not incapacitated to lead the work properly, turn to the information of the Central Committee of the Women's Section, and we will gladly dispatch you in the necessary direction.**
> **So to work, comrades!**" [Bold formatting, *sic*]

The concerns and desires outlined in this letter reflect Irchan's consternation about participation from the Women's Section in not only its journal, *Robitnytsia*, but in other branch duties and organizational work as well. The lack of participation of the female readership appears related to a lack of confidence in the material - the rhetoric, discourses, and political language - of labour organization and is typically the meaning behind the "education" women sought through participation in ULFTA activities and programming.

In a letter encouraging others to attend educational events at the hall, Hotsuliak submitted letters about educational lectures she attended in November. The first was called 'People Together', on the subject of anthropology and human behaviour and proclivities when living in groups, and the second on evolution theory, called 'The Origin of Man'.[80]

Hotsuliak's letters focused on the importance of continuing educational work in the title of her submission, and in the first line which read, "The local branch of the Women's Section should not forget the organizational and general entirety of membership", implying that many readers of *Robitnytsia* should support the organization at-large in a greater capacity, above and beyond paying

[80] M. Hotsuliak, "Conduct Educational Work," *Robitnytsia*, 1 November 1928, 670.

subscription fees for the journal. Hotsuliak stressed that both educational lectures were “very useful and instructive”, and submitted letters frequently throughout 1928 on the subject of education and work in the Women's Section.[81]

In a longer letter from Hotsuliak published in October, the educational work of the Women's Section in Winnipeg was outlined in more detail.[82] This longer report fills-in the gaps from shorter updates mentioned earlier in the year. The lecture of Dr. Chasniy on raising children was revealed to be more specifically about preventing the contraction of tuberculosis in children, and the importance of keeping them healthy at home and not sending them to extra-curricular activities when they were sick. Hotsuliak added that lectures on organizational themes were also offered, and added details to the educational lectures on science-based themes, including 'The Origin of Man', which was specified as 'Evolution, or The Origin of Man (People)' in the second letter, and emphasized the importance of newspaper wall-reading at meetings and the desire to increase them.[83] Additionally, Hotsuliak mentioned another lecture by an English- speaking doctor named Mary Crawford who provided a lecture on 'Women's Diseases'.[84] Hotsuliak concluded her lengthy update by saying,

> “Consequently it is proof that our comrades and lady-comrades sincerely work to lead educated work forward. On behalf of the educational committee and women's branches and [central] committee of the Women's Section I offer sincere gratitude to our lecturer.”

These letters show a distinct promotion of more practical educational values – applied science, easily understood by laypeople, linked to human health and hygiene; and anthropology. They provide evidence for the importance of education as an issue around which women were radicalized and

---

[81] M. Hotsuliak, “Conduct Educational Work,” *Robitnytsia*, 1 November 1928, 670.

[82] M. Hotsuliak, “Educational Work of the Women's Section,” *Robitnytsia*, 1 October 1928, 636.

[83] “Newspaper-wall reading refers to the practice of posting newspapers on walls for public, shared reading.

[84] Dr. Mary Crawford came to Winnipeg in 1903 as a Doctor of Medicine specializing in obstetrics, infant care, hygiene, and nutrition. Crawford worked extensively in Winnipeg’s North End with many young immigrant families and created a home-visitation program to attempt to improve living conditions for families living in poverty. For more details see: http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/features/timelinks/reference/db0013.shtml

mobilized in the progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg.

Beyond the priorities of supporting the labour press, supporting the ULFTA hall more generally, and promoting education, the readership of *Robitnytsia* also reflect concerns about the subjugation of women in daily life. Parallels are drawn between the exploitation of women and unequal access to power at work, and exploitation and unequal access to power in society.

The most highly gendered and revealing letter of personal experience stands out as an important critique of the progressive Ukrainian labour movement in Canada. The story of a woman being physically beaten by her husband is linked with the failures of the labour movement to address the discriminatory nature of social and familial gender roles and sexism. V. Mariyanna wrote a letter relating the uneven power dynamics in her own family, and which highlighted the disconnect between her brother's identity as a member of the labour movement, and his "spirit", his abusive behaviour toward his wife, at home.[85] The letter is worth quoting at length,

> "What I want to write relates to our members, and also to the members of our organizations. It seems that when a man begins to try to take action it is somehow more beautiful, and because he meets with a larger group of people it draws together even more people, whereby more begin to read and understand. But whether this is a reality or not, is yet to be seen.
>
> I went once to my sister-in-law and found her bedridden – sick. [...] she confessed that she had been beaten by her husband. And I said then: - I do not care for such women, that give themselves to be beaten! And that woman, listening to us talk, asks:
>
> Well, and what to do when the woman's husband beats her?
>
> It is not necessary to allow yourself to be beaten, it is necessary that the husband of the women does not batter.
>
> I answered.
>
> Oh, and you hear in every way possible to make it a thing of the past, and nothing helps, and now we are reading 'The Working Woman' and still nothing.
>
> Possibly, - I say to her – the way that your husband reads working newspapers, should be honoured.
>
> And you, here, familiar with people who read working newspapers and belonging to working organizations, how can you behave this way towards your wife? Always violence and anxiety

[85] V. Mariyanna, "What We Ought To Remember," *Robitnytsia*, 1 June 1928, 348.

> in the house, and you are yet called comrades! [...] Well, consider yourself, how this is a bad thing, when our members are treated like that, not behaving properly in one house, with a soul that does not belong to the working organization. Just behaving wildly. How shameful it is when you hear that the man who belongs to the workers' organization can not make do without quarrels and fights.
> So this is what we all need to remember!"

Mariyanna's letter reflects the contradictions between policy and practice in the passion of the workers' organizations and press, with the daily habits of so-called "comrades" in the home. She effectively evaluates an abusive personal relationship as detrimental to the worker cause, and not in the spirit of working class solidarity.

In one other letter there is revealed a heavily gendered dynamic that radicalizes the working woman's experience by appealing to the protective or maternal concepts of womanhood and motherhood. In a May 1928 issue a reader wrote a reply to a letter 'In Defense of Lady [Female] Comrades', and called upon fellow readers to consider the situation facing a fictitious 'Oksana', a working woman who is young but "already knows class consciousness due in part to her "forceful boss", and compared her with an older working woman, 'Maria', who has children and is also exploited at work.[86]

> "Now, comrades, compare 'the boss' pushing this young girl, Oksana. Oksana was not yet married, but she felt the grief of Maria, whose needs are remote from those of labour, to stand hunger and cold with the children. And 'the boss' pushing occurred nonetheless, and he did not feel the least bit of grief. As an irresponsible woman, she cared only for herself. And think, comrades, can such a mother educate her children on the honest and conscious fight of the working class? Found above is this burning question. Remember, each child first learns at school. And what will the mother teach, how will they educate children in order to give them the best knowledge, and how had their families? Only the working organization will teach this.
>
> Comrades! You want your children to grow up not on your enemies, but to senior years of summer fun and aid [...] Fight altogether for the best fate, because only then can we overcome darkness and irresponsibility. Only consciousness is our force."

[86] A. Patek, "Let's Get Together With Class Organization," *Robitnytsia*, 15 May 1928, 318.

Encouraging working women to involve themselves and their children in the ULFTA, this letter stressed the importance of education yet again, but specified its importance for women.

Outside of these heavily gendered responses to the everyday, organizers and activists who wrote to *Robitnytsia* were practical in their approach to radicalizing working women by being direct and clear about the topics around which they organized and their relevance to all workers, not just the more radical or politically savvy. In September 1928 Hotsuliak wrote about the informative nature of the Women's Section lectures, and encouraged readers to attend.[87]

> "Comrade I. Karach gave a lecture entitled, 'The Struggle for a Normal Working Day.' The lecture was very interesting and informed many listeners who benefited from it."

The struggle for a normal working day was a good platform upon which to recruit attendance, given its broad appeal and relevance. The anonymous letter that was published about a workwoman being scolded by her employer for reading the "naughty" labour press encouraged readers to read the labour press in order to understand the importance of their labour and their rights as workers. Reinforcing the value of women's wage labour and the relationships of labour, be they related to home finances and spousal relationships, or with the employer deciding what they read and how their children were educated, women's letters to the *Robitnytsia* dwelled upon the "little things".

Conclusions

The letters from the Winnipeg readership of *Robitnytsia* provide compelling evidence for the importance of relatively straightforward topics such as education, participation in worker organization and further mobilization, and support of labour publications. However, there are glimmers of the complex interactions of class and gender inequality, of being a woman in a male-dominated labour

[87] M. Hotsuliak, "Something About Our Work," *Robitnytsia*, 1 September 1928, 574.

organization, and being a member of the working class, having access to few resources. Strong language and sophisticated and intelligent aims aside, the issues around which Winnipeg's *robitnytsi* were radicalized highlight huge gaps in equal access to resources, personal agency, and political power in Canada.

CHAPTER 2

Subversive Socio-Politics in Winnipeg: The Transnational *Robitnytsia* and the Cultural Revolution, 1928

Circumstances resulting from the Russian revolutions and subsequent Bolshevik takeover connected the interests of the progressive Ukrainian diaspora all over the world to political and social activity in the newly formed USSR. This chapter analyzes the international grouping of letters to *Robitnytsia* in 1928, letters that were material manifestations of a transnational community. It was hypothesized that if there were a tangible reflection of the Soviet Cultural Revolution, it would speak to a transnational connection between the Ukrainian workers of Winnipeg and the workers of the Soviet Union. There is no evidence of any connection to, or knowledge of, the Cultural Revolution in the Letters section; however, there is evidence of the transnational nature of the labour movement, which is explored in detail in this chapter.

A successor state to the multinational, multiethnic Russian Empire, the Soviet Union was formed officially in 1924, though the Bolsheviks exercised power in Ukraine in the city of Kharkiv as early as December of 1917. A Central Council was formed in Kyiv, and proclaimed Ukraine an autonomous state within the body of the Provisional Government of Russia.[88] Volodymyr Vynnechenko, a popular political activist and playwright in progressive Ukrainian circles all over the world, was appointed in charge of the sovereign Ukrainian state as the General Secretariat, to the delight of the progressive Ukrainian diaspora in Canada and elsewhere.[89] The Russian Revolution of 1917, coupled with the creation of the Central Council and a sovereign Ukrainian state led by Vynnechenko led to a much

[88] See Hajda,193-278.
[89] Krawchuk, *Our History*, 28 and 216.

more optimistic view of the political social future of Ukraine, which manifested in support of the political leaders of the Russian revolutions, the Bolsheviks and the Communist Party.[90] The feeling of exhilaration and optimism about the political situation in the old Russian empire under the Bolsheviks soon changed; Soviet rule was declared in Ukraine at the end of 1917, effectively splintering the opinion of the Ukrainian Left in Canada.

Post-revolution, the flame of Ukrainian independence was re-ignited in eastern Europe and amongst the Ukrainian diaspora. After the Bolsheviks seized power, the revolution turned to civil war and the feelings of euphoria and solidarity with the pan-Slavic proletariat soon faded in Ukraine.[91]
The creation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR) in 1922 inspired the Ukrainian Left in Canada, and in the 1920s Soviet Ukraine saw a marked increase in cultural development reflective of the trends amongst the progressive Ukrainians of Winnipeg participating in activities at the ULFTA hall: Ukrainian language classes, study and creation of Ukrainian literature, Ukrainian film, and social organization.[92] It was easier to remain optimistic about the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s, when it enjoyed relative autonomy, relatively free from Russian cultural influence. But the politics that developed in the 1920s culminated in arrests of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and widespread famine, which was impossible for Ukrainian Canadians to ignore.[93]

Lenin's idea of cultural revolution had been a gradual, non-militant expansion of mass education and achievement of basic literacy, a path that would culminate in a heightened understanding of social

---

[90] Krawchuk, *Our History*, 28.
[91] Subtelny writes that because of Ukraine's abundant natural resources and strategic location, it became the location of the most chaotic and complex events of the Civil War. See Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 2000), 355.
[92] Andrij Makuch, "Fighting for the Soul of the Ukrainian Progressive Movement in Canada: The Lobayites and the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association," in Hinther and Mochoruk, eds, *Re-imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 384.
[93] Makuch in Hinther and Mochoruk, 385.

inequality and that could be addressed by a shift toward a worker-focused economy: a revolution from below. Instead, after Lenin's death in 1922, the cultural revolution was hurried, taking on a more militant and intolerant character.[94] The state shifted to spending on technical training and political education, and channeled rural populations into training institutions.[95] Following Lenin's death, Stalin's leadership model rushed the revolution from above, increasing basic literacy and education, while at the same time professing intolerance of "bourgeois" values and tastes, including specific types of literature, opinions, and thought.[96] The Cultural Revolution called for the destruction of "bourgeois values", functionally inciting a class war against property owners, including rural agriculturalists, and forcing a homogenous cultural shift in a large and diverse population.[97] This period came to be known as the Cultural Revolution, and the rhetoric infused into society from the state and its newly confiscated academic institutions, was "Class War."

Much of the Ukrainian historiography is written from the assumption that "Ukraine" was always a nation, moving towards self-government throughout history. Ukrainian leaders' culturally-specific concerns regarding national autonomy could be viewed as detrimental to the larger concern of working class solidarity. The efforts that preserved Ukrainian culture in the twenties formed a significant barrier for the Bolsheviks and their systematic attempts to unify Slavic cultures and nations under the banner of socialism in the USSR. The Comintern effectively suppressed interethnic conflict by promoting a policy of Russification, which was a defining feature of Soviet nationalism and ethno-republic solidarity.[98]

---

94 Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1937*. (Bloomington 1984), 2.

95 Suny, 208.

96 The term *bourgeois* is of French origin and refers to middle-class culture and values. Marxist-Leninist definitions are commonly understood as "...the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour". (Friedrich Engels: Note to: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' in: Karl Marx: 'Selected Works', Volume 1; London; 1943; p. 204)

97 Suny, 209.

98 Hajda, 193.

Some political arguments on topics of the Soviet governance had a demonstrated impact on Ukrainian labour organizations in Canada. The ripple effect of Soviet rule in Ukraine caused a major dispute in Canada within the USDP, a convergence of opinion about the goal of the Central Council in Kyiv. The disagreement was between the USDP, which was highly critical of Soviet control in Ukraine, and the newly created Committee of Aid to Ukrainian Emigrants (CAUE), which held a favourable view of Soviet power and influence in Ukraine.[99] This conflict led to a referendum of the USDP membership and the eventual dissolution of the Toronto USDP branch. At the same time, USDP branches across Canada continued to operate, growing their membership as political activity and cultural programs increased under the collective priority of supporting independence in Ukraine.[100] The experience of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union during the Cultural Revolution posed a particular dilemma for those on the left. The language and cultural customs of Ukrainians were valued, despite the fact that the international labour movement called for the disintegration of ethnic and cultural differences in service of a different social goal.

A more in-depth discussion of Ukrainian history and national identity post-revolution, though intriguing, is not pertinent to this study. The link between transnational political affiliation and Ukrainian culture in Canada mirrored a similarly interesting parallel amongst the Ukrainian immigrants of the ULFTA in Winnipeg concerning feminism. In a spring issue of 1930 the Central Committee of the Women's Section stated,[101]

> "We take the view that working women do not have interests separate from the interests of the working class as a whole, and we consider feminism to be opportunistic and harmful to the working class."

[99] Krawchuk, *Our History,* 30.
[100] Krawchuk, *Our History,* 30.
[101] Central Committee of the Women's Section of the ULFTA, "On the Political and Economic Conference of Women Laborites in Winnipeg," *Robitnytsia*, 15 April 1930, 7.

It is interesting to consider that religion and feminism were of very little concern to the Women's Section, as evidenced by *Robitnytsia*, they were "beyond" it. However, the language and cultural customs of Ukrainians were valued and preserved in the face of the international labour movement which called for the disintegration of those differences in service of a larger social goal. It is in the spirit of open inquiry and curiosity that the transnational connections found in *Robitnytsia* are explored and analyzed with respect to the entangled intersections of transnationalism, political life, and culture in the Soviet Union.

In viewing the source material as a transnational construct, it is helpful to have a familiarity with the concept of Transnational Civil Society, as it relates to the progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg in the 1920s. The progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg itself is a transnational one, as the ULFTA and other labour organizations stressed the roles of non-state actors and transmission processes amongst lay people with the goal of creating leaders in a community who sought to manage international problems by establishing roles that were essentially expert in international relations.[102]

Letters to *Robitnytsia* reveal the tangled intersections of transnationalism, political life, and culture in the Soviet Union and Canada.[103]In viewing this source material as a transnational construct, it is helpful to have a familiarity with the concept of "transnational civil society", as it relates to the progressive idea that a transnational civil society exists across more than one country in order to build a social

[102] For greater context on transnational civil society, see Daniel Lacqua, *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movement Between the World Wars* (London, 2011), 57.

[103] For theoretical reinforcement of this perspective in Karl and Marx, see *The Communist Manifesto* (Toronto, 1998), 59. Marx and Engels write that "Differences in age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex."

consensus and take appropriate action.[104]

Transnational civil society as a concept contains three interrelated features: (1) a sector of civil society associations, (2) the values, norms, aspirations of a society, and (3) the provision of spheres for public discourse on issues and ideas.[105] The aspects of the first feature mean that the association is composed of non-profit, non-governmental associations like unions and churches; the second feature highlights the civil values and norms of those associations, such as tolerance, trust, cooperation, non-violence, and inclusion; the third feature focuses on communication processes and structures to discuss, debate, and analyze issues which operate across more than one country in order to build a social consensus and take appropriate action.[106]

There is a spectrum of transnational civil society development, and the more progressive organizations and communities initiate movements that promote the values and goals of tolerance, equity, nonviolence, and democratic participation.[107] According to this definition, the ULFTA clearly constitutes an example of a transnational civil society, promoting tolerance, equality, and increased democratic participation, while vehemently opposing war. The progressive Ukrainians of Winnipeg drew on national and international diversity and used technology to help facilitate a transnational discourse, in this case, with the publishing of labour newspapers and journals, including *Robitnytsia.*

Canadian labour history specialist, Joan Sangster, has worked with *Robitnytsia* to study gender and women's participation in the labour movement and progressive politics in the interwar period. She was

---

Srilatha Batliwala and L. David Brown, eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Kumarian Press, Inc., 2006), 2.

[105] Batliwala et al., 2.

[106] Batliwala and Brown, 2.

[107] Batliwala and Brown, 3.

struck by the appeal in the United States from Winnipeg, referring to its international readership as part of a "transatlantic diasporic left-cultural community".[108] Sangster states that letters to *Robitnytsia* sent from Europe, the United States, and as far away as Argentina, are indicative of a "diasporic left-cultural community" that maintained significant lines of communication, with thousands of letters and articles published from the United States every month.[109] This study similarly found evidence of transnationalism in the issues of *Robitnytsia* from 1928.

The following pages of analysis focus on the efforts of the ULFTA and one of its publications, *Robitnytsia*, to foster a transnational community. The journal assisted in this cultivation by identifying social issues and their implications held in common, mobilizing concerned citizens, attempting to balance power differences, and using information and expertise to exert direct influence on decision makers and policies.[110] Due to clearly defined common values and tactics, the progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg were able to engage in a sustained mobilization effort in multiple countries.

North American Transnationalisms

There is evidence that Winnipeg was the core of the progressive Ukrainian diaspora in North America. A member of the Women's Local of New York, New York, Rosa Luxemburg, considered *Robitnytsia* crucial to keeping the "flame of revolution alive for women".[111] Although the Comintern usually viewed the Canadian Party (CPC) as less influential than its American counterpart, for the Women's Section, Winnipeg, not New York, was the centre of the community's agitational efforts. Letters published in *Robitnytsia* from the Winnipeg readership demonstrate that the community in Winnipeg

[108] Joan Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate': Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930," *Labour/le Travail*, Vol. 56 (Fall, 2005), pp.51-89, 66.
[109] Sangster, 66.
[110] Batliwala and Brown, 3.
[111] Sangster, 66.

did not operate in a vacuum; they discussed the activity of American organizations and publications frequently. The following letters provide insight into the way readers and contributors to *Robitnytsia* viewed Winnipeg, and their relationships to other organizations and locations in Canada and the United States.

When the Ukrainian Daily News (UDN), a labour periodical published by progressive Ukrainians in the States, published a criticism of *Robitnytsia* by a "Comrade Yaroslava", the Winnipeg readership defended the relationships between the two publications and the values that bonded them as workers. One writer, Anna Moisiuk, stressed the danger of slander from women writers of the UDN erecting "a certain wall for workwomen between the United States and Canada", and stated her opinion,[112]

> "I feel that comrade Yaroslava does not comply with **class-solidarity positions** and in my reasoning forgets even on that call which can be seen on every worker newspaper (including this one and the UDN): 'Workers of the world, unite...' Both the 'UDN' and the 'Working Woman' serve the same interest."

Moisiuk goes on to say that *Robitnytsia* encourages workers in Canada to support the Ukrainian labour press in the United States, and also "in the old country".[113] Moisiuk challenges the readership of both journals to overlook national boundaries and highlights the need for funding the progressive Ukrainian press, preserving culture, and improving life for all workers above any sense of nationalism,

> "To us, workers and workwomen need mutual understanding to brace ourselves, then this support will be more close and more sincere, the effect will become our motion, and our ranks will stand more firmly. We do not dare to be Winnipeggers, nor American 'patriots', when the question is about attitude toward the working press and worker organizations. Such fragmentation is not conducive to harmonious labour both locally or in other countries [...]
>
> Though this attack was extremely staggering to us – trust us, comrades from 'Ukr. Daily News', we will overcome it and will heal this wound of class consciousness. First of all, comrade Yaroslava, note that for the branch misunderstanding we have another method of repair – the organizational path. And when it is already necessary to begin speaking in the press, for this

[112] Anna Moisiuk, "Indeed it Must Be Done", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March 1928, 181. Bold emphasis in original.
[113] Anna Moisiuk, "Indeed it Must Be Done", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182.

purpose there are quiet and amusing words, not groundless attacks which go out in harm, while we move onward, to the delight of our enemies.

With a deep sense of class solidarity, above burning physical pain, I am convinced that not only I but also thousands of readers of 'The Working Woman' will not forget the blow of comrade Yaroslava, which was without merit. Divorced from the class restraints of Yaroslava, we will re-read it, and will cry thunderously and, indeed, sincerely:

Long live 'The Working Woman'!
Let 'Ukrainian Daily News' live!
Long live the worker farmer presses of the entire world!"

Moisiuk's letter is a useful example of the diversity and challenges to worker organization in the interwar period, namely related to funding and delimiting the internationalism of the progressive Ukrainians in North America. Perceived competition threatened the UDN on one side of the border, but inspired cooperation on the other. The notion of dividing the diaspora based on a national boundary became a political issue and an opportunity to unite around values that are not geographically determined, nor specific to a certain organization.

Moisiuk's letter espousing the importance of a transnational view of progressive Ukrainian organizations in North America was followed by a letter by Anna Sydor, who politicized the attack from the UDN more sharply and called it "enemy worker press" of an "anti-labour spirit". Sydor also encourages the UDN to acknowledge the error of the accusations and correct them.[114] Sydor underlines the importance of looking beyond the national boundary between Canadian and American labour organizations:

"Is there not this propaganda of an idea, that the Ukrainian workwomen in the United States have 'their nest', but that the Ukrainian workwomen and farmers in Canada also have 'their nest' and that the first and the second must take care of 'their nests' just separately? [...] In my opinion to make cuts between the Ukrainian working women of the United States and Canada and question our attitude towards our labour newspapers and magazines – is unnecessary. It does not

[114] Anna Sydor, "The Question of Children", *Robitnytsia*, 15 March, 1928, 182.

> fail to separate. It is the wrong position for workwomen and workers and it must be condemned. To prevent such fragmentation in our ranks visitors must speak out to all comrades, in both Canada and the United States."

Moisiuk and Sydor's responses reflect the existence of a transnational network in North America amongst members of a particular epistemic community, one which historians have argued requires coherent nations and intergovernmental cooperation in order have a serious impact.[115] The impact of the actors involved in this discussion are atypical protagonists in early twentieth-century history: female readers of a political journal, not male political leaders; but these women are acting politically with the shared interest of social and economic reform from their respective locations with a unifying ideological outlook. Despite the historical focus on prominent male leaders within the ULFTA, the inclusion of female activism is a telling deviation, particularly from Canadian women in the 1920s, even more so the inclusion of Ukrainian-Canadian women in the 1920s. Looking deeper into these types of sources allows historians to hone in on the local level of discussion in Winnipeg about the larger socio-political community of organized labour in North America and beyond.

There is evidence of transborder/international concerns amongst the immigrant populations of North America outside of the Ukrainian left, around which progressive Ukrainians organized. A letter to *Robitnytsia* in September 1928 is a report on the anniversary of the deaths of Ferdinando Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two left-wing radicals from South Braintree, Massachusetts, convicted and executed for two murders during an armed robbery.[116] Both Sacco and Vanzetti opposed the First World War and were known to attend anarchist political meetings. Historian Lisa McGirr has made a case for the worldwide worker movement which mobilized to save Sacco and Vanzetti from execution as a

---

[115] Patricia Clavin, "Conceptualising Internationalism Between the World Wars", in Daniel Lacqua, ed. *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movement Between the World Wars* (London 2011), 5.

[116] M. Hotsuliak, "Anniversary of the Death of Sacco and Vanzetti," *Robitnytsia*, 1 September 1928, 574.

"short-lived but powerful sense of transnational worker solidarity", one which "crystallized in a unique moment of international collective mobilization."[117] The martyrdom of Sacco and Vanzetti and their experience as progressive Italian immigrants in the United States affected the readers of *Robitnytsia*. M. Hotsuliak of Winnipeg wrote a letter to *Robitnytsia*, a brief and reverential report that sheds light on the relationship the ULFTA had with the memory of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the meaning with which their deaths were imbued by progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg. The full text of Hotsuliak's letter reads,

> "On the anniversary of the death of our fallen fighters against capitalist power, Sacco and Vanzetti, a meeting took place on Wednesday evening on August 22. The meeting was at the Market Square. Unfortunately, a small number of workers and workwomen attended this meeting.
>
> The meeting began at 8 o'clock in the evening. The chairman, comrade Kolusnyk, opened the meeting and explained the meaning of this holiday. Further such conversations followed: comrade Yuven, young comrade Yuven, and comrade Elson. All speakers spoke with great passion. Those present listened as though they saw these great martyrs before their eyes, who perished innocently. All stood with lowered heads, and some felt the severe suffering and humiliation of Sacco and Vanzetti, and unfortunately could not hold it in their hearts, and hot tears fell down their faces.
>
> In a sign of deepest respect for those great worker martyrs, we condemn that we will fight for the cause for which they gave their lives."

This commemoration of Sacco and Vanzetti's deaths is a specific vernacular expression of public memory, a discourse in a transnational labour community relating these events to its own history.[118] In a transnational context, these public memories have the power to shape and reshape each other, dependent on fluctuations in the nation and on the local level.

Aside from supporting the endeavours and publications of labour organizations in the United States, and sharing in public memorial discourses, the progressive Ukrainian community in Winnipeg also

---

[117] See Lisa McGirr, "The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti: A Global History," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 93, No.4 (Mar., 2007), pp. 1085-1115, 1085.

[118] Stephanie E. Yuhl, "Sculpted Radicals: The Problem of Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston's Public Memory," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 9-30.

supported American labour causes intellectually and financially. In a letter from September of 1928, M. Hotsuliak made a small mention of fundraising efforts that went out to support a labour dispute across the border.[119] Hotsuliak reported,

> "Work in the Women's Section goes pretty well. [...] In the month of July, our comrades collected $52.55 to support the miner strike in the United States. It is much needed and they deserve sincere thanks. Our work is proof that our comrades do not sleep, but try to fulfill their organizational work."

It is clear that the author, M. Hotsuliak, does not consider the miners in the United States to be distinct or separate from those on the Canadian side of the border. The transnational nature of the labour movement in the 1920s challenged progressive Ukrainians to refrain from viewing the "nation" as static, or something to be "moved through or passed over".[120] *Robitnytsia* provides evidence of protagonists actively working to shape Canada as a nation, shaping it in real-time, while perpetually in the process of being defined and redefined themselves by social, economic, and environmental factors in Canada and abroad.

Leftist Transnationalisms

Transnational empathy and cooperation with individuals and organizations working toward the same goals in the labour movement was not limited to North America. A fusion of Ukrainian culture and Soviet-leftist culture were woven into the daily lives of the progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg, and many traditions were borrowed from practices made common in the Soviet Union, but exercised by leftist organizations all over the world. There are three letters that discuss such transnational leftist cultural traits: the use of the colour red to decorate rooms at meetings and concerts; linguistic metaphors specific to the Russian revolutionary struggle; and engagement with leftist literature and

[119] M. Hotsuliak, "Something About Our Work", *Robitnytsia*, 1 September, 1928, 574.

[120] Terminology from Clavin in Lacqua, 2. Patricia Clavin has astutely classified the task of historians of the interwar period as observing transnationalism as a force that takes life inside nation-states as a phenomenon, not standing in opposition to nations. The nation-state is an essential element in the shaping of a transnational phenomenon.

theatre. Each of these links are briefly outlined below and provide further context to the transnational influences visible in the hall of progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg.

International leftist culture is visible in a letter by M. Hotsuliak, a writer of the majority of the letters, describing the celebration of International Women's Day, which she attended at the ULFTA hall. The stage was “enrobed with red flowers” and contained a banner which read 'Let the International Day of Women Workers live on March 8!'. The Junior Mandolin Orchestra played, and then sang ' The Red Flag', the socialist anthem of the British Labour Party.[121] A speaker at the event, “Comrade Sydor", provided an abstract on the importance of International Women's Day, “a holiday which arose in a time of revolt, and should therefore be celebrated by all working women.”[122]

Political scientists have analyzed the meaning of nonverbal symbols in Soviet culture, like the colour of the red flowers noted by Hotsuliak in the above letter. Such symbolism has been observed and noted much less frequently than the text of literature, press, and correspondence; however, visual communication such as colours and symbols were of great importance for progressive Eastern Europeans and Canadians due to high and perpetual levels of illiteracy within the movement.[123]

A letter submitted by an anonymous reader referred to an exploitative employer as 'Tsar Nicholas'. The analogy is somewhat obvious and quite sloppy, but appears effective:[124]

> “Reading the Ukrainian workers' press, was I, when seen by my Lady and she said:
> - Why do you read the workers' press? - Because I am a worker. - I will not advise you to read

[121] For lyrics see the Modern History Sourcebook of Fordham University, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/redflag.asp last accessed March 3, 2016.

[122] M. Hotsuliak, “Celebration of the International Day of Women Workers,” *Robitnytsia*, 1 April 1928, 218. Comrade Sydor is presumably Anna Sydor, whose writing is in various other letters in 1928.

[123] Carol Barner-Barry and Cynthia Hody, “Soviet Marxism-Leninism as Mythology,” *Political Pscyhology*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Dec., 1994), pp. 609-630.

[124] Anonymous, “Wanted Me to Not Read the Workers' Press,” *Robitnytsia*, 1 October 1928, 639.

it. This is a naughty magazine for you...
- You will presumably forgive me – I said – because for me it's just a good magazine and filled very well. I consider it my duty to read it because it teaches me how to behave presently.

She looked at me angrily:
- I absolutely forbid you read this magazine in my house!
- And wherever shall I read it – a neighbours'? I work for you and have my corner here, you have no right to prohibit me from reading what I like.
She paused a little, and then:
- I do not like the labour press because it spreads propaganda.
- I ask, which one?
- You read it, so you know full well.
And she told me that she has an acquaintance in New York that is related to the former Russian Tsar Nicholas and she told her about the events during the revolution."

The conversation related by the letter-writer positions her employer in Winnipeg alongside the inspiration for the Russian revolutions which led to the collapse of the Russian Empire – tsarism, and the last tsar, Nicholoas II. While not all of the readers of *Robitnytsia* may have related to their class consciousness in the same way that they related to rhetoric and discourses about "the Tsar", it is reasonable to imagine that this anecdote painted a picture of class consciousness in the everyday lives of working women in Winnipeg. Comparing your "lady"[125] at work to Tsar Nicholas II establishes a critique of exploitation and social inequality.

In the final issue of 1928, a letter by Sophia Cheredaryk was published relating to her experience viewing the ULFTA's theatre production of Irchan's drama 'The Twelve'.[126] The play's relationship to Ukraine and to the Ukrainian national struggle and class struggle is communicated by Cheredaryk. Her letter provides a transnational infusion of Ukrainian exploitation to the readership of *Robitnytsia* in Winnipeg. Cheredaryk wrote about the play and its implications at length, describing the Ukrainian experience of imperialism and the Polish noble class which profited from Ukraine's occupation:

[125] "Lady" is a literal translation, a term denoting nobility, as with "Lord", but it means the worker's employer, who is female. The term is residual but culturally significant due to the rule of Polish nobility in Ukraine in the nineteenth-century, as a domestic worker or farmhand, the "lady" of the house was the employer's wife or daughter.
[126] Sophia Cheredaryk, "Something About the Drama '12'," *Robitnytsia*, 15 December 1928, 731-2.

> "To see the drama of M. Irchan's 'Twelve' on the stage and forget even the most shallow part of it – it is impossible. Whole days and nights it torments me after the performance, it compels me to think of the heavy fighting the working class Ukrainian masses face from the Polish noble through its captivity of Western Ukraine and clearly puts before our eyes all those reasons, which took the fight to tragedy, even though it is temporary."

Additionally, Cheredaryk connects the viewing the play in Winnipeg to the larger international efforts of labour organizations when she writes,

> "I, comrades, am an emigrant, not yet six months in Canada. Today in my life I saw the best and worst presentation, because in our country this is not new. To mention amateur performances in villages and cities, I was in a position often to see performances of the Ukrainian travelling theatres. I love and terribly value the theatre, and experience every performance deeply. But no drama ever made such an incredible impression on me as 'Twelve' which I saw on Saturday, November 10 onstage at the Ukrainian Workers' House in Winnipeg. But not only was I so touched. It seemed the whole hall jam-packed full of workers and workwomen experienced the tragedy I experienced, the immortal worker-peasant twelve. Even those who spoke had seen this drama for the seventh or eighth time.
>
> [...] But this is only a fantasy, though I am convinced that this drama in the near time will play on the worker-peasant scenes, free in Western Ukraine. [...] I love and hate and seek vengeance to light a fire, a fighting for the liberation of the working masses."

As Cheredaryk shows in her submission at the end of 1928, she had been in Canada for six months when she became a part of the movement, and connected her experience as a worker in Canada not only to the plight of her home country, but to that of her new country. The ULFTA represents the experience of Ukrainian-language speaking immigrants radicalized by their experiences of imperialism and war in Eastern Europe, and then by the socio-economic reality of life in Canada as part of the labour force. For context, on June 4 of 1940 when the Canadian government criminalized the ULFTA, thereby vastly restricting its activities, the ULFTA had 15,000 members, 87 Ukrainian Labour Temples across Canada, and over 20,000 periodical subscribers.[127]

Conclusions on Transnationalism

[127] Hinther, "Raised in the Spirit of Class Struggle", 50.

Divisions of the ULFTA, including the Women's Section and *Robitnytsia,* show a transnational appreciation of different concepts and practices, offering a plethora of rich connections that were meaningful on a local level. With the “class against class” mentality of the Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union as a transnational context, the mutli-ethnic and multinational Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg was able to redefine and navigate its radicalism. While there is no direct discussion of the Cultural Revolution in the issues of *Robitnytsia* from 1928, there is ample material for examining transnational discourses and experiences of progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg.

CHAPTER 3

Transnational Imagery: *Robitnytsia* Covers and the Importance of Winnipeg, 1928

As evidenced by the previous chapters, the ULFTA was very much a transnational organization and, as shown by the international, social, cultural, and educational concerns of the *Robitnytsia* readership, the work of the Women's Section was no different. Due to the blatant rejection of the leading hypothesis of this work, that there may have been a transnational social or political connection to the Soviet Union reflected by the 1928 letters section, the decision was made to interrogate the imagery of the 1928 covers in order to gain further insight into the transnational connection that exists formally and to consider whether any such connections observed, or otherwise inferred, could be useful to historians or social scientists seeking to understand the Ukrainian Canadian Left in the interwar period.

The markedly Soviet character of the 1928 *Robitnytsia* covers stands in stark contrast to the local, Winnipeg-based content reported and discussed by the readership in the letters section. Out of the twenty-one covers studied, twelve are distinctly Soviet, with captions that reflect an interest in or admiration of Soviet culture and values; four relate more closely to organized labour on local and international levels; and four feature images of children, sometimes with women and sometimes not, without a nation or region specified. This chapter provides an analysis of the covers based on these three categories observed: Soviet, Labour and Gender, and Children; and provides context on the images and their potential meaning to the Winnipeg readership of *Robitnytsia*, based on secondary source work.

Soviet and Ukrainian Imagery in *Robitnytsia*

The twelve covers relating to Soviet Ukraine depict images of an idealized woman-worker lifestyle in

which the social services necessary for workers are in place, and thriving. In this first issue of 1928 (Figure 6) Lenin is depicted as a moral leader, whose principles are enshrined in the national consciousness of Ukrainians in Canada.[128] The cover features a sketch of Lenin as a giant, wearing a suit, governing a thriving industrial city. Lenin is depicted surrounded by people, at the height of his ankles, and his facial expression appears calm and stoic, staring straight ahead. Lenin's right hand is held up toward the sky, as if he is addressing or condoning what surrounds him, and he is clutching his left lapel with his left hand. The Ukrainian text beneath the illustration, in English, means "Lenin died, but his will is carried out".[129]

It is reasonable to assume that Lenin was a popular figure amongst the *Robitnytsia* readership, given that his image features prominently in issues from other years, and that the caption in Volume 2 from 1928 explicitly says that although Lenin is no longer alive, his principles are in action, his "will" is carried out the way that he intended, and that that is a valuable thing.

The cover of the following issue, Volume 3 (Figure 7), highlights the importance of emulating the Soviet Union's dedication to higher education, particularly for women.[130] A photograph of a classroom setting shows three women sitting at a table or desk, one wearing modern clothes of the day, common to North America; one wearing traditional Ukrainian folk clothing; and one wearing a combination of the two. One woman holds a pen and listens intently, another's gaze is down while she writes studiously. A translation of the caption below the photograph reads, "Working women are a trumpet of the Soviet Union at a higher educational course."[131]

[128] 15 January, 1928, Vo. 2. *Robitnystia*, cover.
[129] Original Ukrainian: Лєнін умер, але його заповіти здійснюються.
[130] [130] 1 February, 1928, Vo. 3. *Robitnystia*, cover.
[131] Original Ukrainian: Жінки-робітниці ріжки народів радянського союзу на вищому освітньому курсі.

The noted focus on the importance of the Soviet model as one to follow provides evidence of a trans-Atlantic link between the Ukrainian Left in Winnipeg and the Soviet Union, but with images like this photograph it is difficult to distill those values into a grassroots or structural position that is meaningful. There is an assumption that the Soviet Union is doing something worth emulating, that it is ahead of the curve on a similar project, but not much more. Regardless of the accessibility of higher education to women living in the Soviet Union at the time, higher education courses were a mainstay of the ULFTA in Winnipeg and were popular with both men and women, along with reading clubs and political activist causes.[132]

The cover of Volume 4 (Figure 8) has an ethno-Ukrainian focus in its portrayal a photograph of a woman in traditional Ukrainian clothing, in profile, with a fence and trees in the background. The woman's gaze is forward and down and she appears solemn and long-suffering. In both hands the woman is clutching what appears to be a swaddled infant or a bundle wrapped with cloth.[133] The caption below the image reads, "Peasant woman from Subcarpathian Ukraine".[134]

This ethnically focused Ukrainian image, coupled with the rural scene, is a shift from the more traditional covers of *Robitnytsia* which feature images of urban workers. The term "workers" largely referred to the urban labour force working in factories - heavy and light industry - as well as the civil service, transportation, and food production, such as canning. "Peasant workers" are referred to throughout the journal; typically referring to farmers or general labourers on farms. Categories of workers, "urban" and "peasant" both, were considered integral to the economic planning of the Soviet Union, beginning with the collectivization of farmland; however, the unattainable grain quotas, and

[132] See Krawchuk, *Our History […]*
[133] 15 February, 1928, Vol. 4, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[134] Original Ukrainian: Жінки-селянка з підкарпатськоі україни.

resulting widespread famine, was a definitive and traumatic cultural experience of the Peasant Worker demographic, rather than equal access to resources and increased opportunities for education and other work. Instead, resources were gathered and transported from rural farms to urban centres to fuel the industrialization effort, which never really got off the ground.

Ukrainian farmers were a targeted group by the Soviet Union, one that were called *kulaks*, which denoted a successful farmer, in essence, who owned enough land to make a living, beyond subsistence. Collectivization was particularly offensive to this group, as farming operations were built and maintained by families and created capital that was invested in the next generation. *Kulaks* were classified as class enemies and enemies of Bolshevism due to their perceived prioritization of personal profit over general social well-being.[135]

Whether the image of a Ukrainian peasant woman is meant to instil strength or inspire hope for the diaspora in Winnipeg is highly speculative. The image would resonate with Ukrainians in Canada who arrived in one of the earlier waves of immigration, particularly the agriculturalist class emigrations from 1891-1914 who experienced village life in Ukraine either personally or by proxy through their parents or family members who remembered it better. The image appears as a reminder of what life was like for Ukrainians before collectivization, which was not prosperous, nor comfortable, for many who emigrated to Canada. In this sense the Volume 4 cover can be interpreted as a hopeful image tying two experiences and chronological times together - the peasant village past of being hungry and cold, disconnected, and in need of a new home overseas, and the future, the newly collectivized and urbanized workforce of the Soviet Union moving towards industrialization and socialism.

[135] See Subtelny for details on the *kulak* class and differentiations between peasant-farmer classes and associations with bourgeois culture, 409.

The Volume 6 cover shows a famous, photorealistic portrait of Ukrainian poet and artist Taras Shevchenko. Shevchenko is shown with his chin down and gaze upward, with an arresting and serious expression.[136] Shevchenko is perhaps the most well known Ukrainian poet and this image is a famous one. This same image of Shevchenko is used prominently by the Ukrainian Right in Winnipeg as well, due to Ukrainian nationalism and the importance of language in cultural preservation.[137] Shevchenko's image is a transnational one, though not distinctly Soviet. The caption below the image mentions the 67th anniversary since Shevchenko's death, and there is a feature inside the issue related to his work.

The cover of Volume 10 (Figure 9) features another Ukrainian poet and activist, Ivan Franko.[138] The caption relays that it is the 12th anniversary of Franko's death, and the issue features a biography of Franko in an article. Franko was a Ukrainian nationalist and social activist who founded both movements in western Ukraine, produced radical poetry, and translated great works of literature into Ukrainian language.[139] Shevchenko and Franko are extremely well-known Ukrainian literary figures, but cannot be divorced from their political influence on modern Ukrainian thought, particularly with regard to the importance of preserving Ukrainian language and maintaining Ukraine as a sovereign nation state. It is fascinating to see the Ukrainian Left and Right in Winnipeg use the same heroes, the same artists and their work, the same actions and works with different meanings; integral figures that are a piece of two distinctly different futures envisaged for the people of Ukraine.

Familiarizing Ukrainians in Winnipeg with Ukrainian artists, authors, and scientists helped build a sense of cultural solidarity amongst the readership of *Robitnytsia* and, to no small extent, fostered a

[136] 15 March, 1928, Vol. 6, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[137] See the Shevchenko Foundation of Winnipeg website: http://www.shevchenkofoundation.com Last accessed December 12, 2013.
[138] 15 March, 1928, Vol. 10, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[139] See Subtelny, 232-35.

sense of Ukrainian cultural pride. In 1921 Soviet Ukraine had an experience, along with other Soviet republics, of a "nativization" policy called *korenizatsiya.*[140] The implementation of this policy in Soviet Ukraine was referred to as "Ukrainization", and was somewhat of an indiginization policy that related most importantly to preserving Ukrainian language and cultural practices that were distinct from Russian traditions and language, under the proletariat-based, pan-Slavic banner of the Soviet Union. *Korenizatsiya* was intended to heighten morale and to create a sense of pride in the Soviet Union, particularly in Ukraine where there had been great Russification efforts in the past.[141] This policy is visible in the cover featuring celebrated linguist, political activist, and writer, Taras Shevchenko, in Volume 6 (Figure 10) .[142]

Celebrating writers like Shevchenko and Franko provided an outlet for Ukrainians to engage in indigenous language, as well as the opportunity to celebrate a distinctly Ukrainian experience that was separate from the Russian historical narrative. The featuring of Ukrainian writers on the covers of *Robitnytsia* could have reinforced the concept that Ukrainians are not Russian, and the fact that the journal was published in Ukrainian, not Russian or English, attests to the importance of Ukrainization amongst the diaspora in Winnipeg, and contests the commonly held view that the progressive Ukrainian community was an affront to Ukrainian culture, that they were Communists and Stalin sympathizers that cared more for Russian working class values than their own language, folk, and culture.[143]

One Russian writer is featured on the covers of *Robitnytsia* in 1928, Lev Tolstoy in Volume 20 (Figure

[140] In original Russian: коренизація. The term translates quite literally to "put down roots", in other words "indiginization".
[141] *Korenizatsiya* began in 1921 and didn't really end in a meaningful way until the early 1930s, but the policy was practiced in many different ways throughout that time. By the early 1930s greater Russification efforts took hold and the Ukrainian language was severely threatened.
[142] 15 March, 1928, Vol. 6, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[143] Subtelny, 235.

10).[144] The cover shows a photorealistic drawing of the Russian author, Tolstoy, who appears unruly and elderly, with a wild, white beard and hair, staring defiantly downward. In Tolstoy's portrait the background is black and his eyes gleam. The text below the image reads, "Lev Mykolayovych Tolstoy (Regarding the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth)".[145]

The cover of Volume 8 (Figure 12) features a photo of the Russian and Soviet scientist and inventor Léon Theremin, in Ukrainian and Russian his name is Lev Sergiyevych Teremin.[146] The cover features photo of Theremin behind a piece of equipment, likely the theremin, one of the first electronic musical instruments ever made. Theremin is featured staring straight ahead, the caption below his photo reads, "Prof. Leo Sergiyevych Teremin (See article in this issue: "New scientific learning")."[147] Theremin was on tour in the United States in 1928, and played his theremin with the New York Philharmonic.[148]

"New scientific learning", as cited on the cover beneath Theremin's photograph, was an important feature in the journal itself. There is a Science section in *Robitnytsia* which features something different in each issue; from the functioning of the human eye, to evolution theory. In the Letters section, it is clear that ignorance was viewed as a choice, at least by the leadership of the magazine. Scientists and doctors appeared to be held in extremely high esteem for their contribution to furthering humankind's understanding of the workings of the world, from biology to chemistry and physics for lay people.

Compared with the previous issue of *Robitnytsia* which featured Shevchenko, a dead Ukrainian poet, and Theremin, a living Russian inventor, suggests a value in preserving the Ukrainian past while moving forward towards a more enlightened version of society, one which valued science and

[144] 15 October, 1928, Vol. 20, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[145] 15 October, 1928, Vol. 20, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[146] In Russian: Лéв Сергéевич Термéн; in Ukrainian: Лев Сергієвич Теремін.
[147] 15 April, 1928, Vol. 8, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[148]Albert Glinsky, *Ether Music and Espionage* (Chicago, 2000), 346.

socialism more than the arts and nationalism, with no small degree of nostalgia for Ukrainian language and culture.

In Volumes 11, 16, 21, and 22 (Figures 13,14, 15, and 16) there are cover images featuring women and girls at home, at work, and at rest which link the Soviet Union and Ukraine to a Winnipeg audience. Volumes 11 and 21 (Figure 13 and 15) feature images of women in the Soviet Union - both at work. One volume features a Komsomol worker in the Soviet Union and one features a woman in a Kyiv factory.[149] The first reads, "Komsomol member-workingwoman in Soviet Ukraine", and a photograph of a woman wearing a headscarf, her gaze bravely meeting the viewer. It appears as though the subject of the photo is in a factory, the collar of her shirt is visible, and she meets the gaze of the viewer with a calm and confident look.[150] The second transnational related image shows a Ukrainian woman working in a factory in Kyiv.[151]

The woman working in Kyiv on the cover of Volume 21 (Figure 15) appears older and somewhat haggard, as she stands and works at her station in a factory. The woman appears to be concentrating, eyes cast downward; she is wearing a heavy coat and a kerchief on her head, and there is a coffee cup to her left. The inclusion of photos of women working, one young and one old, paint a picture of real-life experience which shows the daily routine of women working in the Soviet Union and perhaps was intended to link the experiences of the Ukrainian diaspora together.

Two issues from 1928 feature women enjoying recreational activities - one a sports' competition, one sailing. The sports' competition cover features a woman standing on a balance beam, encircled by

[149] 1 June ,1928, Vol. 11, *Robitnytsia*, cover; and 1 November, 1928, Vol. 21, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[150] 1 June ,1928, Vol. 11, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[151] 1 November, 1928, Vol. 21, *Robitnytsia*, cover.

fellow athletes and spectators.[152] The caption reads, "A sport competition of working women in Soviet Ukraine."[153] The cover of Volume 22 (Figure 16) features a photo of a young woman smiling; she is wearing a cap and a collared shirt.[154] The caption below the photograph identifies the subject as a "girl-sailor" of the Soviet Union.[155]

These covers showcase working-class women completing physical tasks and being involved in recreational endeavours counteracts the image, indeed the reality, of life in Soviet Union in the 1920s - of being overworked and undernourished, without access to vital services such as healthcare, education, and even a reliable means of communications with the outside world *via* the postal service. Images of recreational and otherwise extracurricular endeavours also present a more well-rounded view of life as an organized worker, with access to recreational and athletic programs outside of work and the potential for a higher quality of life that was not only concerned with survival and wage work.

In the covers of *Robitnytsia* from 1928 there were not many references to art or culture in Soviet Ukraine, save one image from the Ukrainian film "Pearl of Babylon" (Figure 17) .[156] The cover displays a photo of a man wearing an open shirt, bursting forth from behind a curtain, staring intently forward, with text below which reads, "Picture of the new Ukrainian film "Pearl of Babylon".[157]

Myroslav Irchan, the editor of *Robitnytsia i*n 1928, was a playwright and Ukrainian artist in his own right, it is interesting to see that the majority of the images featured on the covers of *Robitnytsia* related to labour and organizational activities, not to arts and culture. In Winnipeg the arts flourished at the

[152] 15 August, 1928, Vol. 16, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[153] Original Ukrainian: Спортові змагання робітниць на радянській україні.
[154] 1 June, 1928, Vol. 22, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[155] Original Ukrainian: Дівчина-матрос в радянському союзі.
[156] 1 December, 1928, Vol. 23, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[157] Original Ukrainian: Картина з нової української фільми Перли семіраміди.

ULFTA hall, with orchestras, dance groups, choirs, and theatre groups practicing and performing Ukrainian pieces year round; perhaps it was the more organizational activities that merited the attention of the cover photo, since participation lacked in Women's Section meetings and the same contributors wrote-in to the Letters section over and over again.

It can be said with certainty that in 1928 transnational images of life in the Soviet Union dominated the covers of *Robitnytsia*, speaking to a desire to connect the diaspora population with a common culture. Imagery related to labour organization and children follows in the rest of this chapter, but neither category features so prominently as images of the Soviet Union and Soviet Ukraine. This deviation implies that imagery was used as unifying, transnational force, but that it did not resonate, or translate necessarily, to the content generated and engaged with by the readership.

Organization & Labour on the Covers of *Robitnytsia*

There are four covers that relate to organization and labour from *Robitnytsia* issues in 1928. None of the four issues are geographically specific, but all four feature labour-related images relevant to the Ukrainian Left in Winnipeg or the Soviet Union. The four covers are displayed and examined for the purpose of better understanding the culture of labour and organization that was fostered. The visual cue linking each of these four covers is their focus on human subjects who, for the intents and purposes of this work, appear to typify the everyday experiences of everyday people. These images are not dead Ukrainian poets or Russian scientists; and with the exception of one issue, number 17, the covers appear to focus on the anonymous faces of labour - people without names who are representing the community to itself.

Volume 5 (Figure 18) features a photograph of two women in warm winter clothing intently working on

a poster to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8th.[158] The sign is written in Ukrainian, not English, so it is likely that the poster is for a Hall of a predominantly diaspora population, not for a protest or larger, more general purpose. If the photograph is not from Winnipeg or North America, the sign would likely be in Russian, but that is highly speculative. Celebrating International Women's Day was considered extremely important in the Soviet Union, and the rhetoric surrounding gender equality, from Lenin's speeches and writing, was leagues ahead of cultural climates in both Western and Eastern Europe, Canada, and the United States in terms of views on gender equality and the importance of socializing "women's work."[159]

International Women's Day is an important celebration to note in the interwar period, since *Robitnytsia* had housed an intense debate regarding women's right to organize and their place in the labour movement, period.[160] The hierarchical nesting doll of oppressions for immigrant, racialized, working-class women meant that the subjugation of women was ghettoized in the working-class rhetoric regarding oppression, and class, then ethnicity, then gender oppression, were considered worthy of protesting. Many suspected that the debate within the Ukrainian Left regarding women's right to have a labour organization, the Women's Section of the ULFTA, and its organ, *Robitnytsia*, was written by the editor, Myroslav Irchan, or another male author, intended to ignite a new passion for the journal and to increase female participation.[161]

Volume 9 (Figure 19) presents a strong Soviet image, an illustration of a smiling, muscular-looking woman in a headscarf holding a flag with text on it; there are many flags in the background, all

[158] 1 March, 1928, Vol. 5, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[159]Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Reminiscences,* 1900-1922, (Moscow, 1963), pp. 221-223.
[160] See Joan Sangster, "The Communist Party and the Woman Question, 1922-1929", *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 15 (Spring 1985), pp. 24-56.
[161] See Joan Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism' Debate: Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930," *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 51-89.

coloured red like the colour of the print, with a caption in the bottom right corner.[162] The text box in the corner reads, “Let May 1 live as a working holiday!” with a bright sun in the background.[163] Organizing to rally against changes to working conditions and labour legislation was an important way in which the Ukrainian Left influenced Winnipeg’s working class culture in the interwar period.

By maintaining statutory holidays for workers, awareness and a sense of entitlement to days off needed to be fostered. The paternal notion that an employer was doing a worker a favour by keeping them employed, and in many cases exploiting their labour, was a difficult battle to fight amongst the Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg, who were desperate for jobs and generally very hardworking due to the exploitation and poverty they had faced in their home country.

Literacy was believed to be the cornerstone of socialism and organization for Lenin, who wrote that the conditions for socialism could not be realized until the working class had the tools to enlighten themselves - literacy being that gateway tool. In Winnipeg, supporting the labour press with subscriptions and letters was highly encouraged, and an issue from 1928 promotes the reading of wall newspapers - copies of the labour journals that were posted at the Hall.[164] The text below the photograph of a woman and a man smiling and pointing while reading something on the wall states, “They read our wall newspapers.”[165]

Supporting the ULFTA through membership involved not only attending events and maintaining a level of political activism, but participating in any other avenue possible - reading clubs, volunteer programming with youth, contributing to labour journals, joining clubs, and attending meetings. Paying

[162] 1 May, 1928, Vol. 9, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[163] Original Ukrainian: Хай жибе 1 Травня піжгародне свято працюючих!
[164] 1 July, 1928, Vol. 13, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[165] Original Ukrainian: Читають свою стінну ґазету.

subscription fees to *Robitnytsia* was appreciated, but not enough, this cover seems to say. The photo and caption on Volume 13 (Figure 20) imply that one should be familiar with all of the journals of the labour press and thereby take full advantage of the resources produced and maintained by the ULFTA.

Two covers related to labour and organization present rather negative and hopeless images - Volume 15 (Figure 21) is a photograph of two despondent looking men sitting on a bench, with large, upper case text beneath it reading, "UNEMPLOYMENT" (more literally translates to "without work").[166] The caption below the photograph says, "Unemployed (read the article in this issue: "the machine and the unemployment rate"!).[167]

The second cover related to labour organization more generally features a photograph of two immigrant labour martyrs of the eighteenth-century international labour movement, Sakko and Vanzetti (Figure 22) .[168] The text surrounding the photograph of Sakko and Vanzetti refers to their deaths and states in large, bold lettering at the bottom, "We will not forget you!".[169] In a way, the execution of Sakko and Vanzetti in the United States speaks to the radicalization of the everyman in the working class immigrant Left.

While the experience of Sakko and Vanzetti was not typical, their crime, trial, and execution provided a lightning rod of sorts around which the international labour community could rally. The covers of Volumes 15 (Figure 22) and 17 (Figure 23) project more negative images, but they are important ones. Unemployment and a fundamental lack of government support and social services meant that the

[166] 1 August, 1928, Vol. 15, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[167] Original Ukrainian: Безробітні (читай в цьому числі статтю: "Машина і безробіття"!)
[168] 1 September, 1928, Vol. 17, *Robitnytsia*, cover. "Sakko" is a Ukrainian-to-English transliteration. Italian-to-Enlgish would transliterate as "Sacco", and that is how the name would have been published in English in Canada and the United States.
[169] Original Ukrainian: НЕ ЗА БУДЕМО ВАС!

continued racialization of immigrant workers in North America as criminal, alien, and otherwise animal, would continue, and organizing labour and providing cooperative services for workers was a key role of the ULFTA. With pension plans, food banks, and unemployment assistance, the ULFTA filled a notable gap in social services in Winnipeg, one which was sorely needed. The thread of social services and gender continues in the analysis of children on the covers of *Robitnytsia*.

Images of Children on the Covers of *Robitnytsia*

Four out of twenty-one *Robitnytsia* covers studied feature images of children. Two of these covers feature children in public, with other children, participating in activities, and two express the emotions of anguish and fear that the covers featuring adults don't portray in any other instances observed. Interestingly, the images of adults are predominantly strong and happy, the deceased leaders and martyrs stoic and serious, but images of children are used exclusively to create an emotional response that is not optimistic, nor do they appear steadfast in the face of hardship. Images of children appear outside of public institutions as points of interest to ponder, vessels of experience that can be protected and shaped to a desired outcome. The two public images of children at play feature a group of children singing around a piano, and another with two children looking at a paper with writing on it in a Kindergarten.[170]

The Volume 12 (Figure 24) cover is a photograph of a woman playing the piano for a group of school-aged children who are singing.[171] The text below the photograph provides lyrics to the song the group is singing, "The sun of truth and freedom will begin to shine and stoke our fires!"[172] The Volume 14

[170] 15 June, 1928, Vol. 12, *Robitnytsia*, cover; and 15 July, 1928, Vol. 14, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[171] 15 June, 1928, Vol. 12, *Robnitnytsia*, cover.
[172] Original Ukrainian: Нам сонце правди і свободи засяє тичсяччю огнів!

(Figure 25) cover shows two children examining a newspaper, a girl and a boy.[173] The little girl appears slightly older and is at the forefront of the photo with a finger on the print, looking down, the little boy is beside her, looking over her shoulder, presumably listening to her read. The caption below the photograph reads, “Children at kindergarten, while mother is at work.”[174] These images of children paint a picture of a thriving atmosphere in which children are included and looked after in a context that appears be both secular, and which does not lament the lack of a mother-parent figure at home.

The covers with more private images of children, as seen on the following page, appear as evidence of political expression. Children are the link between work and home life that carry culture, both ethno-cultural and familial, and upon which many efforts regarding insurance, health care, and the health of mothers are focused, historically, in the maternalist perspective.

The cover of Volume 18 (Figure 26) features a photo of a young woman and a little girl, presumably a mother and daughter.[175] The little girl appears distressed and is holding the woman's shoulder while looking down. The woman appears stoic and unmoved. The caption below the photo reads, “Comfort in a difficult time of sorrow.”[176] Interestingly, only the child’s face reflects any such emotion. Presumably the image of a mother as a comfort is meant to balance images of children without their mothers - such as in the kindergarten photograph cover, or maybe the choice is not a conscious one on the part of the editor at all.

The cover of Volume 24 (Figure 27), the last of the 1928 issues, depicts a drawing of a woman and a

[173] 15 July, 1928, Vol. 14, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[174] Original Ukrainian: Діти в садку, а мати тимчасом на роботі.
[175] 15 September, 1928, Vol. 18, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[176] Original Ukrainian: Розрада в тяжкій годині смутку.

child sitting against a brick wall with bars on the windows.[177] The woman is wearing a traditional Ukrainian blouse and skirt and has a parcel at her side, and the child is clasping its hands and appears to be sleeping. Both subjects in the drawing are barefoot, and it appears as though they are waiting. The writing beneath the drawing says, "Under the prison walls".[178] These two covers starkly contrast between two worlds, one urban and polished, the other rural and barefoot. Volume 18 shows a relatively affluent mother and child, while Volume 24 harkens back to Ukrainian exploitation and imprisonment of foreign rulers.

As in the letters submitted from Winnipeg readers in 1928, the covers which feature children seem to say, "If not for yourself, for your children". The letters beseechingly stated this, and communicated that while some women could take care of themselves in the workplace, other, younger woman were ripe for exploitation. Depicting children in both peaceful and tumultuous times in these covers, balances the need for hard work to maintain peace, to leave behind that rural imprisonment, the hardships of the homeland.

Conclusion on the Covers of *Robitnytsia*

The very first cover of *Robitnytsia* in 1928 did not fit into a category above, necessarily, but is an all-encompassing image; universally encouraging of literacy, labour organization, and the maintenance of Ukrainian language. The cover features a young, attractive woman, eyes downcast, book in hand, reading.[179] The caption below the photo reads, "A happy new year to begin educational work!"[180] The image is positive, progressive, and its own way, quietly up-lifting.

[177] 15 December, 1928, Vol. 24, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[178] Original Ukrainian: Під тюремними мурами.
[179] 1 January, 1928, Vol. 1, *Robitnytsia*, cover.
[180] Original Ukrainian: З новим роком до завятої освітньої праці!

While there is speculative visible evidence of transnational working class culture that is specific to the Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg, as evidenced by the 12/24 issues depicting Soviet imagery, the work of the ULFTA and the reasons for its existence in Winnipeg do not appear to be overshadowed. Literacy and education, labour organization and legislation, and a balance between the importance of work and the importance of family and leisure loom large in the imagery of these covers as a contrived body of work.

Whether the *Robitnytsia* covers were related to each other or chosen to appear in a specific order or not, they communicate an idea of culture that crosses national boundaries and encourage working class North Americans reading the journal to participate in their organizations through a series of inspiring and thought-provoking images. In the end, the imagery on these covers were not indicative of a larger transnational link, as the examination of the Letters section in this work shows, but the covers themselves are worth considering for further analysis. There are long stories written in Ukrainian language which accompany the covers, but were not translated for the purposes of this work. Understanding the aspirations and fears of the Ukrainian Left helps to better contextualize their reactions to the Ukrainian Right in Winnipeg, and to the Canadian government in later years when the ULFTA was criminalized by the RCMP.[181]

[181] See Donald Avery, 'Divided Loyalties: The Ukrainian Left and the Canadian State,' in Lubomyr Luciuk and Stella Hryniuk, eds. *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity* (Toronto, 1991).

CONCLUSIONS

On Local Interests

The letters from 1928 show that Winnipeg's progressive Ukrainian working women had three main interests in their participation with the ULFTA Women's Section: supporting the labour press with subscriptions; contributing to and taking advantage of worker benefit cooperatives; and prioritizing education, particularly in science and politics. The letters examined validated the notion that the Winnipeg organizers and activists that wrote to *Robitnytsia* were pragmatic in their approach to radicalizing the everyday experiences of working class women. The contributors to 'What We Write' achieved this by being direct and clear about the topics around which they sought to mobilize workers, and selected topics and causes around which most working people could relate - literacy, education, health, and social services - not exclusively to content related to more radical or politically active members.

On Transnationalisms

While there was no direct reflection of a transnational culture found in the Letters section linking the Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg to the Cultural Revolution of the Soviet Union, divisions within the ULFTA, including the Women's Section and *Robitnytsia,* show a transnational appreciation of different concepts and practices, offering a plethora of rich connections that can be meaningful on a local level. With the “class against class” mentality of the Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union providing the transnational context of the time, the multiethnic and multinational Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg was able to redefine and navigate its radicalism in its own way. While there is no evidence of the Cultural Revolution in the issues of *Robitnytsia* from 1928, there is ample material for examining transnational discourses and experiences of progressive Ukrainians in Winnipeg remaining in its pages.

On Soviet Cover Art

While there is speculative visible evidence of transnational working class culture that is specific to the Ukrainian diaspora in Winnipeg, as evidenced by the twelve of twenty-four issues which depicted Soviet imagery, the work of the ULFTA and the reasons for it do not appear to be overshadowed by the basic local aims of Winnipeg's *robitnytsi*. Literacy and education, labour organization and legislation, and a balance between the importance of work and the importance of family loom large in the viewing of these covers as a contrived body of work. The markedly Soviet character of the 1928 *Robitnytsia* covers stands in stark contrast to the local, Winnipeg-based content reported and discussed by the readership in the letters section.

While the Winnipeg readership of *Robitnytsia* may have been aware of developments in the Soviet Union *via* the Women's Section journal and other channels, the 1928 letters reflect no such connection, despite the strong Soviet imagery printed on the covers that year. The local and organizational interests of the Ukrainian workingwomen of Winnipeg in 1928 contribute to the further enrichment of Winnipeg and Canadian labour history, but the Ukrainian publication language will likely remain a barrier to the source being utilized further by social and labour historians without Ukrainian specialization. The most consistent message of these letters, and the evidence supplied therein, is that Ukrainian working class women in Winnipeg were radical in their view of the "little things", and that the everyday experience of working and living in a society that does not provide adequate social services for its citizens was observed, discussed, and addressed. The letters had very little to do with the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution, or anything transnational at all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Robitnytsia, No. 1, 1 January, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 6, 15 March, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 7, 1 April, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 9, 1 May, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 10, 15 May, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 11, 1 June, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 13, 1 August, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 18, 1 September, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 20, 1 October, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 21, 1 November, 1928.

Robitnytsia, No. 23, 15 December, 1928.

Secondary Sources

Avakumovic, Ivan. *The Communist Party in Canada: A History*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975.

Avakumovic, Ivan. *Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1978.

Barner-Barry, Carol and Cynthia Hody, "Soviet Marxism-Leninism as Mythology," *Political Pscyhology*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Dec., 1994), pp. 609-630.

Batliwala, Srilatha and L. David Brown, Eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction* Bloomington: Kumarian Press, Inc., 2006.

Bohachevsky-Chomiak, Martha. *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939.* Edmonton: CIUS Press, 1988.

Burke, Peter. *History & Social Theory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel*: *History as Ritual.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Carter, Sarah. *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

Duncan, Lauren E. and Abigail J. Stewart, "Personal Political Salience: The Role of Personality in Collective Identity Action," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Apr., 2007), pp. 143-164.

Dziewanowski, M.K. *Russia in the Twentieth Century*, sixth ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Frager, Ruth A. *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Hajda, Lubomry. "Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in the USSR and the Post-Soviet States," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 2, RACE, GENDER & ETHNICITY: GLOBAL

PERSPECTIVES (1993), pp. 193-278.
Hinther, Rhonda L. "Raised in the Spirit of the Class Struggle: Children, Youth, and the Interwar

Ukrainian Left in Canada," *Labour/Le Travail*, 60 (Fall 2007), pp. 43-76.
Hinther, Rhonda L. and Jim Mochoruk, Eds. *Re-imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics,*

and Identity. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
Iacovetta, Franca et al. *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian*

History, 1840s-1960s. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
Kolasky, John. *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in*

Canada. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1979.
Krawchuk, Peter. *Our History: The Ukrainian Labor-Farmer Movement in Canada, 1907-1991*.

Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1996.
Krawchuk, Peter. *The Unforgettable Myroslav Irchan*. Edmonton: Kobzar Publishing, 1988.

Lacqua, Daniel editor. *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movement Between the World Wars*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto.* Introduction by Martin Malia. Toronto: Penguin Group Signet Classic, 1998.

McGirr, Lisa. "The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti: A Global History," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 93, No. 4 (Mar., 2007), pp. 1085-1115.

Sangster, Joan. "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism Debate': Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930." Labour/*le Travail*, Vol. 56 (Fall, 2005), pp. 51-89.

Subtelny, Orest. *Ukraine: A History, Third Edition*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. Toronto:

Oxford University Press, 1998.

Swyripa, Frances. *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991*. Toronto: 1992.

Swyripa, Frances and John Herd Thompson, eds., *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada during the Great War*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1983.

Turnock, David, ed. *East Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Environment and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Tyrell, Ian. "What is transnational history?" blog post, http://iantyrell.wordpress.com/what-is-transnational-history/ , last accessed March 11, 2013.

Walker, Barrington. *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2008.

Westwood, J.N. *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-2001*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Yuhl, Stephanie E., "Sculpted Radicals: The Problem of Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston's Public Memory," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 9-30.

APPENDIX

APPENDICES I. Library of Congress Transliteration Table, 2011.

Ukrainian

Vernacular	*Romanization*	*Vernacular*	*Romanization*
Upper case letters		*Lower case letters*	
А	A	а	a
Б	B	б	b
В	V	в	v
Г	H	г	h
Ґ	G	ґ	g
Д	D	д	d
Е	E	е	e
Є	‿IE	є	‿ie
Ж	‿ZH (see Note 1)	ж	‿zh (see Note 1)
З	Z	з	z
И	Y	и	y
І	I	і	i
Ї	Ï	ї	ï
Й	Ĭ	й	ĭ
К	K	к	k
Л	L	л	l
М	M	м	m
Н	N	н	n
О	O	о	o
П	P	п	p
Р	R	р	r
С	S	с	s
Т	T	т	t
У	U	у	u
Ф	F	ф	F
Х	Kh	х	kh

94

Ц	T͡S (see Note 2)	ц	t͡s (see Note 2)
Ч	Ch	ч	ch
Ш	Sh	ш	sh
Щ	Shch	щ	shch
Ь	′ (soft sign)	ь	′ (soft sign)
Ю	I͡U	ю	i͡u

95

Я	I͡A	я	i͡a

Notes

1. The ligature is necessary to distinguish ж from the combination зг.
2. The ligature is necessary to distinguish ц from the combination тс.

APPENDICES II. *Robitnytsia* covers, 1928