

**Hurrah Revolutionaries and Polish Patriots:
The Polish Communist Movement in Canada, 1918-1950**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis constitutes the first full-length study of Polish Communists in Canada, a group that provided a substantial segment of the countries socialist left in the early 20th century. It traces the roots of socialist support in Poland, its transplantation to Canada, the challenges it faced within an ethnic community heavily influenced by Catholicism, the complications caused by its links to the Comintern, and its changing strength and decline. It offers a deeper understanding of the ways in which the Communist party was able to appeal to certain ethnic groups, such as through cultural outreach, as well as its complicated and often arguably counter-productive relationship with the Comintern. It also furnishes important information on the efforts of the RCMP and Polish consulates to maintain control over the communists, as well as how generally improved material conditions among Poles, especially following the Second World War, along with the influence of the Cold War, accounted for a rapid decline in support. The thesis is primarily based on sources generated by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or, more precisely, by the Polish consulates in Winnipeg, Montreal and Ottawa. On the Canadian side, the thesis took advantage of RCMP records, Canadian security bulletins, immigration records and Polish-language newspapers printed in Canada. By utilizing these sources, this study not only analyses the interaction of the Polish Canadian communist movement with other segments of the Polish community in Canada, but it also moves beyond the introverted approach that has characterized most studies of ethnic organizations in Canada by placing the movement within a “Canadian” context to analyze its relations with the government, broader segments of Canadian society, and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).

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Introduction

Politics, History and “Deviant(?)” Polish Canadians

“...If it weren't for the strict laws in this country, I would have put a bullet in his head like in any other enemy.”¹ With these bold words, M. Sasiela, a Polish anti-Communist, ended his letter to the Polish consul in Ottawa. He had just informed the consul that he was aware of a Polish worker who was a dangerous agitator spreading anti-Polish propaganda in Canada. According to Sasiela, the agitator had compared Poland to a prostitute and “praised Stalin and everything that is made in Soviet Russia.”² Sasiela’s letter was not unique. Similar letters and petitions written by concerned and sometimes overzealous citizens flooded the Polish consulates in Canada in the 1930s. These letters were perturbing signs that Communism was becoming popular among segments of the Polish immigrant population in Canada.

Between the 1920s and the end of the Second World War, Polish Communists in Canada struck a responsive chord among several thousand Polish immigrants. In fact, the Polish Communists’ central organization, the *Polskie Towarzystwo Robotniczo-Farmerskie* - PTRF (The Polish Workers’ and Farmer’s Association), later the *Polskie Towarzystwo Ludowe* – PTL (Polish Peoples’ Association), was one of the largest Polish federations in Canada, with a membership that was comparable in size to other mainstream Polish religious and secular federations. The communist movement became popular not only because of a talented and dedicated leadership, but primarily because of favourable political and economic circumstances (such as the Great Depression) which provided fertile ground for the communist ideology to

¹Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa. Letter from M. Sasiela, October 5th, 1938.

² Ibid.

develop. Many of the movement's adherents and sympathizers were not devotees of Communism when they arrived on Canadian shores. Instead, a clear causal link existed between migration to the New World and the embrace of the radical ideology. While radicalism had foreign roots, demoralizing circumstances and disillusionment on the North American continent nurtured radicalism in the New World. In many instances, communism arose as part of migrants' acculturation to North American society, and their deep desire to change the circumstances which they encountered.

This study examines how the Polish communist movement in Canada operated to persuade traditionally conservative and religious immigrants to adopt an ideology that was anti-nationalist and atheist, at least in theory; and it tries to determine how the communist ideology shaped the identity, experiences and the actions of its adherents and sympathizers. It is a "social history of politics," combining the methodologies of social, cultural and labour history, ethnic studies and discursive analysis to examine the origin, the ideology, and the culture of Polish pro-communist organizations, which have hitherto been almost entirely ignored by scholars. By utilizing Polish consular documents, records from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish-language newspapers, Canadian government surveillance records and Canadian mainstream newspapers, this study not only analyses the interaction of the Polish Canadian communist movement with other segments of the Polish community in Canada, but it also moves beyond the introverted approach that has characterized most studies of ethnic organizations in Canada by placing the movement within a "Canadian" context to analyze its relations with the government, broader segments of Canadian society, and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).

Communism, for all its international pretensions, its belief in the unity of all people and a classless and stateless society, has always been divided into national and ethnic groups. In

Canada, the communist movement could not have existed, much less functioned or flourished, without support from its ethnic branches. To be a Communist did not mean that one ceased to be, for instance, Polish or Ukrainian. On the contrary, ethnic branches of the CPC borrowed traditional cultural symbols from the immigrants' homeland to translate the communist ideology into more proverbial forms. In the late 1930s for instance, realizing that Polish immigrants were too traditional to accept atheism, class struggle and international radicalism, Polish Canadian Communists adopted familiar Old World symbols and features (such as national heroes, commemorative observances and nationalistic motifs) and they opted for moderate and patriotic agitation to attract more supporters. They remained however, highly critical of the Polish government and its representatives in Canada. In this respect, they sharply differentiated nationality and love for one's native land from political patriotism.

Mikhail Bakunin, one of the fathers of the European anarchist movement, succinctly summed up this difference: "the common people of all countries deeply love their fatherland; but it is a natural, real love. The patriotism of the people is not just an idea, it is a fact; but political patriotism [...] is not the faithful expression of that fact: it is [...] always for the benefit of an exploiting minority."³ Recognizing that the majority of Polish immigrants were homesick and disillusioned by the patronizing attitude accorded them by mainstream Canadian society, Polish Communists adopted recognizable symbols through which they tried to transmit the proletarian ideology. Just how successful Polish Canadian Communists were in putting Polish national culture into practice is one of the major questions of this study. As this thesis suggests, it was the traditional culture of Polish immigrant communities, rather than a failure on the part of Polish radicals to live up to their ideals, which most often determined the limits of their radicalism.

³G.P. Maximoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), 324; Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 309.

The development of the communist movement in Canada was strongly influenced by the languages in which it was spoken and disseminated. For immigrants, language could act as either a barrier or a bridge between different groups. Polish Canadian Communists, like the majority of their non-Communist counterparts, frequently interacted with fellow “Slavic” immigrants, mainly Ukrainians, Slovaks, Czechs and Russians. Affinities between these groups had as much to do with linguistic similarity as they did with an allegedly shared “Slavic mentality” and close geographic proximity in the Old World.

While English was the language that most immigrants would have in common, it also became the only language most immigrants (aside from those residing in French Canada) could use to interact with members of the host society and the CPC leadership. The English-language communist press, which included the communist newspaper *The Worker* (later renamed *The Clarion*) brought together Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Croats, Finns, Hungarians and other immigrants into a transnational community of readers.

While the Canadian communist movement was supposedly unified by the English language, cultural and linguistic differences were highly pronounced. There is evidence that non-English and non-French Communists were not instructed to operate in one of Canada’s official languages. Canadian police surveillance records reveal that at multi-ethnic communist meetings, efforts to use a unifying language (i.e. English) or to translate what a speaker was saying into the dominant language were not always made, even in the presence of prominent Anglo-Saxon guests.⁴ Despite their linguistic and cultural differences however, Communists

⁴ At a meeting organized in the Polish Labour Hall in Winnipeg, the guest of honour, an ex-judge and a left-leaning politician, Lewis St. George Stubbs, expressed his regrets at not being able to understand what was being said in Polish, though he assured the audience that he understood almost all of the remarks for “the spirit of the workers is one, no matter in what language it may be expressed.” See: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III (St. John’s, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993): No. 836, 9th December, 1936, 537.

were more than willing to offer support, in some cases even to risk their lives, for the struggles of peoples whose language they could not understand. The many examples of mutual inter-ethnic assistance are a remarkable testament to the Communists' ideological commitment to interethnic and interracial solidarity.

The day-to-day activities of Communists extended well beyond the traditional political sphere and into everyday life. Communists formed communities, reading clubs, educational circles and they organized a myriad of cultural and recreational events which helped, as Ian McKay noted, “distil [their] insights and communicate them to adherents and sympathizers.”⁵ The structure of the communist organizations often mirrored those of the larger religious or sectarian organizations in the Polish community, but in content they were antithetical to most of them. While the mainstream Polish Canadian press, organizations, theatres and annual national observances fostered nationalism, a similar set of Polish Canadian communist institutions sustained the radical ideology: the communist press, radical theatre, and revolutionary commemorations.

The radical movement was rooted in a network of meeting halls, printing agencies, taverns, restaurants, libraries and on street corners where supporters assembled and carved out spaces for themselves. Any understanding of the radical movement would be impossible without an understanding of the local cultures and spaces in which it was embedded.

Local communist spaces and communities were themselves part of a network of what Benedict Anderson has termed “an imagined community.”⁶ Although some Communists did not interact with other fellow-Communists in Canada or elsewhere because of geographic isolation,

⁵ Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 117.

⁶See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

their common beliefs, ideas and information, united them into an imagined community of individuals who wanted to live otherwise. Based on this premise, this study aims to analyze how Polish Canadian communist organizations worked as a “thought and structure system” for its members. It borrows Ian McKay’s “reconnaissance” strategy to analyze the interaction between specific organizations and individuals in a particular space and time.⁷ Unlike the “scorecard” approach, which McKay argued tends to place each organization before “the Bar of History” to decide whether its “partisans should be praised or damned;” the “reconnaissance” strategy evaluates an organization on how it was shaped by the people it involved, rather than on its success or failure.⁸ Most histories of ethnic communities in Canada, especially those written by amateur historians in the 1960s and the 1970s, have been victims of the “scorecard” approach. They tend to evaluate a particular group of people based on the success of their organization. But they fail to scrutinize how ordinary men and women influenced and transformed the organizations to which they belonged. “Reconnaissance” therefore, makes way for an examination of the interaction between people, ideology and the institutions that individuals create to serve their specific needs.

McKay tied “reconnaissance” to a “horizontal” model that challenges “vertical” approaches to doing history. Until relatively recently, there was a popular tendency among historians to make interpretations based on a “vertical” analysis which focused on large formations and institutions. The “vertical” model acts like a large hand picking out institutions or events in a particular period that stick out for analysis. This approach invites thinking about humans as fixed essences attached to their institutions and ideologies (i.e. a Communist is a Communist). McKay prefers a “horizontal” approach that pans across the events and institutions

⁷Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 130.

⁸Ibid, 131.

in a particular space and time to examine how individuals mutate in a multifaceted dialectic with their own surroundings. It suggests that ethnic workers in each particular period create a distinct concept or system through which they understand the world. The “horizontal” method is comparative; it examines how people interpreted various ideologies and concepts (i.e socialism, unionism, Marxism and Communism) in distinct periods. For instance, a Communist from the 1920s could have a conversation with a Communist from the 1980s: they could discuss *Das Kapital*, criticize greedy cigar-smoking industrialists or simply engage in a conversation on how to live “otherwise.” Yet how each individual adopts Communism and uses it to solve problems in his or her society differ because conditions in specific periods influence distinct interpretations of how to use Communism to grasp the world. This study applies McKay’s “horizontal” approach to analyze how, not only prominent agitators and writers interpreted and distilled the communist ideology, but it also makes generalizations about how communist ideals influenced the majority of the largely anonymous masses who constituted the movements’ base.

The Comintern’s sharp and often contradictory policy turns form an integral part of the history of the communist movement. In his study on the Communist Party of Canada, Ian Angus observed that the CPC underwent a drastic transformation between Lenin’s International Front and Stalin’s Popular Front.⁹ Angus argued that the CPC was developing properly under the Leninist-Trotskyist leadership in the Communist International. The end of this steady growth, he insisted, coincided with the displacement of the Lenin-Trotsky leadership and its replacement with a Stalinist bureaucracy.¹⁰ Leninist politics of a united front, in which Communists pursued common goals for the working class, were replaced by Stalin’s Popular Front. The new policy created a relationship between, on the one hand, working class militants, communist parties, and

⁹ See: Ian Angus. *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard, 1981).

¹⁰Ibid, 96.

socialist intellectuals, and, on the other hand, non-Marxist socialists and left-leaning liberals. The Popular Front introduced a new interpretation of communist involvement in the fight for democracy. The new party line proposed that the struggle for democracy and social justice be synonymous with, or a prerequisite for, the struggle for socialism.

According to this concept, Communists were to subordinate their own program to the programs of their petty bourgeois allies. In 1934, Soviet Russia joined the League of Nations, an organization that Lenin had opposed, and in 1939, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. The Popular Front policy strategy appealed to many Canadians who feared being dragged into another European conflict. The communist-sponsored League Against War and Fascism, which was founded in 1935, attracted thousands of Canadian supporters, and membership in the CPC tripled between 1934 and 1937.¹¹ This period also marked a significant turning point for the Polish Canadian radical movement. Polish-Canadian Communists abandoned their militant ultra-left agitation and they became zealous Polish patriots. Their movement stood for peace and democracy, and it promoted the collective organization of society and of economic and social resources to help arm Poland against Nazi aggression. Polish Communists began to make patriotic appeals for unity with non-communist organizations, including religious ones.

The struggle for Polish Canadian Communists to maintain themselves was greatly facilitated by their flexibility and adaptability. They supported calls for a Soviet Canada and “hurrah revolutionism,” but when it suited their purpose they became patriots and partisans of

¹¹ Faith Johnson, “*The Communists, the CCF, and the Popular Front.*” Seventh Annual Roberts S. Kenny Prize Lecture, May, 2007. Robert S. Kenny Prize in Marxist & Labour/Left Studies. <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/kenny-prize/faith-johnston.html> (accessed June, 2011).

democracy.¹² This study asks how the Comintern's major policy turns and matrix-events – such as the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War and the outbreak of the Second World War - influenced the strategies and the identity of the Polish communist movement in Canada.

In addition to people, information and ideology circulated between communist networks usually in the form of publications. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of newspapers in the communist movement. In *Where to Begin?*, Lenin emphasized that the press was a fundamental cornerstone of any communist organization.¹³ Victor Turek, in his study on the Polish-Canadian language press observed, “That the overbuilt press structure was detrimental to the overall effort of the [Polish] communist organization.”¹⁴ Since Polish Canadian Communists never published an official history, yearbooks, commemorative monographs or memoirs, their newspapers are essentially the only available source of insight into the world as they saw it. The circulation figures of Polish Canadian communist newspapers are also the best guide for gauging the approximate size of the movement's following during different periods.

The following table compares the circulation of the Polish-Canadian communist newspaper *Głos Pracy* (Voice of Labour) to three of the largest non-communist Polish Canadian newspapers:

¹²Albert Morski, one of the prominent leaders of the Polish communist movement in Canada used the term “Hurrah Revolutionism” to describe the rigid and militant nature of the communist movement which he claimed would not help Polish Communists win over broader segments of the Polish community in Canada.

¹³Vladimir I. Lenin, “What is to be done?” in Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Moscow: 1961), 22-23.

¹⁴Victor Turek, *Polish Language Press* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1962), 118.

Year	<i>Czas</i>	<i>Gazeta Katolicka</i>	<i>Związkowiec</i>	<i>Głos Pracy</i>
	(Time)	(Catholic Gazette)	(Alliancer)	(Voice of Labour)
1934	3,958	7,000	600	4,000
1935	4,400	7,000	600	4,000
1936	4,500	7,000	-	3,000
1937	4,500	7,000	5,000	3,000
1938	4,532	7,000	5,000	6,593

The circulation figures provided in the table do not account for the “second circulation,” which consisted of individuals who read the newspapers but who did not subscribe to them. In his examination of the reading habits of Polish immigrants, Victor Turek concluded that newspaper readership was significantly higher than the number of copies that were printed. In many instances, one newspaper was read by three or more different people. Consul Jan Pawlica reported that *Głos Pracy* was read by at least 40,000 Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish Canadians in 1939.¹⁵ In addition, the above noted readership estimates are based on the mainstream newspapers and do not include small, ephemeral publications with much smaller circulations. The figures shown, therefore, are lower than the actual totals for each year by a margin, quite possibly, of several thousand, but are nevertheless a useful indication of the approximate size of the Polish communist movement and its rival non-communist Polish organizations.¹⁶

Capturing Totality: Ethnicity, the Canadian Working-Class and the Polish Left

When Canadian social historian Fred Landon complained in the early 1940s about the general lack of interest in uncovering the histories of Canada’s “humble folk,” he stood out like a

¹⁵ AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to MSZ, a chronicle of Communist activities in the Canadian Polonia, 5.

¹⁶It should be noted that the estimates provided in the table may have been inflated by the editors of each respective newspaper in order to exaggerate their influence. See Victor Turek, *Polish Language Press*.

sore thumb.¹⁷ Two decades later, Canadian labour historians were entangled in a messy debate which centered almost exclusively on placing the “humble folk” at the center of Canadian history. Inspired by the works of Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman, a new generation of Canadian historians (such as Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan Palmer) challenged the very meaning of labour and vowed to recapture the “totality” of the working class experience.¹⁸ They moved beyond the boundaries of trade unions and third-party politics and vowed to capture the culture of working men and women. For nearly three decades their research, debates and publishing have built a solid foundation in the field and they have helped piece together a coherent and, at times a romantic, albeit still incomplete, understanding of the history of Canadian working men and women.

Those scholars who examined ethnicity or ethnic nationalism as an element of labour history before the 1970s tended to focus almost exclusively on Anglo-Canadians and French-Canadians.¹⁹ Before the 1910s, the only significant publications concerning immigration were government studies documenting the “problems” associated with the newcomers. Most of these studies were bureaucratic accounts, which had little impact on the scholarly world. The first significant publications appeared in 1909. That year J.S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers Within Our Gates* and Ralph Connor’s novel *The Foreigner* were published. These books appeared at a time when 30,000 immigrants, most of whom could not speak English, were arriving in Canada every year as a result of Canada’s liberal immigration policy.²⁰ Alarmed by the massive influx of non-

¹⁷ Fred Landon, *Lake Huron* (Indianapolis: 1944), 10. See also: Gregory S. Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History* (Montreal: McGill University Press: 1996), 14.

¹⁸ E.P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman focused on examining class relations and on the culture of working men and women. See: E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Great Britain: London, 1963) and Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

¹⁹It would be too ambitious to discuss all of the studies that have been produced on Canadian labour history and on the ethnic working class. The aim of this section is to provide a general outline of the major trends and to discuss some of the important historians who have contributed to the field.

²⁰ Olive Ziegler, *Woodsworth, Social Pioneer* (Toronto, Ontario Publishing, 1934), 28-29.

Anglo-Saxon immigrants, Woodsworth and Connor reflected the growing anxiety felt by many Canadians towards the rampant immigration. Connor's novel depicted the violence and immorality of East European settlers, and demonstrated concern about the effects of these newcomers on the "virtuous, order-living" native-Canadians.²¹ To Woodsworth, these newcomers "had been oppressed and down-trodden for ages," and he wondered if they would "fall in with our secular ways and understand or appreciate our institutions."²² Woodsworth even advocated a policy of sterilization to prevent "mentally unfit" immigrants from reproducing. To the contemporary reader, some of the conclusions reached by Woodsworth may seem overtly racist and xenophobic. Nevertheless, one must consider that his observations were informed by social Darwinism and eugenics theories which were widespread in Canada at that time.²³

By the 1930s, a number of studies began to look at ethnicity using the sociological approach. Stuart Jamieson's contribution to the McGill Social Science Research Project which began in 1930, centered on an examination of the Anglo-Canadian elite in Montreal. In his study, Jamieson concluded that Quebec had been conquered twice, first militarily and later economically, by the English.²⁴ Yale labour historian Lloyd Reynolds also participated in the McGill Project. His 1935 thesis, *The British Immigrant: His Social and Economic Adjustment in*

²¹ Cited in: Dirk Hoerder, "Ethnic Studies in Canada from the 1880s to 1962: A Historiographical Perspective and Critique" in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 26 (1), 1994, 5.

²² J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 122.

²³ More "positive" accounts of immigration to Canada included Howard A. Kennedy's *New Canada and the New Canadians* in 1907. Kennedy was a British journalist for the *Times* of London. He was sent to Canada as a foreign correspondent. His book, which is a collection of articles that had been published in the *Times* was written to attract British immigrants to Canada. Kennedy described the Canadian climate, landscape, farming practices and he portrayed a "positive" image of various ethnic groups, including French Canadians, Doukhobors, Mennonites and Ukrainians.

²⁴ Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957).

Canada, was at that time one the most comprehensive analyses of British immigration and British settlement patterns in Canada.²⁵

Only a few attempts were made at this time to study non-British immigrants by scholars such as Carl Addington Dawson, Robert England and Charles H. Young. Their studies, however, focused on assimilation policies and settlement patterns rather than on the immigrants' culture and their ethnic organizations.²⁶ Dawson, a Baptist clergyman from Prince Edward Island, contributed to three volumes of the *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement Series*, edited by W.A. Mackintosh.²⁷ His work is a painstaking compilation of statistics, farm receipts, mortgage indebtedness, etc. But although Dawson went a long way to recognize the uniqueness of the Western Canadian ethnic experience, his conclusion was that assimilation and integration were simultaneous processes that were both natural and desirable.²⁸ Young made a similar conclusion in *Ukrainian Canadians*. His study was published under the patronage of the Canadian National Committee for Moral Hygiene, which noted that "Canada cannot have a strong and healthy nation unless its people are mentally well as well as physically sound."²⁹ In recognizing the "undesirability" of the Continental European immigrant, but also his necessity, Robert England went on to state the case for a more comprehensive view of ethnic tolerance in his study on Slavic immigrants: "We are beginning to realize that a primitive people has a right

²⁵ Lloyd G. Reynolds, *The British Immigrant: His Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1935). For other studies that focused primarily on British and French immigrants during this period see: John M. Gibbon, *The Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1938); Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America: The First Hundred Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); George Wrong, *The Canadians: The Story of a People* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938).

²⁶ Robert England, *The Central European Immigrant* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929); Charles H. Young, *The Ukrainian Canadians: A Study in Assimilation* (Toronto: Nelson, 1931).

²⁷ Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 162.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 379-380.

²⁹ Charles H. Young, x.

to preserve its own cultural background whether aesthetic or not.”³⁰ Assimilation, according to England, was possible, but only if the immigrant could preserve his cultural distinctiveness. It was unrealistic to demand that the immigrant should surrender his cultural and religious heritage as soon as he reached the shores of North America: “we must not exploit our guests; we must learn the art of making them at home without surrendering the distinctiveness of that home.”³¹

Histories which emphasized the bi-national identity of Canada continued to appear in the late 1960s and early 1970s.³² Labour historians seldom engaged other ethnic groups. Gregory Kealey’s and Bryan Palmer’s study of the Knights of Labour broadened the scope, albeit still within the parameters of an Anglo-Celtic perspective, by studying the culture of the Irish Catholic working-class.³³ They identified a strong Irish nationalism that led workers to identify with various forms of late nineteenth-century radicalism, despite the strong Irish Catholic conservatism that traditionally characterized the majority of Irish immigrants.

Martin Robin’s *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour* was an early attempt to synthesize Canadian labour history.³⁴ Robin argued that the rise of urban radical politics should be traced to at least two decades before the creation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1932, and that the activities preceding the Great Depression should not be ignored. He neatly divided his text into thematic and regional chapters that focused on labour revolts, political

³⁰ England, 162-163.

³¹ Ibid., 186-187. Another important scholar who adopted a favourable position towards immigration was John Murray Gibbon in *Canadian Mosaic*, which was a historical, ethnographical and literary portrait of some thirty ethnic groups in Canada. His study was designed “to make Canadians understand themselves as people of many backgrounds.” In fact, he coined the term “mosaic” which would be celebrated when the policy of multiculturalism was announced in 1971. See: Hoeder, *Ethnic Studies in Canada*, 9.

³²For example: Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hill of Canada, 1977); Robert Babcock, *Gompers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974). It should be noted that the developments in the field were not rigid, that is, some scholars, especially non-English and non-French scholars, were already writing about ethnic immigrants. However, it was not until the policy of multiculturalism was announced in 1971, that the topic of ethnicity and immigration experienced an explosion in activity from scholars representing various disciplines.

³³Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, 255-258.

³⁴Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour* (Canada: Industrial Relations Centre, 1968).

relations, unionism and social mobilization. Yet, in providing a history of radical labour groups, Robin not only ignored the French-Canadian element, but also other ethnic groups that undoubtedly formed and influenced the politics that he was discussing.

The Communist Party of Canada also sponsored a number of historical studies on the labour movement. In 1948, the CPC launched the “People’s History” project, which was delayed by the Cold War and the Suez Crisis of 1956. Some of the materials collected for this enterprise appeared in the 1950s in CPC magazines such as *National Affairs Monthly*, and later in the *Marxist Quarterly*. Written through the lens of traditional Marxism, these works sought to place the working class at the forefront of Canadian history. Like most histories written by leftist activists, these interpretations came with their own potent brew of sectarianism. The communist-sponsored studies focused primarily on realigning major Canadian historical events such as Confederation with Marxist paradigms. The history of the CPC’s ethnic branches was neglected by mainstream CPC writers and leaders, who only occasionally acknowledged the contributions of radical immigrants to the Party’s history.³⁵

The 1970s can be described as a period in immigration historical writing that marked the awakening of ethnic groups. In the United States Herbert Gutman began to analyze the development of class between 1840 and 1890 by asking who constituted the American working class during that period.³⁶ In order to understand the makeup of the American working class, Gutman emphasized the need to examine immigration patterns, immigrant families and ethnic communities.³⁷ Similar approaches to the study of working-class culture penetrated Canadian scholarship. Several historians began to close the divide between immigration and working-class

³⁵See: Tim Buck, *Our Fight For Canada* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1959); Tim Buck. *Thirty Years 1922-1952* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952); Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1974).

³⁶Herbert Gutman, “Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America” in *American Historical Review* 78 (1973), 532.

³⁷Gutman, 536.

history by arguing that immigration and labour were intimately connected.³⁸ The work produced at this time generally focused on nineteenth and early twentieth-century immigration, and on the impact that continental and regional migrations had on the growth and transformation of Canadian society, immigration policies and the labour movement. Scholars such as Donald Avery, Bruno Ramirez, Reg Whittaker and many others, began to examine immigration statistics, population shifts and the general development of ethnic (non-English and non-French) nationalism in Canada.³⁹ As more and more second and third-generation ethnic descendants were graduating from Canadian universities and gaining political and economic autonomy, they too decided to turn to the history of their own ethnic group's experience in Canada.

Building on Robert F. Harney's study of the Italian communities in Quebec and Toronto, Bruno Ramirez explored various distinct Italian identities that not only separated Italian immigrants from their host society, but also from other Italian communities. He illustrated the antagonisms between Italian itinerant and local workers which separated them into two distinct classes. This led him to argue that ethnic class divisions determined much that occurred out of sight of the predominantly Anglo-Canadian society.⁴⁰

Probably the most popular monograph dealing with Canadian immigration policy from this period was Donald Avery's *Dangerous Foreigners*, which was one of the first attempts to provide a narrative history of Canadian immigration policy during the influx of immigrant

³⁸ The divide that emerged between the two fields, according to Gregory S. Kealey, was an artificial outcome from the "competition of new fields [...and] Canadian governmental enthusiasm for multiculturalism." Gregory S. Kealey and Greg Patmore, eds., *Canadian and Australian Labour History: Towards a Comparative Perspective* (Australia: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1990), 38.

³⁹ Bruno Ramirez. *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990). See also: Bruno Ramirez and Michael Del Balso, *The Italians of Montreal: From Sojourning to Settlement, 1900-21* (Montreal: Les Éditions Courant, 1980); Reg Whittaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1987).

⁴⁰ Ramirez, *On the Move*, 86-92.

workers in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Avery demonstrated the increasingly close relationship between the Federal government's immigration policy and the apparently limitless needs of railroads, lumber and coal magnates for cheap and pliable labour.⁴² Trying to explain the rise of left-wing organizations among the ethnic workers, he argued that immigrant workers turned to labour unions and radicalism because of their inability to integrate into traditional Canadian institutions.⁴³ Avery concluded that Federal policy served above all else, the needs of the capitalist labour market.

In the last two decades, significant strides have been made in unearthing the history of the non-English and non-French working-class. The writing of scholars such as Avery, Ramirez, Franca Iavocetta, Varpu Lindström, Carmela Patrias and Anthony Rasporich, among others, have contributed to the formulation of theoretical frameworks designed to help study the ethnic working class in Canada.⁴⁴ The immigrant worker is no longer studied as either a docile

⁴¹ Donald Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners:" European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979). See also: Donald H. Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1995). In *Reluctant Host*, Avery explains that the Canadian government was in fact a "reluctant host" to immigrants. He concluded that the federal government was unwilling to accept foreign workers unless political or economic lobbies pressured it into doing so.

⁴² See Craig Heron's review in *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 61 (4) 1980, 531.

⁴³ Avery, 142-143.

⁴⁴ Franca Iavocetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992); Iacovetta, Franca, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006); Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); Varpu Lindström, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1992); Anthony Rasporich, *For a Better Life: A History of the Croats in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); See also: Raymond Breton, et al., *Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Jorgen Dahli and Fernando Tissa, eds., *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Methuen, 1981); Dirk Hoerder and Inge Blank, eds., *Roots of the Transplanted* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Dirk Hoerder and Jorg Nagler, eds., *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Bryan D. Palmer *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992); Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988). Similar developments have occurred in the United States. See for example: Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); Josef Barton, *Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Romanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890 - 1950* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975); John Bodnar *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town, 1870 - 1940*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 197 and *The*

strikebreaker or as a violent foreign revolutionary. Earlier conceptions of ethnic versus class consciousness have also been challenged by historians such as Franca Iacovetta, who maintain that ethnicity cannot be studied independent of class.

Many important issues about ethnic workers and the ethnic left have, however, been ignored by professional historians because the relevant documentation exists in one or another of Canada's "unofficial languages" – and is therefore not accessible to researchers who are "officially" only bilingual. Writing about the prospects of labour history in the 1980s, Gregory S. Kealey observed that ethnic workers still posed a "significant challenge to Canadian labour historians" and he noted that "Much remains to be unearthed about [ethnic] communities, for too long ignored by Canadian scholarship."⁴⁵ One glaring case in point is the history of the Polish Left in Canada. Many other ethnic groups – Ukrainian, Jewish, Finnish, Hungarian – can boast of at least several books or articles about the history of their radicals.⁴⁶ Polish radicals have not enjoyed such attention. In the few instances where Polish communists are mentioned in the non-Polish literature, they are muddled together with other ethnic communists in general statements such as "the Ukrainians, Russians and Poles" or "Ukrainian, Polish and Russian" radicals.⁴⁷

Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); John Bodnar, B. Simon and M. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Ewa Morawska, *For Bread with Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁴⁵Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, 114.

⁴⁶See for example: Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians*, on Hungarian radicals; John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979); John Kolasky, *Prophets and Proletarians: Documents on the History of the Rise and Decline of Ukrainian Communism in Canada* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990); Thomas Prymak, *Maple Leaf and Trident: Ukrainian Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1996); Rhonda L. Hinthner, Jaroslav Petryshyn, Jennifer Anderson, Jim Mochoruk, Andrij Makuch, S. Holyck Hunchuck and Stacey Zembrzycki in *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics and Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Varpu Lindström, *From Heroes to Enemies: Finns in Canada 1937-1947* (Beaverton, Ontario: Aspasia Books, 2000); E.W. Laine, "Finnish Canadian Radicalism and Canadian Politics: the First Forty Years, 1900-1940" in *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada*, ed. by Jorgen Dahle and Tissa Fernando (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1981); *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, special issue on ethnic radicals vol.10 (2): 1978; Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁴⁷See for example: Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*.

Packaging ethnic workers under such general terms hinders an accurate understanding of how ethnically diverse communist groups disseminated the “language of socialism” and how they used it to understand their own unique circumstances.

A Polish historian, Anna Reczyńska, has thus far made the only concerted effort to document the Polish communists’ history in Canada. Her article, *Początki działalności radykalnych ugrupowań Polonii Kanadyjskiej* provides an important overview of the Polish Canadian radical movement - its origins, membership and organizations- until the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴⁸ Reczyńska pieced together important aspects of the Polish Canadian communist movement and its structure from Polish consular reports, the Polish-language press and several interviews with leading Polish-Canadian Communists. Her published doctoral dissertation, *Piętno Wojny*, which examines the Polish Canadian community during the Second World War, also includes sections on the activities of Polish Canadian Communists during the war.⁴⁹ *Piętno Wojny* is a comprehensive analysis based largely on primary sources which provides important insights into the reactions of Polish Communists to various wartime events including: the outbreak of the war, the war effort, relief, Polish-Soviet relations and the communist imposed Polish provisional government.⁵⁰

In Canada, Polish scholars have only sporadically written about the history of the Polish Canadian communist movement. Their treatments have been limited to brief outlines of a page or

⁴⁸Anna Reczyńska, “Początki działalności radykalnych ugrupowań Polonii Kanadyjskiej” [The Beginnings of the Activities of Radical Groups in Polonia] in *Przegląd Polonijny* vol. 2, 1994, 84-102.

⁴⁹ Anna Reczyńska, *Piętno Wojny* (Kraków, Poland: Nomos, 1997).

⁵⁰Reczyńska’s studies serve as important springboards for studying the Polish Canadian left. Her shortcoming however, lies in the fact that she did not consult Canadian security and surveillance sources, namely the Royal Canadian Mounted Police security bulletins, which not only help fill important gaps in the movements’ history, but they also provide insight into how Canadian authorities monitored and interacted with Polish radicals, and they help situate the Polish Canadian communist movement within a “Canadian” context.

two in studies on the general history of Poles in Canada.⁵¹ Their studies, moreover, are descriptive rather than analytical, and the authors make little effort to relate their findings to the rich literature on immigration, labour and social history in North America.

Victor Turek devoted a few pages to discussing Polish Canadian communist newspapers in his monumental work on the Polish-language press in Canada.⁵² His study is a historical outline of the early development of the Polish press, and it includes a bibliographical list of Polish periodicals in Canada. Turek's statistics on circulation rates are valuable sources of information which are widely cited by scholars of the Canadian Polonia. Without Turek's research and interviews with a number of communist editors, information about obscure communist publications like *Czerwona Jaskółka* (Red Swallow), which was published only three times in 1931, would have been lost.

Turek's study on Polish immigrants in Manitoba, however, which is one of his most important studies of the Polish community in western Canada, included only vague references to the Polish Communists, (who thrived in the western provinces) mainly in a few scattered footnotes.⁵³ Other Polish Canadian scholars, namely Benedykt Heydenkorn, William B. Makowski and Henry Radecki have also made efforts to discuss the Polish Canadian communist

⁵¹ The history of the Polish-American Left and the Polish working-class has received more attention from scholars in the United States. See for example: Mary E. Cygan, "The Polish-American Left" in *The Immigrant Left in the United States*, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). T. Radzilowski, "Interplay of Class and Ethnicity in Polish-American Radicalism" a paper presented at Social Science History Association Conference (Baltimore, MD: 1993); T. Radzilowski, "Polish American Workers and Interwar Unionism" a paper presented at Polish-American Historical Society panel at the American Historical Association annual meeting (Washington, DC: 1999); Dominic A. Pacyga "Villages of Steel Mills and Packinghouses: the Polish Worker on Chicago's South Side, 1880-1921" in *The Polish Presence in Canada and America*, ed. by Frank Renkiewicz (Toronto: The Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1982); Edward Kantowicz, *Polish-American Politics in Chicago, 1888-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); John Bodnar, B. Simon and M. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

⁵²Turek, *Language Press*, 118-129; 152-155.

⁵³ Victor Turek, *Poles in Manitoba* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1967), 212-213; 300.

movement, but their treatments were modest attempts at best.⁵⁴ They offered general sketches of the origins of the Polish pro-Communist organizations and briefly traced their development and their demise. In all of these studies the Polish radicals and their organizations were presented as a marginalized element whose influence, as Turek noted, was “insignificant.”⁵⁵ Even when Polish Canadian Communists enjoyed an increase in popularity in the late 1930s, which enabled them to dramatically expand their organizations and their newspaper, the Polish-Canadian scholars did not try to analyse the extent of this popularity or the Communists’ influence in the Polish immigrant community. Despite their tendency to marginalize the Polish Communists, however, Polish Canadian scholars occasionally admired the discipline and the devotion of the Polish Communist leaders, and they generally agreed that the Communists initiated “very meritorious” activities.⁵⁶ Turek even considered the editor of *Głos Pracy*, Władysław Dutkiewicz, to be one of the best informed journalists in the Polish community.⁵⁷

The Polish Émigré School

The paucity of historical writing on Polish Canadian radicalism, especially among Polish scholars in Canada, can be explained by several factors. First, since the émigré scholars and other “patriotic” immigrants came to dominate the Polish-Canadian community after 1945, they played a decisive role in shaping its politics, and they were able to interpret the past and downplay any influences or events that they considered irrelevant or embarrassing. Second, the imposition of a communist regime in post-war Poland and the ensuing Cold War antagonisms

⁵⁴Benedykt Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1979); Benedykt Heydenkorn, *Past and Present* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1974); William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada: A Visual History* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1987); William B. Makowski, *History and Integration of Poles in Canada* (Niagara Peninsula: Canadian Polish Congress, 1967); Henry Radecki, *Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: The Polish Group in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980).

⁵⁵Turek, *Language Press*, 118.

⁵⁶Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 212.

⁵⁷Turek, *Language Press*, 75.

created an environment which discouraged émigré scholars from writing an analytical history about the communist movement. Marxism was equated with Stalinism – making it difficult to draw distinctions between Marxism as an analytic approach to history and society and Marxism as a political practice associated with the Communist Party.⁵⁸ This strategy reinforced the stereotype - *Polak-anty-komunista* - that Poles, by nature, have always been anti-Communists. Finally, “patriotic” organizations, such the Canadian Polish Congress, which zealously denounced the Polish People’s Republic (PRL), helped marginalize communist groups within the Canadian Polonia.

Turek, Heydenkorn and Makowski helped lay the foundations of Polish-Canadian history shortly after the Second World War through their writing of basic works in the field, their leadership in professional associations, and the institution-building in which some of them engaged. They established what may be termed the “Polish Émigré School,” which encompassed the institutional and ideological factors that affected the way émigré scholars interpreted the Polish past. The intellectual migration to which these scholars belonged was the consequence of the imposition of a Moscow-backed communist regime in Poland after the Second World War.⁵⁹ The émigré scholars waged a crusade against the vulgar Sovietization of Polish history, and it is little wonder, therefore, that they showed a limited interest in documenting the history of the Polish communist movement.

Those scholars who remained as émigrés in Great Britain, the United States, or in Western Europe had ties to three important research centers: the Sikorski Institute in London, the

⁵⁸ Bryan D. Palmer, “Listening To History Rather Than Historians: Reflections on Working-Class History” in *Studies in Political Economy*. 20 (Summer 1986): 50.

⁵⁹ These Polish émigré scholars belonged to a cohort whose wartime experiences had significantly influenced their anti-Communist position. Turek and Heydenkorn for instance, were among the approximately 1.5 million Poles who had been deported by the Soviets and forced into the Gulag system during the Second World War.

Piłsudski Institute and the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in New York City, and the Historical Institute in Rome which was linked to the Lanckoroński Foundation. In Canada, Polish émigré scholars coalesced around the Polish Canadian Research Institute (PCRI) which was founded in 1956 by Victor Turek. The Institute was created to fill the need for a “research body that would be responsible for the study of problems connected with the development of a Polish ethnic group in Canada” and “to study the social and cultural aspects of integration of the said group into the Canadian community and to collect and register materials concerning that process.”⁶⁰

Until the 1960s, Polish émigré scholars in Canada were mainly concerned with documenting the early institutional history of the Polish community and its leaders. The first works published by Turek were biographical sketches of important Polish settlers. His first work was a biography of Sir Casimir Gzowski, who at that time was recognized more by Canadian engineers and historians than by the majority of Poles living in Canada. Perhaps because Poles were among the immigrants who had traditionally occupied the lowest rung of the social ladder in Canada, it became imperative for the émigré scholars to rectify this perception by establishing their pedigree in the new land by searching for illustrious forbearers. Aside from Gzowski, other notable Poles who were written about included Alexander Edward Kierzkowski, who was the member for St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, in the first Canadian Parliament after Confederation in 1867; Edwin Brokovski, who purchased the *Manitoba Gazette* in 1872, and Joseph Smolinski, who became a leader in the nationalist Fenian movement.⁶¹ Robert F. Harney observed that, through

⁶⁰ Canadian Polish Research Institute: <http://www.canadianpolishinstitute.org/history/history.html> (accessed September 2011); Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, ix.

⁶¹ Other ethnic groups have also been looking for their own *titres de noblesse*. Many Italian Canadian scholars for instance, underscored the link between the great explorer Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) as not only a founder of Canada, but also a father of the Italian presence in North America. Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians Created Canada: From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance* (Edmonton: Dragon Hill Publishing, 2007).

such studies, the immigrants tried to wipe out the original sin of place of origin and to claim founding status with Canada's mainstream.⁶² The chapter headings in William B. Makowski's book on Polish Canadians certainly illustrate such a tendency: "The participation of Poles in the Anglo-American War (1812-1815);" Poles in the Canadian Rebellion (1837-1838);" and the "Contribution of Early Poles in the Canadian Scene."⁶³

For the most part, the émigré scholars concerned themselves with producing "pioneer" histories to document Polish settlers, their organizations and settlement patterns. It would be too ambitious to attempt to analyse the whole body of this literature. Instead, the focus here is on an outline of some of the most important studies and the methodological trends that have shaped the writing on Polish immigration to Canada. Among the most important of the "pioneer" histories were Turek's *Poles in Manitoba* and William Makowski's *History and Integration of Poles in Canada* which outlined the settlement patterns of the Polish Canadian community, its ethnic organizations, language and churches.

By the 1970s, Poles in Canada could boast of having a vibrant community with several Polish-language newspapers, a myriad of quasi-political, socio-cultural, educational and recreational organizations, and other professional, students' and artists' clubs, which became the subjects of many monographs, yearbooks, and anniversary texts.

The Canadian government's announcement of the policy of multiculturalism in 1971 heralded an explosion of work in the field involving every branch of the social sciences, the humanities and the arts. Scholars became more interested in studying ethnic nationalism in

⁶²Robert F. Harney, "Caboto and Other Parentela: The Uses of the Italian- Canadian Past" in *Arrangiarisi: The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada* (Montreal: Guernica, 1989), 37-62.

⁶³See: William B. Makowski, *History and Integration of Poles in Canada*.

Canada, and they tackled questions of identity, remigration and assimilation more vigorously.⁶⁴

In 1979, Heydenkorn published *The Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community. The Federation of Polish Societies in Canada*. This bilingual monograph (with sections in Polish and in English) describes the roots of Polish political organizational life in Canada. Heydenkorn examined the social stratification of Polish-Canadians, the culture of Polish organizations, and the transnational relations between Polish-Canadians and their ancestral homeland. He argued that Poles were stuck in two different worlds (“half worlds”), between “[...] the ways, demands, problems and loyalties of the country of origin, [and] the local community here [in Canada].⁶⁵

The Polish Canadian Research Institute held several competitions to encourage Polish-Canadians to submit their memoirs. Half a dozen of them were edited by Heydenkorn and published between 1971 and 1989. The authors of the memoirs were farmers, labourers, salesmen and professionals in many fields. They differed both in age and in their levels of education, which provided an important cross-section of the Polish immigrant experience.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁴ See for example: Henry Radecki, “Poles” in Paul, R. Magocsi, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Anna Reczyńska, *For Bread and a Better Future: Emigration from Poland to Canada, 1918-1939* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1996); Henry Radecki and Benedykt Heydenkorn, *A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Henry Radecki, *Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: The Polish Group in Canada* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979); Henry Radecki, “The Polish-Canadian Family: A Study in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,” in K. Ishwaran, ed. *Canadian Families: Ethnic Variations* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980); Aloysius Balawyder, *The Maple Leaf and the White Eagle: Canadian-Polish Relations 1918-1978* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., *A Community in Transition: The Polish Group in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1985); Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., *From Prairies to Cities* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1975); Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., *Heritage and the Future* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1988); Benedykt Heydenkorn, *Rodowód i pierwszy okreskongresu polonii kanadyjskiej* [The Pedigree and the First Period of the Canadian Polish Congress] (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1995); Benedykt Heydenkorn, *Past and Present* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1974); Benedykt, Heydenkorn, *The Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1979); Rudolf Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976).

⁶⁵ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure*, 7.

⁶⁶ While having common people write their memoirs was viewed as an important new frontier in North American historiography in the 1970s, it should be noted that the Polish historian Florian Znaniecki was organizing memoir contests to encourage ‘ordinary Poles’ to record their experiences in Poland already in the 1930s. Znaniecki

memoirs offer intimate insight into the hopes and disappointments of Polish immigrants, which can help evaluate the conditions that immigrants of different class backgrounds encountered in Canada.

Many Canadian-educated Poles went on to expand Polish-Canadian ethnic studies by looking at issues concerned with the maintenance of culture, the trans-generational renewal of values and traditions, and socio-cultural autonomy within the host society. Henry Radecki belonged to the small group of Polish sociologists and historians who had immigrated to Canada after the Second World War and received their education in Canadian universities. Radecki's *Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: The Polish Group in Canada* was the first major study that focussed on the struggle to maintain cultural distinctiveness not just among foreign-born Poles, but within the Canadian-born population. Radecki warned that Polish organizations in Canada would "become mausoleums to the efforts and achievements of the immigrants in the past" if they did not adjust to the needs of Canadian-born Poles.⁶⁷

While the majority of studies on the Polish group in Canada offer little assistance in forming an analytical history of the Polish Canadian communist movement, they present important insights into Polish immigrant culture, settlement patterns and the development of associations and quasi-political groups. Some of the observations made by scholars of the Canadian Polonia have been very helpful in forming generalizations about the immigrant experience, the conditions which made Communism appealing in Canada, and the structure and the activities of the Polish religious and patriotic associations. They have also helped define the

was a renowned Polish sociologist who, together with William I. Thomas, wrote a monumental history of Polish immigration to North America: *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America vols.4 and 5* (Boston, Mass.: Badger. 1920).

⁶⁷Radecki, *Organizational Structure*, 232.

position of the Polish group in the host society, the relationship between Polish immigrants and their ancestral homeland and the tasks of cultural preservation.

Those who have written about the Polish immigrant population in Canada, did of course, deal with community politics. They generally limited their discussions to conventional political processes: organizational development, leadership, memberships, and lobbying for domestic and homeland concerns. In addition, they related how the political process developed vis-à-vis matrix events such as the Great Depression and the Second World War. While such treatments are invaluable, they suffer from two fundamental shortcomings. First, they focus on an interactive process between the rulers and the ruled that does not extend beyond political processes, matrix events and institutions. This suggests that outside forces and elites were decisive elements in community building, and they remove the immigrants' agency and deny them initiative. Historians such as John Briggs and Josef Barton have argued that it was in fact the rank and file, and not the elites, which dictated the course of community development. Barton argued that working class immigrants could respond critically and selectively to elite initiatives.⁶⁸ Briggs concluded that elites played only a secondary role in immigrant society, whereas ordinary immigrants influenced the political culture of ethnic communities. Second, those who focussed solely on conventional political processes and matrix events seldom analysed how the process of politicization was shaped by the immigrants own culture. Political ideas were enmeshed with other elements of immigrant culture, specifically language, drama, youth clubs, funerals, sporting events and newspapers. As this study aims to show, such elements often limited the workers' ability to accept and discard political ideas.

⁶⁸ Josef Barton, "Eastern and Southern Europeans" in *Ethnic Leadership in America*, ed. J. Higham (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

John Bodnar has rejected the notion that working-class immigrants were insular and he stressed that the immigrant experience was in fact transformed by the “interaction of classes, ideologies and culture within and outside the communities of newcomers.”⁶⁹ The importance of immigrant culture as a transmitter of various political ideologies has been obscured by the majority of scholars who have examined the Polish immigrant population in Canada. Those who concentrate on the dominant ideologies within immigrant communities without analysing oppositional or “deviant” groups such as the Communists and anarchists miss important aspects of political and group identity. Those who have analysed the Polish Left on the other hand, have created the misleading impression that the marginalized status of the immigrants invariably led them to join radical groups. Such an approach fails to consider why those who were just as exploited as those who joined radical groups adopted conservative ideologies in Canada. Consequently, the importance of immigrant culture as a transmitter of different, even conflicting political ideologies does not only shed insight into how culture influenced community politics, but it also demonstrates how immigrant identity is intertwined with political ideologies.

⁶⁹John Bodnar. *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), xvii.

Chapter 1

Gorączka Emigracyjna – Emigration Fever

The early history of Polish immigration to Canada until the mid-twentieth century can be divided into three distinct periods. The first of these includes the emigration of political refugees, who, due to pressures resulting from the Austrian, Prussian and Russian partition of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, were forced into exile. The second covers the years from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the Second World War. This period witnessed a profound influx of Polish immigration to Canada and it can be characterized as an economic migration. Strictly speaking, it began during the inauguration of an energetic immigration policy advocated by the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton.⁷⁰

The third migratory wave began during the Second World War, but it did not gain momentum until after 1945.⁷¹ It was a political migration composed predominantly of refugees,

⁷⁰Clifford Sifton helped secure immigration from continental Europe, particularly the Slavs and those immigrants in sheepskin coats, whom Sifton imported *en masse* in order to populate the prairies in Western Canada. Sifton's policy proved to be advantageous for Canada because vast territories were cleared and settled by immigrants. See: Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979); Howard Palmer, ed., *The Settlement of the West* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press: 1977). The second migratory wave can be divided into two sub-periods: the pre-1918 and the post-1918 period. The Polish immigrants who entered Canada before the First World War were not as educated and as politicized as those who came after the war. They were mainly drawn from the poorer classes of small landowners or landless peasants who inhabited Galicia, a part of partitioned Poland under Austrian control. Approximately seventy-five to eighty percent of Polish immigrants in Manitoba (which at the time had the largest concentration of Polish immigrants) originated from this part of post-partitioned Poland. The post-war newcomers distinguished themselves from their predecessors by an advanced level of education, a better understanding of urban conditions, and experience in political and social organizations. The increase in Polish industry had contributed to a mushrooming of radically progressive parties in all areas of partitioned Poland at the turn of the nineteenth century. As a result, the post-1918 immigrants were no longer only content with gaining land and money like their predecessors. Many of them became entrepreneurs, teachers and community leaders. They also founded quasi-political and social organizations that mirrored similar organizations in Poland.

⁷¹ Approximately one thousand Polish engineers, technicians, and skilled workers arrived in Canada in 1941 as refugees. They contributed significantly to the war effort and most of them remained in Canada after 1945.

displaced persons and ex-soldiers who refused to return to the Soviet-backed Polish Republic.⁷² By 1952, about 55,000 of these immigrants entered Canada.⁷³ Distinguished by a higher level of education, professional qualifications and a strong aversion to Communism, the post-1945 immigrants noticeably transformed the Polish-Canadian community. They invigorated the Canadian Polish Congress, which was loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London, England, and they established a myriad of Polish patriotic and cultural-educational organizations, radio programs and newspapers which played a significant role in lobbying the Canadian government to oppose Communism in Poland. As we will see in chapter 8, the post-war immigrants strengthened the anti-communist outlook of the Polish Diaspora, which resulted in almost complete isolation of the communist camp.⁷⁴ In 1960, the Canadian scholar Watson Kirkconnell observed that, under the influence of the post-war immigrants, ninety-five percent of all Poles in Canada were anti-Communists.⁷⁵

The above mentioned divisions of the migratory waves may appear to be quite rigid. It should be noted, therefore, that during politically-motivated migrations, there were also immigrants who came to Canada for economic reasons (and vice-versa). Yet, by speaking generally and highlighting the commonalities that characterized each migratory period, it is possible to distinguish periods of underlying change that occurred between each successive migration.

A sketch of the pre-1918 Polish migratory wave to Canada should be illustrated with statistical data indicating in figures and comparative proportions the influx of Polish immigrants.

⁷²Victor Turek, *Poles in Manitoba* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1967), 33.

⁷³Rudolf K. Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto, Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976), 4.

⁷⁴See Donald H. Avery and Jan K. Fedorowicz, *The Poles in Canada* (Ottawa: Société Historique du Canada, 1982).

⁷⁵ See Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 300.

Unfortunately, Canadian statistical sources offer little assistance for concretely mapping the extent of the early Polish migration. The deficiencies can be attributed to a lack of experience on behalf of the poorly prepared statistical departments of a young Canadian nation. The mass influx of non-British and non-American immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century made it clear that Canada was not prepared to deal with the task of absorbing a multi-national and multi-lingual mass of newcomers. Many shortcomings were caused by the ignorance in Canada of the political, religious and geographical divisions existing in the eastern territories of continental Europe.⁷⁶ The territorial divisions that ensued after the First World War changed the status of many immigrants. Some European nations gained national independence; others came under the domination of newly-created states which resulted in territorial shifts. The newly independent Polish state, which was revived in 1918, received East Prussia, Galicia and other territories which it had lost as a result of the partitions. Many of these areas were heavily populated by ethnic Germans, Ukrainians and Ruthenians who came under the administration of the Polish government. Such changes created confusion and an inadequate classification of the newcomers with respect to their national, ethnic, and linguistic affiliations.

The inaccuracies in the census data also stemmed from linguistic barriers, misinformation and the immigrants' poor education. Both Canadian immigration authorities and the immigrants often confused ethnic affiliation with citizenship. Polish immigrants who had lived under the Austrian, Prussian and Russian partitions occasionally identified themselves based on their place of birth and not their ethnicity. Consequently, they were registered as Russian, Prussian or

⁷⁶ On Polish immigration statistics see: Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*; William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1987); Kogler *The Polish Community in Canada*. On problems with Canadian immigration statistics see: Charles H. Young, *Ukrainian-Canadians: A Study in Assimilation*. (Toronto: Nelson, 1931); Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

Austrian immigrants. Canadian immigration authorities also created a separate category for “Galicians” in which they placed the Poles, Jews, Ruthenians, Ukrainians and other ethnic minority groups who came from the Austro-Hungarian territories. This classification poses many problems for scholars because ethnically distinct immigrants were classified into an ethnically homogeneous category. As a result of these discrepancies many Polish immigrants found themselves in records reserved for Russians, Austrians, Prussians or Galicians.⁷⁷

The inadequate census records are particularly problematic with regards to the Polish group. Although Poland regained independence in 1918, its international boundaries were not stabilized and recognized until 1923.⁷⁸ The Canadian census conducted in 1921 therefore, did not account for the political and geographical changes in Poland. Moreover, Poland did not cease to be a multi-national state after 1918. Polish minority groups which included Jews, Ukrainians and Germans came to Canada as Poles because the Canadian authorities categorized these immigrants based on their citizenship or birthplace, and not on their ethnic origin.⁷⁹ It was not until 1927 that the Canadian census authorities began to record the immigrant's origins based on their ethnic affiliation rather than on their citizenship and birthplace.⁸⁰

In view of the statistical deficiencies mentioned above, it is obvious that there are several impediments to postulating an accurate estimate of exactly how many Poles entered Canada until

⁷⁷According to Victor Turek, about seventy-five percent of Polish immigrants who settled in Manitoba before 1951 came from Galicia. Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 33.

⁷⁸David H. Kaplan and Jouni Häkli eds., *Boundaries and Place: European Borderlands in Geographical Context* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 228-234.

⁷⁹Non-Polish immigrants, namely Ukrainians and Jews, also identified themselves as Polish immigrants in order to receive Polish diplomatic protection in cases of criminal offence or deportation. Diplomatic relations between Poland and Canada were first established in 1919 and coordinated from the Polish Embassy in London. The first consulates were opened in Montreal and in Winnipeg between 1919-1920. A Consulate General was opened in Ottawa in 1933, prior to this date, Polish consuls reported directly to the Embassy in London and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland. For more information about Polish consulates in Canada see: Edward Kołodziej and Tadeusz Radzik, eds. *Zjazdy i konferencje konsulów Polskich w USA i Kanadzie: protokoły i referaty 1920-1938* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Marie Curie-Słodowskiej, 2004).

⁸⁰Turek, 13.

shortly after the First World War. A generally accepted figure is that approximately 50,000 people of Polish origin inhabited Canada in 1914. The 1921 census indicated that 53,403 Poles lived in Canada. By 1931, a more accurate census revealed that 145,503 Poles, out of a total Canadian population of 10,376,786, had settled in Canada.⁸¹

Old World: The Partitioned Res Publicae

The mass migration of Poles to North America must be viewed in the context of the economic, political and social conditions that prevailed in the partitioned territories of the former Polish Republic. The partitioning powers instituted ruthless political and economic oppression to obliterate any remnants of the Polish Commonwealth and its territories. In the lands governed by Prussia, Polish inhabitants were subjected to intense Germanization. Peasants found their lands expropriated and they were forced to move into industrial slums and ghettos. The Prussian-controlled territories produced the first significant wave of Polish emigrants. The Kaszuby Poles, who were compelled to leave their farms because of difficult political and economic conditions, were among the first ethnic Poles to immigrate to the New World.⁸²

Russia had received the largest chunk (about 62 per cent) of former Polish Commonwealth territory. Under Russian influence, Poles were also subjected to an unrestrained policy of Russification, particularly in the aftermath of the November Uprising (1830-1831) and the January Uprising (1863-1864) which resulted in the forced deportation of thousands of Poles to Siberia. Severe economic oppression lingered over the Russian controlled partition. Few steps were taken towards industrialization and urbanization. Farms were frequently divided

⁸¹ The ten year period between 1921 and 1931 showed an eighteen per cent increase in the overall Canadian population and a 172.5 per cent increase among Polish immigrants. Benedykt Heydenkorn, *The Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1979), 10.

⁸² Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, Volume II, 1795 to the Present* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1981).

which reduced them to bare subsistence levels and created a labour surplus in the villages that could not be absorbed by the underdeveloped industrial sectors. As a result of the political oppression and economic stagnation, many Poles decided to search for better conditions abroad.

The third partitioned territory, Austrian-occupied Galicia, was inhabited primarily by Ukrainian and Polish peasants and farmers who constituted one of the most destitute and land-hungry populations in East-Central Europe. Although Galicia was the least politically oppressed territory of the former Polish Commonwealth, the economic backwardness made living conditions difficult, resulting in a great trans-Atlantic economic emigration in the 1880s.⁸³ To this day, the term *Galician poverty* has survived in the Polish language as a popular expression: *bieda galicyjska* (Galician poverty) or *nędza galicyjska* (Galician misery). Others still joke about Galicia and Głodomeria – *goły* meaning ‘bare’ and *głód* meaning ‘hungry.’

The Polish writer Melchior Wańkowicz, vividly described the dire realities of daily life in his account of the Gasior family in his historically-based literary masterpiece *Three Generations*:

The Gasiors [sic] in Poland ate meat only once a year, at Easter. They could not afford to keep a pig. They kept ten hens, to be sure, but never touched an egg. All the eggs and three-fourths of the milk from their one miserable cow went for sale. Mother Gasior grew hemp which she spun and wove into coarse linen out of which she made their work-shirts and pants. Indeed, she even managed to find on her acre plot a hidden spot where, out of sight of the police, she grew a few tobacco plants for her husband’s use. A pair of boots cost them six months wages. But then those boots, reinforced now and then with new uppers, would last a lifetime. They ate bread sparingly, mostly they lived on cabbage and potatoes.⁸⁴

Abundant evidence exists to confirm that emigrants generally left the former Polish territories to improve their lot. Those who read letters or heard accounts from emigrants and shipping agents about the great expanses of land that were free for the taking in North America

⁸³ According to Canadian statistics, 104,716 persons from the multinational and multilingual Austro-Hungarian Empire arrived in Canada between 1900 and 1910. In 1903-1904, 9,307 out of 9,914 immigrants from Austria were Poles from Galicia and Ukrainians (Ruthenians) from Galicia and Bukovina.

⁸⁴ Melchior Wańkowicz, *Three Generations* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1973), 11.

were lured by such opportunities. The Gasior family heard rumours that someone from a neighbouring hamlet had gone to “Hamerika” and later to Canada where they purchased one hundred and sixty acres for ten “thalers.” The richest farmer in the Gasior’s village had only twenty-two acres.⁸⁵ Letters about large farms and vast plots of land and the sight of re-immigrants dressed in Sunday clothes like their *pan* (lords) enticed them to claim their own fortunes. One Polish woman, who had settled in Alberta in the 1920s, recalled the circumstances that lured her to Canada:

At home in Poland, there was no work for money, only at the manor. But it paid very little. People, particularly women, returned to the village from America with money. The girls who went praised their experience. The girls were needed to work in Canada on farms. I decided to go. Some people who had no money went to Germany or France. I wanted to do better. I wanted to go to Canada.⁸⁶

While such positive images undoubtedly lured many prospective emigrants to the New World, they have also coloured the imaginations of many migration scholars who have undermined the emigrant’s awareness of the social, political and economic realities in their homeland and abroad. We are accustomed to hearing about primitive and uninformed emigrants fleeing to a “land of opportunities” where “streets are paved with gold.” With varying degrees of emphasis, a number of scholars such as Turek and Makowski have maintained that Polish emigrants were not just victims of social, economic, political and religious oppression, but that the emigrants were themselves uneducated and backward.⁸⁷ Others have put the matter more bluntly. Wańkowicz described the Polish immigrants from Galicia as “crude and sheathed in ignorance.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Wańkowicz, 14.

⁸⁶ Krystyna Łukasiewicz, *Family and Work: Polish Immigrant Women in Alberta, 1920-1950 in Polonia in Alberta* ed. by Andrzej M. Kobos and Jolanta T. Pękacz (Edmonton, AB: Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 72.

⁸⁷ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*; Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada*.

⁸⁸ Wańkowicz, 25.

Such observations are not inaccurate – Galicia was indeed one of the most economically backward regions in Europe, and the majority of newcomers during the earlier stages of migration were illiterate.⁸⁹ Squalid conditions and various forms of oppression certainly enticed many immigrants to search elsewhere for “bread and a better future.” But an overemphasis on negative economic and political circumstances and the emigrant’s inability to navigate through these circumstances reduces them to a species that lacked agency and societal experiences to make well-informed and enterprising decisions. Lila Kluck, who had settled with her parents in Alberta in 1909, noted in her personal writings: “[we were] not ... slaves seeking freedom in a new land, or victims of oppression, persecution or poverty. We came perhaps seeking adventure and new experiences.”⁹⁰ As one scholar put it, “Weak, beaten men and women do not undertake transoceanic journeys to far-off lands unless they are herded aboard ship at gunpoint.”⁹¹

Scholars who have minimized the homeland experience and the peasants’ agency have overlooked important aspects of the emigrants’ cultural baggage. Many of them ignore the experience and the information that immigrants brought with them from the Old World which helped them navigate the complex capitalist system in North America. The societal experiences of peasant-migrants had a considerable bearing on their lives in their new homeland. By examining how peasants acquired and performed citizenship and how the populist movement advanced peasants’ status in the Old World, we can better evaluate the immigrants’ experience in political movements and social organizations, and draw more accurate conclusions about their experience in the New World.

⁸⁹ By the late 1870s, nearly ninety percent of village commune officials were illiterate. See: Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation In The Village: The Genesis Of Peasant National Identity In Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (U.S.A., Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 86. ft.23.

⁹⁰ Lilia Kluck, “The ‘Firsts’ in a Pioneer Family’s Life” in *Polonia in Alberta* ed. by Andrzej M. Kobos and Jolanta T. Pękacz (Edmonton, AB: Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 55.

⁹¹ Stella Hryniuk, “‘Sifton’s Pets’ Who Where They?” in *Canada’s Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, Stella Hryniuk and Liubomyr Luciuk eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 4.

Harvesting a New Nation: Peasant Politics and the Polish National Question

In the socio-political sphere, the legacy of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth included a deep division between *enserfed* peasants and gentry landowners. Only the *szlachta* (the nobles), who had basked in their *aurea libertas* for centuries, were considered to be citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This understanding began to change in the latter part of the 18th century under the influence of Enlightenment ideas. The terms “*naród*” (nation) and “*obywatel*” (citizen) were ambivalently defined in the Polish constitution of May 3rd 1791. In some paragraphs these terms were applied only to the landed gentry, in others, to all inhabitants of the Commonwealth. The partitions of Poland forced a new definition of the national identity, based more on history and culture than on state or estate. The ideas of Romanticism contributed to discovering peasant folk culture as an important pillar of the Polish past and of national identity. The Polish national movement, which was led by Polish intellectuals in the 19th century, considered Polish peasants to constitute the nucleus of the Polish nation. This was especially true after the failed insurrection of 1830-31 when the future of a free Polish state began to rest increasingly on a mass peasant patriotic uprising.

The peasant uprising of 1846 in Galicia, however, proved that prospects of a mass peasant patriotic uprising in support of the Polish national movement were grim. In February of that year, peasants in western Galicia, mainly of a Roman Catholic extraction, directed a rising against serfdom which resulted in the slaughter of about one thousand insurgents, mostly landlords and officials, and the destruction of nearly 400 manors.⁹² Austrian authorities had encouraged the peasants to defend their emperor against the complots of their landlords, but the

⁹²Thomas W. Simons, Jr., “The Peasant Revolt of 1846 in Galicia: Recent Polish Historiography” in *Slavic Review* vol. 30 (4): December 1971; Arnon Gill, *Die Polnische Revolution 1846: Zwischen nationalem Befreiungskampf des Landadels und antifeudaler Bauernerhebung* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1974).

real cause behind the massacre of Polish patriots by peasants was the tension between the two classes.

The peasants feared that by resurrecting the Polish state, the nobles would bring back landlord wilfulness. Historian Keely Stauter-Halsted observed that Polish-speaking peasants were more apt to identify with the Austrian Emperor and the Catholic Church than with their Polish lords or the middle classes.⁹³ Under Austrian auspices, the peasants enjoyed a limited improvement of their legal status, serfdom was abolished, some restrictions on the *corvée* had been introduced and a number of legal institutions were implemented to protect peasants against the landlords' infringements. The legal mechanisms were quite ineffective, but they offered the peasants a form of protection that they had not enjoyed under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The revolution of 1848 significantly advanced the peasants' status in Galicia. The most important consequence of the revolution for the peasantry was that the *corvée* had been abolished and that the peasants received property rights to their farms. Austria reluctantly abolished the *corvée* in an attempt to woo the peasants away from supporting the Polish landlords and their nationalist aspirations. Moreover, the defeat of the revolution in 1849 and the subsequent phase of neo-absolutist rule in Austria severely limited all possibilities of political participation among peasants and other segments of society for more than a decade.

New possibilities for bridging the gap between peasants and the gentry arrived during the Austrian constitutional reforms in 1860, which led to the constitution of 1867.⁹⁴ Theoretically,

⁹³Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation In The Village: The Genesis Of Peasant National Identity In Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (U.S.A.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁹⁴The Austrian constitution of 1867 arranged, at least in theory, that all nationalities should enjoy equal rights and it guaranteed that each ethnic group could use its own language in education, administration, and public life. In 1868, the Hungarians passed a law that allowed minorities to conduct local government in their own language, to hold the chief posts in the counties where they were in the majority and to have their own schools.

the constitutional reforms opened new possibilities for the development of a civil society. A number of enlightenment associations were established to educate the “*lud*” (people), though such initiatives at this time were still limited. From those educational associations that were established in the 1860s, only the Ukrainophile *Prosvita* was able to flourish, while Polish initiatives met little success.⁹⁵ By the turn of the century associations and organizational networks with increasing memberships from rural sectors began to spread. Polish voluntary associations built residential accommodations in the towns to assist children to acquire a secondary education. The school councils and the enlightenment societies also increasingly concerned themselves with providing books for young pupils and educating peasants on new farming methods.

The co-operative movement, which was originally concerned with popular Credit Banks, offering short-term loans to peasants for farm improvements and the purchase of farm equipment, played an important part in the politicization and economic advancement of the peasantry. Newly created Farmers’ Circles helped introduce peasants to modern and more efficient cultivation methods to help them sell their yields. By the early 1900s, yields of barley and oats were well above average in Galicia. By Western European standards, yields were low, but from the perspective of a Polish peasant, the upward trend was a welcome change. Historian Franciszek Bujak estimated that by the turn of the century peasants’ income from animal husbandry had also increased to at least as great as that from crop production.⁹⁶ In 1898, a Canadian visitor admired the resourcefulness of Galician peasants, noting that “in their cultivation of their respective locations, not even the width necessary for the furrow of a plough

⁹⁵ The Ukrainophile *Prosvita* Society in Galicia (founded in 1868), issued 348 educational booklets (3 million copies) between 1877 and 1914. *Prosvita*’s and its Moscowphile rival, the *Kachkovski* Society (founded in 1872), encouraged their readers to found co-operative shops, savings and loan societies and grain storage facilities.

⁹⁶ Stella Hryniuk, 12.

is wasted [...], crops may be seen at any stage of growth.⁹⁷ By the turn of the 19th century peasants were experimenting with new varieties of seed, they raised good quality livestock; they introduced new fruits into orchard cultivation and they produced diversified legumes, fodder crops and cash specialty crops. An improvement in transportation networks and rail lines also meant that peasants could take advantage of a much broader market.

In 1875, the Roman Catholic priest Stanislaw Stojalowski started to publish two Polish-language newspapers, *Wieniec* (Wreath) and *Pszczółka* (Bee), which encouraged peasants to become pro-active citizens and to join mutual aid associations to improve conditions in the villages. Stojalowski was a great advocate of peasant rights and grass-roots democracy. He wanted peasants to learn to use their constitutional rights and to become Polish patriots. In 1883, he suggested that peasants should establish their own electoral committees in districts where other Polish committees did not bother to integrate them.⁹⁸

The enlightenment societies and parish publications were often closely associated with village reading clubs. In their rudimentary form, the reading clubs were places where villagers could come to socialize and read newspapers and discuss them with illiterate villagers. The enlightenment societies and mutual-aid associations encouraged members to gain practical knowledge through didactic features in their publications and discussions on such topics as animal husbandry, crop production, health education, beekeeping and manuring.

It should be noted that rural organizations and religious associations were generally set up by government officials, the clergy, the village intelligentsia and the landowning elite to influence the peasant's behaviour. Carmela Patrias suggested that elites and their political representatives in Hungary established rural associations "to reduce discontent by stabilizing

⁹⁷ Stella Hryniuk, 9.

⁹⁸ Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation In The Village: The Genesis Of Peasant National Identity In Austrian Poland, 1848-1914*.

economic conditions and to foster a spirit of cooperation” in order to prevent radical and socialist ideas from flourishing.⁹⁹ The lowest strata of rural society, which made up the bulk of Polish emigrants to North America at the turn of the 19th century, had quite naturally, limited resources to set up and run rural associations. Limited education and a lack of money prevented poor villagers from handling administrative duties such as accounting and correspondence writing, let alone purchasing or renting a village hall. While clergymen and patrons undoubtedly imposed their own politics and ideologies onto the organizations that they supported, this does not mean that peasants were passive and unable to construct their own opinions and to gain some organizational experience.

There were many voluntary associations, reading clubs and taverns in the countryside where even dwarf holders and landless labourers gathered to mingle and to discuss news. At their core, such places were cultural rather than economic or political in nature. Members gathered to chat, to read and discuss newspapers, to play games, to dance and to eat *kielbasa* and drink. Keely Stauter-Halsted described the village tavern as a “microcosm of public life” and “a medium of information for largely illiterate villagers who learned news about the world or gossip about local affairs.”¹⁰⁰ Even in the poorer parts of eastern Galicia, uneducated villagers were well informed that prices of grain on the European markets had risen at the turn of the 20th century.¹⁰¹

Since the enlightenment press in partitioned Poland was usually associated with the Polish nationalist movement, it also provided peasants with a political education. Public discussions and the reading of various publications helped to better inform peasants about the

⁹⁹ Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 31.

¹⁰⁰ Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation In The Village: The Genesis Of Peasant National Identity In Austrian Poland, 1848-1914*, 51.

¹⁰¹ Stella Hryniuk, 12.

social sphere around them. But the newspapers were not only limited to providing news about political events in their homeland, the empire or the European continent. The co-editor of the daily *Kurier Lwowski* (The Lwów Courier), Bolesław Wysłouch, informed peasants about their rights as Austrian citizens, and he encouraged them to create separate electoral committees to support the election of peasant candidates to the Galician diet.¹⁰²

Stojałowski also continued to play an instrumental role in shaping the direction of the peasant movement in Galicia, though he saw his political activities as part of the Christian social-movement. Stojałowski and Wysłouch eventually separated, - as did the peasant movement - over the issue of whether the peasantry should be an independent, secular body separated from the influence of the clergy. Wysłouch and his followers represented a new trend in Polish politics and argued that the *lud* (people) represented the core of the Polish national identity and therefore should be at the center of the Polish nationalist movement.¹⁰³

In the late 1880s, Wysłouch established *Przyjaciel Ludu* (People's Friend), a new left-wing newspaper which represented the ideological cradle of the Polish peasant movement, the *ruch ludowy*. While the Polish nationalist movement favoured a hierarchical nation fit for the struggle with other nations, the peasant movement favoured a more democratic approach that articulated the peasants' interests. The degree of peasant political participation can be observed through the increase of peasant candidates who were elected to the Reichsrat (Parliament) in Vienna. While there was only one elected peasant in 1891, nine peasant candidates were elected

¹⁰² Peter Brock, "Bolesław Wysłouch, Founder of the Polish Peasant Party" in *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 30 (74): December 1951, 139-163.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

for office six years later. This was quite a remarkable accomplishment, especially since Austrian authorities tried to prevent the election of peasant candidates.¹⁰⁴

By the 1890s, several other peasant parties styled themselves as representatives of peasant interests and as Polish nationalist parties. Among the most important of these political organizations was the People's Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*) formed by Wysłouch, Jakub Bojko and Jan Stapiński and their supporters in 1895. The Party's major competitor was the People's Party (later changed to *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* - The Polish People's Party, PSL) which modelled itself as the avant-garde of the peasant movement and the Polish nationalist movement.¹⁰⁵

Workers Unite!: Politicizing the Polish Proletariat

The Polish industrial proletariat, which represented a significant portion of the immigrants who settled in North America, was arguably even more politicized and better organized than the rural peasantry. Originating in the late nineteenth century, the industrial proletariat recruited mainly from the lower class: craftsmen, foreign immigrants, the Jewish poor, and the peasantry. Although the proletariat in partitioned Poland did not match its counterparts in Western Europe, it significantly transformed the socio-political landscape of many localities. Warsaw, Upper Silesia, the Dąbrowa Basin, and above all, the 'Polish-Manchester' - Łódź, experienced dramatic population increases and a mushrooming in industry. Peasants continued to move into urban centers, where better wages and economic opportunities

¹⁰⁴See: Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation In The Village: The Genesis Of Peasant National Identity In Austrian Poland, 1848-1914*.

¹⁰⁵The party eventually suffered from a three-way split. In 1913, the leadership of the more radical wing PSL-Lewica (Left) of Jan Stapiński passed into the hands of the more moderate PSL-Piast under Wincenty Witos and Jan Dąbski. From 1915, another wing, the PSL-Wyzwolenie (Liberation), operated in Prussia and Russia. The Polish socialist movement at the time continued to suffer as it was weakened by the nationalist movement. Most socialists could not agree whether social revolution or the national issue should take precedence. Despite these tensions and schism, the PSL continued to be a major factor in Polish politics for fifty years.

were easier to come by. The urban population increased by 75 percent between 1880/1890 and 1910, and around 18 percent of the total Polish population was dependent on industrial employment.¹⁰⁶

By the 1890s, a Polish Trade Union movement was born in Prussia and Austria, and later in Russia after the Revolution of 1905-1907. Aside from the Trade Unions, a number of other organizations like the *Związek Wzajemnej Pomocy Chrześcijańskiej Robotników Górnośląskich* (Christian Mutual Aid Society of Upper Silesian Workers') and the *Towarzystwo Socialistów Polskich* (Society of Polish Socialists') in Berlin, pressed for eight-hour work days and better pay. Marxism however, was of minimal concern to most worker-friendly organizations at this time. Attempts to form a common political front had failed.¹⁰⁷

The politicization of the proletariat occurred at the turn of the century. The ongoing policy of Russification and the growing possibility of an Austrian-Russian, or even a German-Russian conflict, put the spotlight on the Polish national question, and revived the patriotic movement. The Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which was formed in Paris in 1892 under the chairmanship of Boleslaw Limanowski, competed with Roman Dmowski's National Democrats. Like the PSL, the PPS suffered from a number of splits and schisms between its anti-nationalist and nationalist members. In 1906, the PPS divided into two rival camps, the PPS-Lewica (Left) which supported the anti-nationalist communist camp, and the PPS-Rewolucja (Revolution) which became preoccupied with national independence. The PPS initially enjoyed little

¹⁰⁶ Ewa Morawska, "Labor Migrations of Poles in the Atlantic World Economy, 1880-1914," in Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch, eds., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 175.

¹⁰⁷ During the inter-war period, at least five rival Trade Union Federations, all claiming some degree of competence over the working-class came into existence in Poland. Norman Davies, *God's Playground*, 199.

influence over the Polish Socialist Democratic Party (PPSD) in Galicia, or over the PPS branch in the Prussian partition with which it merged in April 1919.¹⁰⁸

Another group that vied for the hearts and minds for the Polish working class was the *Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski* – KPRP (Communist Workers Party of Poland), which had developed sophisticated tactics for infiltrating the existing political and social institutions, and maintained a revolutionary profile that operated through dedicated and disciplined members.¹⁰⁹

The KPRP was formed as a result of a merger in 1918 between two leftist factions, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) and the PPS-Left. In 1925, at the 2nd Party Congress, the party changed its name to *Komunistyczna Partia Polski* - KPP (the Communist Party of Poland), and decided to participate in the parliamentary elections.

During the inter-war period, Polish Communists were incapable of influencing a predominantly Catholic, anti-Soviet and nationalist Polish society. Its following in the working class was minimal and regionally confined. Revolutionary upheaval was the overall goal of the Polish communist movement. Political propaganda and active involvement in public protests against the economic policies of the government were the KKP's usual *modus operandi*. But while signs that Poland was close to a communist revolution were seen in all stages of social conflict, a revolution never materialized.

The Polish-Bolshevik war (1919-1921) marked a period of bitter disillusionment for Polish Communists. Party members anxiously waited for news of spontaneous revolution in

¹⁰⁸ Despite its internal problems, its rivalry with the communists and its enigmatic relationship with Jozef Piłsudski, the PPS, like the PSL, managed to survive the Second World War as a leading political force of the Polish Left.

¹⁰⁹The movement was initiated by the intelligentsia which had been exposed to radical literature in Russian universities, student self-education circles and from Marxist and socialist émigrés. The revolutionary movement in Russia ignited their activities and lent credence to their radical theories.

Warsaw, but the revolution and the Red Army's victory never came. The Polish-Bolshevik war only further distanced the Polish Communists from mainstream society and solidified the view that the party was an agent of the Soviet government. Ironically, Polish Communists failed miserably in gaining the confidence of their Soviet patrons.

In May of 1926, the KPP temporarily supported Piłsudski's *coup d'état* to forestall a right-wing dictatorship. Although the Communists quickly recognized that this was a mistake, it was too late to avoid dissension. Stalin violently denounced the KPP's support for Piłsudski as a betrayal of the socialist camp. The Party never recovered from what became known as the 'May Error,' and it was dissolved by Stalin in 1938.

The KKP has frequently been sullied by scholars, including some pro-Communists, who preferred to underscore its failures than to give it credit for trying to establish a viable communist following in Poland. Considering the fact that the party mostly operated underground due to its illegal status until 1922, and owing to its unpopular image as pro-Soviet, anti-patriotic and ethnically "not purely Polish," the party deserves some credit. During the 1920s, the KPP's membership fluctuated between 2,500 and 6,000, with a peak of 5,934 in 1927.¹¹⁰ In the 1930s, the membership of the entire Polish Communist movement, which included the KPP, the Ukrainian branch of the KPP (the Communist Party of Western Ukraine) and the Communist Party of Western Belarus peaked significantly. By 1936, the total membership of the movement, including the youth movements affiliated with each of the three main branches, reached a total of 33,736.¹¹¹ According to Jaff Schatz general estimates do not account for approximately 6,000 Communists who were imprisoned during this period, which would increase the total to about

¹¹⁰See: Jaff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (U.S.A.: University of California Press, 1991).

¹¹¹Jaff Schatz, "Jews and the Communist Movement in Interwar Poland" in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18.

40,000.¹¹² Political and economic factors significantly influenced the fluctuations in the KPP's membership. In the mid-1930s, for example, membership increased threefold because of poor economic conditions in Poland, but it decreased rapidly in response to better economic conditions and heightened political repressions against the communist movement. Most of the membership was drawn from ethnic minorities due to the movement's international profile and its opposition to discrimination against national minorities. In the Polish communist youth movement for instance, Jews represented the majority with 51 percent in 1930; Poles (19 percent); Ukrainians (18 percent) and Belarusians (12 percent).¹¹³

Towards the end of the 19th century, social, political and economic changes brought about a new type of Polish peasant and worker. The encroachment of capitalist structures into the once isolated village community opened new avenues for enterprising peasants, who took advantage of the prospects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The peasants' appropriation of political culture, better education and new technical advances helped improve their productivity, their confidence and their overall well-being. In his study on Ukrainian peasants, Ivan Rudnytsky noted that "the peasant masses [...] not only [experienced] an improvement of their living conditions, but also a new feeling of human dignity and civic pride."¹¹⁴

The emergence of rural associations, reading clubs, credit and mutual aid associations, and an increase in education is indicative of the penetration of capitalism to the remote European countryside and the integration of its residents into broader national structures. As a result, the peasantry became more enterprising and village societies were no longer static or isolated.

¹¹² Ibid., 18.

¹¹³ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁴ Stella Hryniuk, 16.

Peasant advocates like Wysłouch, who argued that the peasants should be at the core of the national movement, not only revived folk culture, but they helped increase the peasant's awareness of their position in society, and they encouraged peasants to practice their civic rights. These experiences became part of the cultural baggage of peasant-migrants which helped them traverse the challenges and complexities of North American society. Yet if conditions and the social status of the peasantry appeared to be improving by the late 19th century in partitioned Poland, why then, did so many peasants begin to immigrate to Canada in the first place?

The Law of Attraction: Polish Immigrants on the Move

The peasantry was not homogenous. Various factors and motivations worked in varying degrees for potential emigrants. For the majority, the move was purely economic. The Sarnecki family, which came from Galicia to Alberta in 1897, initially hesitated leaving their familiar village, although in the end the prospects of gaining vast tracts of cheap farmland won them over.¹¹⁵ Others made the long journey because of their personal ambitions. As we have seen earlier, one Polish female settler, who arrived in Canada in the 1920s, recalled that she “wanted to do better” than those who went to Germany or France, so she decided to go to Canada. A number of settlers who arrived in Canada after the First World War noted that they emigrated in order to provide a better future for their children. There were also those who thought that “a trip to Canada offered not only the possibility of well-paid jobs, but also an opportunity to see the world and experience something new and more exciting than village life in Poland.”¹¹⁶ Generally speaking, however, the majority of emigrants, particularly from Galicia, went to the New World because they were land-hungry and looking for better employment opportunities.

¹¹⁵ Debbie Anne Seipert, “Follow me, Stanisław Sarnecki, ‘The Moses of Rabbit Hill’” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 38.

¹¹⁶ Krystyna Łukasiewicz, “Family and Work: Polish Immigrant Women” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 73.

The overpopulation of the Galician countryside and a modest industry which could not absorb the surplus population from the villages, forced peasants to look for work elsewhere. After being freed from serfdom in 1848, peasants were able to acquire ownership rights over their land, but in inadequate quantities. As their families expanded, their land lots shrank due to partible inheritance. In order to divide the land fairly between heirs and to allow for a plot of land to connect to a water source, farmers divided their land into long narrow strips, sometimes narrower than the plough itself. The continual buying and selling, dividing and inheriting of these long, narrow pieces of land meant that farmers often owned many unconnected pieces of land, scattered throughout the area. This complicated arrangement greatly slowed even simple farming tasks.

The division of land into narrow strips and scattered plots made it impossible for one peasant to harvest his land without disturbing the land around his. To alleviate this problem, village associations often assigned days for planting and harvesting. Still more complicated was the task of actually cultivating the land. To complete this task, a farmer and his farmhands loaded up the manure, seed and other implements near the family's home and transported them to the fields. Since the fields were located so far from one another and from the family's home, farmers spent a great deal of the day walking between places. In fact, they may have walked one hour from their home to a strip of land they intend to fertilize. Most farmers had some landholdings that lay dormant, simply too far away to make planting and harvesting practical.

Historically, the peasantry was deeply tied to the land. The "Apostle of Truth" Aleksander Swiętochowski, noted in his writings that the peasants cared more about the land than about their own freedom from the ruling elites. '*My wasi*' they said, '*a ziemia nasza*'

(we're yours, but the land is ours).¹¹⁷ The strong attachment to the land followed the peasant-migrants to the New World. Monica Primrose, in her recollection of the Polish community in Coleman, Alberta, noted that Polish men got into women-related fights out of jealousy, but that battles over territory were so serious that occasionally the police had to get involved.¹¹⁸ The land was a source of sustainability, income and security. Turek observed that "the landless peasant, cottager, day labourer, and the servant and small artisan, who being landless, was compelled to take-on some trade, though he often treated his occupation as a temporary one, with the view of returning to the soil."¹¹⁹

The amount of village land was finite; land was in much demand and commanded high prices, and although many gentry landowners experienced financial difficulties and had to sell or lease their land, the amount that was available for purchase by peasants was small. At the same time, the peasantry was becoming more politicized and better educated which increased their expectations, and even more so for their children. Since the market economy had penetrated into the villages, peasants looked for more land on which to grow more crops and raise animals to boost their incomes. When the opportunities to expand economically began to dry up, peasants were willing to go in search for more land abroad. So were the dwarf holders, cottagers and poor day labourers and small artisans whose prospects of owning a piece of land in partitioned Poland were much slimmer.

Opportunity knocked in the mid-1890s when Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton, charged with the responsibility of immigration, drove the campaign to open Canada's doors to

¹¹⁷ Aleksander Świętochowski, *Historia chłopów polskich w zarysie II* [The history of Polish peasants at a Glance] (Lwów: 1928).

¹¹⁸ Monica Primrose, "Good Times in the Coleman Polish Hall" in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 85.

¹¹⁹ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 34.

Central and Eastern Europe. He felt that the country needed to establish farming on the prairies, and it needed people who could survive on their own to do it. Sifton thought that the burly Central and Eastern European peasant was the best candidate for the job. He desired a “stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children.”¹²⁰ The lure of land, with 150 acres available for ten dollars in Canada, was very strong. As a result, landless peasants and well-off farmers headed to the New World in large numbers to secure a piece of “the last best west.”¹²¹

The fact that many emigrants were enticed by the opportunity to acquire large tracts of land for little money has often overshadowed negative aspects of migration. While some scholars such as Carmela Patrias have balanced the history by looking at the difficulties that immigrants faced in Canada, the overall impression is that immigrants left oppression and exploitation in turn for opportunities and bountiful farms. While the immigrants generally left to “strike it rich” they were well aware of the risks and difficulties intrinsic to a transoceanic migration.

In order to comprehend immigrant culture and the immigrant experience during the early stages of transoceanic migration, we should not overlook the ambition, enterprising verve and courage that a decision to emigrate entailed. The emigrants were brave journeymen and women who were aware that they could face indebtedness, family breakup, exploitation and physical injury in a land that was entirely foreign to them. Immigration was supposed to be beneficial to the immigrant, but it also unleashed many fears, insecurities, and troubles.

¹²⁰ Sir Clifford Sifton, “The Immigrants Canada Wants” in *Maclean’s Magazine*, (April 1, 1922), 16; 32-4.

¹²¹ Sir Clifford Sifton’s aggressive immigration policies are probably one of the Laurier years most lasting legacies. Appointed Minister of the Interior in 1896, the young lawyer immediately set out to revitalize a moribund immigration service that had left the Canadian West a sparsely populated hinterland. Realizing that the British-oriented immigration policy was too costly for the meager results it produced, Sifton opted for luring other immigrants, no matter what their national background. For more on Canada’s immigration policy during the Sifton years see: Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*; Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates. Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy 1540-1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).

*Making Sense of Canada: Disappointments and Dreams of a Better (Socialist?)
Future*

*Góralu czy ci nie żal,
Od chodzić od stron ojczystych,
Świerkowych lasów i hal,
I tych potoków przejrzystych?*

*Góralu czy ci nie żal?
Góralu wróć się do hal.
Góralu czy ci nie żal?
Góralu wróć się do hal.*

*Góral na góry spoziera,
I lzy rękawem ociera,
A góry porzucić trzeba,
Dla chleba, panie, dla chleba.*

Góralu czy ci nie żal,

*Góralu wróć się do hal,
W chatach zostali ojcowie,
Gdy pójdziesz od nich hen w dal,
Cóż z nimi będzie, ach, kto wie?*

Góralu czy ci nie żal,

*Góral jak dziecko płacze;
"Może ich już nie zobaczę?"
I poszedł w dal mroczną zkosą,
W guńce starganej i boso.*

*Góralu żal mi cię żal,
Góralu, wracaj do hal!
Góralu żal mi cię żal,
Góralu, wracaj do hal!*

This song, which originally appeared as a poem entitled *Dla Chleba* (For Bread) in "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" on 3 March 1866, was written by the Polish nationalist poet and writer, Michał Bałucki. It is considered to be one of Bałucki's saddest pieces of prose, written after the failed Polish October Insurrection against tsarist Russia in 1863. The song is a lament about a

Góral (a Polish highlander) who left his *ojczyzna* (fatherland) and his *ojców* (fathers) *dla chleba* (for bread). The protagonist is heartbroken, he cries like a child and as he wipes his tears on his sleeves he asks himself “*może ich już nie zobacze*” (maybe I won’t see them again).

Folksongs like this one were handed down in oral tradition as “emigration” songs, reminding those who sang them not just about their homeland, but also whether it was a good decision to come to the New World. Such sentiments increased among post-1918 Polish emigrants who, unlike their predecessors, left an independent homeland which was no longer oppressed by three partitioning powers. The son of a Polish immigrant noted that there was “always a time for polkas and mazurkas for dancing, and sad songs for reminiscing and crying about coming to Canada.”¹²² In her study of Polish “Góral” string bands in 1930s Polish-American society, Mary Cygan concluded that songs were created as a reaction to American culture, “Americanization” pressures and the consequences of the Great Depression.¹²³ The evolving character of Polish-Canadian music, which drew innovatively from commercial business and new developing styles to appeal to Canadian-born Poles, continued to mingle “old” and “new” elements, as did other aspects of the immigrants expression. Ethnic discrimination, low wages, terrible housing and other difficult circumstances inspired a repertoire of sentiments that were critical of the “land of opportunities” and nostalgic towards the beloved homeland and “its green pastures, familiar smells and sounds.”

Like the *Góral* who left his mountains, many immigrants found plenty of reasons to wonder: “*czy ci nie żal ... od chodząc od stron ojczystych*” (aren’t you sad to leave your fatherland) after settling in Canada. The harsh circumstances, chauvinism and exploitation that

¹²² Interview with Andrzej Kipiniak (Toronto, July 14, 2009).

¹²³ Peter Rachleff, “The Dynamics of ‘Americanization’” in *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working-Class Experience*, Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, Bruce Laurie eds., (U.S.A.: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 347.

the majority of Polish immigrants experienced in the New World certainly gave many of them reasons to doubt whether they had in fact, made a good decision to emigrate.

Conditions in Canada before the outbreak of the Second World War were ill-suited to meet the expectations of many Polish immigrants. Most industries offered hazardous working conditions and very low wages; urban housing was overcrowded and unsanitary; and many Poles faced discrimination and injustice. As a result of Canada's early immigration policy, the majority of Polish migrants settled primarily on the land. In 1936, nearly 80 percent of all Polish immigrants who came to Canada after 1921 resided in rural areas. Seventy percent of gainfully employed men and forty percent of gainfully employed women who were born in Poland worked in agriculture, mainly as farmers and stock raisers. More than fifty percent of all Polish immigrants who resided in western Canada in the 1930s supported themselves by agriculture.¹²⁴

Peasant-migrants were generally accustomed to spending long and difficult working days on the land in Poland. They were used to toiling long hours, raising crops and hauling ploughs on scattered plots of land, or thanklessly serving in some wealthier household. But the rugged Canadian wilderness on which they had to build their homesteads far exceeded their imaginations. The land available was often covered with heavy poplar and swamp spruce, making clearing it without equipment strenuous and time consuming. In many instances their plots were miles away from the closest neighbour, and accessible only by wild trails. Immigrants had difficulty conceptualizing the vastness of the country and they could rarely rely on kin networks as they did in their villages.

The mere journey through Canada to the new settlements in the West was not only exhausting and nerve-wrecking, but often humiliating. One woman who came to Canada to

¹²⁴ Census of Alberta 1936. Population and Agriculture, 1025; Census of Alberta 1936, Occupations, Unemployment, Earnings and Employment, Household and Families, 941; Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*. (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1979), 12.

work as a domestic in the 1930s was asked to complete a morality certificate, and to sign a statement confirming that she:

agrees to accept the position provided for her by the CPR, she is not proceeding to Canada with a view of getting married, she has no intention of joining friends and relatives in Canada, and that she will not attempt to gain illegal entry into the USA.¹²⁵

Canadian authorities often made sure that the women would not try to leave train stations before their final destinations by transporting them in locked rail cars and ordering “city police and railway constables on the station platforms [...] to keep people from entering the windows to take the girls.”¹²⁶ Carmela Patrias observed a similar treatment of Hungarian immigrants, who were “threatened with deportation should they attempt to leave the train before it reached the Prairie Provinces.”¹²⁷ A Polish immigrant who later became an active member of the Polish community in Canada, Julian Topolnicki, recalled that Canadian authorities took a twenty-five dollar deposit from each passenger to ensure that they would not try to get off the train in the eastern provinces.¹²⁸ The deposit had to be made before the passengers left Europe, and it was returned to them only after they arrived in Winnipeg. Women were not allowed to communicate with their relatives, who often showed up at the train stations to take them away. In one account “a party of twenty-four girls, destined for Winnipeg, kept the whole station in a state of upheaval for an entire day” because “relatives [attempted] to communicate with [the] women and [they tried] to take them out of the station. After the girls were placed on the train, several men with automobiles attempted to take these young women away, tossing clothing through the

¹²⁵ Glenbow Archives, Calgary, CPR London memorandum to Mr. Colley, February 28, 1930, CPR Papers, box 149, file 1481.

¹²⁶ W.J. Egan, Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization 1928-1929, Annual Departmental Reports 1928-1929, Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1930, II:81.

¹²⁷ Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 61.

¹²⁸ Julian Topolnicki, “Na miejskim bruku” in *Pamiętniki Imigrantów*, Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed. (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1975), 262.

windows.”¹²⁹ Some immigrants found creative ways to break their agreements with the railway companies by crawling out of toilet windows or abandoning their luggage to create the impression that they were returning back to their wagon.¹³⁰

The Central Women’s Colonization Board (CWCB), which worked closely with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) to recruit and find placements for domestic workers often mediated on behalf of its women to ensure that they found satisfactory working conditions, though this objective was not always met. The many women who were not represented by the CWCB often faced tough and humiliating circumstances. One woman recalled:

In Edmonton we were kept inside a fence and guarded by the immigration officer so that we would not leave. The big, strong girls were hired first. I was small, so I stayed longer. Then the boys came and started to ridicule the girls, calling them old maids that had come to get married. I was so mad, that when a farmer offered me ten dollars per month, I accepted right away.¹³¹

Entire immigrant families felt disenchanted and betrayed. Their high expectations, which were often coloured by Canadian recruiting agents and by their own imaginations, were seldom met. After giving birth to her fifth child while en route to New York in 1908, Maria and her husband Jan Polanski boarded a train to Strathcona, Alberta. The two-week train ride was exhausting, and they still had to complete the last stretch of their journey in a horse wagon to a remote postal station between Fort Saskatchewan and Bruderheim. The family eventually settled on the “Victoria Trail,” some twenty miles north of the Scotford, on the North Saskatchewan River in the Radway district. It was a desolate area, with no nearby churches, schools, or hospitals, surrounded only by an abundance of bogs and wildlife. The Polanski’s had endured many hardships in the Old Country, but the circumstances in Canada tested their resourcefulness

¹²⁹ W.J. Egan, Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization 1928-1929, Annual Departmental Reports 1928-1929, Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1930, II:81.

¹³⁰ Patrias, 61.

¹³¹ Krystyna Łukasiewicz, “Family and Work: Polish Immigrant Women” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 73.

and stealth beyond imagination. Jan built the family's first log farmhouse using no nails. He covered the roof with moss collected from the bogs which "dripped endlessly following a rain."¹³² The children had to hide under an oilcloth-covered table to stay dry. The family survived on berries, mushrooms and wildlife for some time until Jan found a job and cleared their land.

While many immigrants went to Canada hoping to ameliorate their lives, many left Poland because of circumstances that had little to do with a lack of food or land. Some emigrants were "pretty well-to-do" in the old country, but "there were better prospects in Canada."¹³³ Antoni and Maria Woźniak, together with their four children, left Poland in 1930 because they feared for their lives. The family had settled in Volhynia (Wołyń) in the 1920s, an area close to the Soviet border which was riddled with constant animosity after the Polish-Soviet war and violent clashes over land that had been settled by Polish veteran-settlers. People "were vanishing without a trace and buildings and crops were [...] set ablaze."¹³⁴ The Woźniaks sold their farm to pay for their journey to Canada. After arriving in Halifax, the family travelled some 4000 miles by rail to Edmonton, and later to the outskirts of Wainwright where they settled. Plagued by flies and mosquitoes, Antoni Woźniak began to clear one acre at a time (it usually took several weeks to clear just one acre), and he built the family's first home - a shack made from wood, cardboard, sawdust and wood chips.

The immigrants were not the only ones who wrote and spoke about the harsh realities that they faced in Canada. A Canadian National Railway (CNR) report produced in 1928 did not conceal the grim conditions that awaited settlers in parts of Alberta: "Observations of the

¹³² Frank S. Polanski, "With Faith, Hope, and Charity: Jan and Maria Polanski Never Looked Back" in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 47.

¹³³ Stella Hryniuk, 14.

¹³⁴ Izabella Wik; revised by Roman Wozniak, "Conquering the Peace River Country" in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 91.

conditions that are being faced by the settlers of central European nationalities in the Athabasca district would not appeal to any other available nationality.”¹³⁵

The twelve to fourteen-hour working day of many immigrants on farms did not differ much from what they were used to in their homeland. But the seasonality of agrarian work prevented many from maintaining steady employment and accumulating savings. When immigrants arrived in the spring, many of them, as the railway company officials knew quite well, would have a hard time finding work in agriculture until harvest in September. Few farmers employed additional help during the summer and winter months. Frustrated, and in many instances indebted because of their travel expenses, immigrants were anxious to reunite with families and they were yearning to improve their circumstances. An Old Italian saying summed up the disillusionment that many felt: "I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: First, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them." A Polish immigrant, who later became a Communist exclaimed "I read a book written by a Polish author. The book said "Canada smells of resin. To me Canada smelled of sweat and hard work.”¹³⁶

Canadian agents, middlemen and employers played an instrumental role in colouring the immigrants' imagination by disseminating a positive image of Canada. Julian Topolnicki recalled in his memoir that many Polish emigrants were under the impression that the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company guaranteed them work. He recalled that many of his compatriots were bitterly disappointed when they arrived.¹³⁷ The costs of travelling abroad were very high,

¹³⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, F.B. Kirkwood, Report on Athabasca District of Alberta, November 1, 1928, CNR Department of Colonization, Edmonton, Alberta, RG 30 5894, file 12.

¹³⁶ Makowski, 229. The book that he was referring to was Arkady Fiedler's *Kanada pachnąca żywicą* [Resin-Scented Canada] published in Warsaw in 1936. The book, which portrayed Canada as an unspoiled "resin-scented" natural paradise, inspired many Poles to visit Canada.

¹³⁷ See: Julian Topolnicki, "Na miejskim bruku" in *Pamiętniki Imigrantów*, Benedykt Heydenkorn ed., (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1975).

and Canada did not grant any assistance to the emigrants. The agents were interested more in earning large profits from the emigrant's overseas transportation than in helping to settle them on Canadian soil. Swindlers and rogues also tried to profit from the immigrants. In 1921, a thief who went by the name Ramen Woll had collected money (50 to 60 dollars) from Polish immigrants who, according to the Polish consuls, did not have the necessary \$250 to land in Canada. Woll told the Poles that he "worked" for the Warsaw office of the White Star Line. He handed out fictitious checks which were rejected by Canadian immigration officials. According to Polish consular reports, at least sixty Polish immigrants were deported back to Poland because of Woll's misdoings.¹³⁸

Few immigrants could conceptualize the vastness of Canada before their arrival, which prevented them from foreseeing the costs, time and effort required to travel in search of employment. One Polish immigrant recalled, "I had studied the geography of Canada and I knew about the vastness of the country but studying it and seeing it were very different."¹³⁹ The geographic expanses added to the immigrant's frustration, especially during the winter months when work in the west was hard to come by. Many immigrants travelled to bigger cities or hoped to get work in the coal mines. With debts and families to take care of at home or in Poland, immigrants could not afford to sit idly by and wait for renewed employment in the spring. The situation became even more difficult during the Great Depression. In 1931, Antoni Woźniak and his neighbours travelled to Edmonton in search of employment. They survived on "one meal per day, consisting of oatmeal porridge from a city kitchen."¹⁴⁰ After discovering that there was nothing for them in Edmonton, they returned in the spring. Travel had exhausted their

¹³⁸ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Warsaw. 56, Embassy in London, Report to the Consulate in London from the Polish Office for Repatriation in Antwerp, 11 November 1921.

¹³⁹ Interview with Andrew Kipiniak (Toronto, July 23, 2009).

¹⁴⁰ Izabella Wik; revised by Roman Wozniak, "Conquering the Peace River Country" in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), Alberta 93.

savings. That year, Antoni was able to make only \$22.00 by logging, which was all the family had for the coming winter.

The tight-knit communities and nuclear family structure from which the immigrants came could seldom be replicated in Canada because of the geographical vastness and the underpopulated frontiers. In their village of Laski, the Sarnecki family recalled that the entire parish wept when they approached the altar at a special mass before they departed for Canada. Everyone knew the family intimately, and they shed “tears of sorrow, for they felt they would never see this adventurous family again.”¹⁴¹ In Canada, the Sarneckis were all alone, separated by miles of wilderness from the nearest neighbour. Another Polish woman who settled with her family near Athabasca in Alberta lived on a homestead deep in the woods with no road access. It could only be reached twice a week by train. The closest homes, which were occupied by single men who travelled in search of work for most of the year, were nine miles away. When her husband left each year to find seasonal work, she managed their homestead with her two children whom she delivered without any assistance.¹⁴²

John Huculak, a descendant of one of the earlier Polish settlers in Alberta, compared the loneliness to a disease in his recollections about his family:

These people had stepped out [...] into a world [...] where nature’s old law of be tough or perish was very much in vogue [...]. No pleasant introduction to neighbours, no smile of welcome, no hearty handshakes. This was their first real experience with loneliness, the most desperate and deadly of all conditions.¹⁴³

Loneliness was not only felt in the rural prairie communities and on the isolated homesteads. Immigrants generally had a better chance of mingling with compatriots and other

¹⁴¹ Debbie Anne Seipert, “Follow me, Stanislaw Sarnecki, ‘The Moses of Rabbit Hill’” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 38.

¹⁴² Krystyna Łukasiewicz, “Family and Work: Polish Immigrant Women” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 75.

¹⁴³ John Huculak, *History of the Holy Rosary Parish in Edmonton 1913-1988*. (Edmonton, AB: Holy Rosary Parish, 1988), 112.

Slavic migrants in urban areas, especially in the ethnic neighbourhoods where community associations and institutions served as the backbone of ethnic communal life. But in many instances, the long working hours and the frequent rotation of new workers prevented immigrants from establishing close contacts with fellow workers.¹⁴⁴ In a letter to his father, one immigrant wrote: “My life is to work from early morning until dusk. My co-workers don’t speak Slavic languages, thus I cannot communicate with them. In the evening, there is nobody to talk to either.”¹⁴⁵

For many Poles, the transient nature of the work, especially during the winter, only added to their indignation. As they criss-crossed the country from the mines in Nova Scotia to the lumber mills in British Columbia, they became more indebted, humiliated and irritated “miserable drifters.”¹⁴⁶ Carmela Patrias summed up their predicament, noting that “The seasonality of unskilled work, their inability to communicate in English, their unfamiliarity with local conditions and the low status accorded to foreign workers meant that they could not settle into secure positions anywhere.”¹⁴⁷ The majority of them could not afford to be selective, and

¹⁴⁴ The majority of immigrants in Toronto and Montreal were peasants who realized that the rapidly growing industries could offer jobs and security. While industrial expansion correlated with growth for urban centers in central Canada, it also led to increased job competition. Because few Poles had any training or experience in industry, however, their prospects were limited to those types of factory employment – unskilled or at best, semi-skilled - for which competition was most intense. New emigrants from Poland undoubtedly received accurate information about the shifting economic conditions, because many of them settled in the eastern provinces, or stayed in Manitoba for short periods before moving to central Canada. The disastrous impact of the Depression hastened the trek from country to city and from west to east.

¹⁴⁵ William B. Makowski, 79.

¹⁴⁶ With only a few dollars in their pockets, immigrants were naturally anxious to take whatever employment was offered. They were willing to work harder, for longer hours, and for less pay. The majority of immigrants hoped to reduce their vagabondage on the prairies by finding more lucrative and steadier employment, which usually meant that they moved to urban areas. Between 1925 and 1929, Canada experienced an economic boom, with the greatest expansion occurring in its two central provinces: Ontario and Quebec. In 1931, over 63 percent of Canadians of Polish origin lived in the western provinces, but twenty years later, this number fell to 50 percent. In 1921, 15,787 Poles resided in Ontario, ten years later this number increased to 42,384. Though the Polish-Canadian presence in Quebec was not as significant, more than six thousand Polish-Canadians settled in that province by 1931. See: Rudolf Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976).

¹⁴⁷ Patrias, 63.

often worked for lower than anticipated wages and lived in primitive and filthy conditions. Their already difficult circumstances were only made worse by frequent discrimination and prejudice.

In the cities and industrial slums, the family and village solidarity to which many Poles were accustomed rarely existed. Many immigrants were shocked to discover the apparent indifference and apathy of their compatriots. Some better established Poles sometimes helped in finding a job or a place to stay, but the immigrants were generally left to fend for themselves. As one man noted: “Here, in America, every working man must think for himself, about himself and is not to count on anyone else.”¹⁴⁸ William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, in their foundational study on Polish immigrants in the United States, concluded that the spirit of individualism, which many immigrants came to regard as “the American mentality” replaced the familiar “primary community” and village solidarity that immigrants relied on in the Old World. While the breakdown of the traditional structure based on formalized solidarity of family had already begun to dissolve in Poland with increased industrialization and broader market relations, Thomas and Znaniecki argued that the process was aggravated in the New World because immigrants were almost entirely isolated from their traditional social structure.¹⁴⁹ The immediate effect of this process was total disorganization of the immigrant’s life. Thomas and Znaniecki explained that the disorganization manifested itself in various forms including: economic dependence on social assistance, breakup of families, delinquency, demoralization, “social immorality” and even murder.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Author’s Collection: Letter to Adam Kipiniak, Canadian Polish Congress, Manitoba, July, 1946. Kipiniak was a Polish soldier who settled with his family in Canada after the Second World War. In 1946, Kipiniak wrote to the Canadian Polish Congress to inquire about living conditions in Canada. He received a discouraging reply, and was advised to prepare for hard work and hazardous working conditions if he wanted to “become someone” (*kimś zostać*) in Canada.

¹⁴⁹ William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Volume 5: Organization and Disorganization in America* (Boston, Mass.: Badger, 1920), 166.

¹⁵⁰ William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, 166.

Discrimination, Pride and Prejudice

The Canadian government and the railway companies extended their recruitment efforts primarily towards agricultural settlers and to domestic workers. This was partly a result of the pressure exerted by organized labour and by nativists who feared that immigration would undercut the workforce and undermine the traditional Anglo-Saxon way of life in Canada. In 1923, Canadian immigration regulations classified the following countries as "non-preferred": Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Austria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Among the lowest in the category of "not preferred" were the Jews, because they differed more in their language, culture and religion, and because they tended to gravitate towards urban centers like Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. According to the regulations, immigration from the "non-preferred" countries was limited to agricultural and domestic workers and sponsored immigrants. But as few Anglo-Celtic immigrants sought to enter Canada in the 1920s, the Railway Agreement of 1925 was made to favour less rigid immigration from East European countries.¹⁵¹

Discrimination against immigrants manifested itself in various forms, but the reasons for discrimination tended generally to fall into two categories: "foreignness," and "job competition." While we cannot generalize about the host society in its entirety, since some people were no doubt welcoming, others, who were unable to communicate with the immigrants, were suspicious and hostile. Most Canadians however, were content so long as the immigrants "knew their place" and settled on farms in the great western prairies of Canada and did not compete for scarce industrial jobs.

¹⁵¹ See: Donald Avery *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Worker's 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

Polish immigrants, and their Slavic counterparts, have traditionally belonged to a group of immigrants that James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger identified as “inbetween” in their study of the American social hierarchy. Their status was above that of groups of African and Asian descent and Native people, but below that of immigrants of north-western European descent. Popular culture and social science played an instrumental role in consolidating their “nonwhite” status by attributing and underscoring their cultural and inborn distinguishing characteristics. Emphasis was placed on the immigrants’ peasant origins, and they were depicted as poor, illiterate, diseased, morally lax, politically corrupt and religiously deficient. Barrett and Roediger argued that the gradual reclassification of southern and eastern European immigrants into a more “preferred” category of immigrants formed part of the process of their Americanization.¹⁵² Although critics like Eric Arnesen have correctly observed that such an explanation misses other important aspects of Americanization that were not linked to the process of “becoming white,” the adverse racial and ethnic classification of immigrants played a major role in hindering their assimilation.¹⁵³

One clear expression of the immigrants’ perceived inferiority, noted Patrias, “was their exclusion, along with immigrants of African and Asian descent, from ‘better neighbourhoods’ by legally accepted covenants.”¹⁵⁴ In 1926 in St. Catherine’s, Ontario, for instance, a deed for the sale of land stated that “The said property shall not be sold, leased to, or occupied by any Armenian, Hungarian, Pole, Italian, Greek or any person of a coloured race without the grantor’s

¹⁵² James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger, "In-Between Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the New Immigrant Workers" in *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (May 1997), 3–44; James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger, "The Irish and the 'Americanization' of the 'New Immigrants,' in the Streets and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900–1930," in *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24 (Summer 2005), 3–33.

¹⁵³ Eric Arnesen, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination” in *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001), 3–32.

¹⁵⁴ Carmela Patrias, “Race, employment discrimination, and state complicity in wartime Canada, 1939–1945” in *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 59 (Spring 2007), 9–41.

written consent.¹⁵⁵ Such categorizations undoubtedly deprived eastern European immigrants of their “white” status.

All of this was frustrating, since many Polish immigrants generally thought that their beliefs and values were not much different from those held by mainstream Canadians. Many immigrants looked forward to life in a democratic state. Most Polish immigrants were not hostile to assimilation. In many cases, they changed their surnames so as not to confuse Canadian immigration officials and to fit in. Thus, a Przystawski became Preston and a Romanowski became Roman.

Some Polish-Canadian organizations, like the *Zjednoczenie Zrzeszeń Polskich w Kanadzie* (Federation of Polish Societies in Canada) were formed for the purpose of retaining “Polishness” and an allegiance to the Polish government. But the majority of Polish-Canadian organizations and their newspapers, such as the oldest Polish federation in Canada, the *Związek Polaków w Kanadzie* (Polish Alliance Society of Canada¹⁵⁶) which traced its roots to the early 1900s, adopted the attitude that Poles were not “guests” in Canada but permanent residents, and that Poland was to retain its symbolic, but not primary position in the lives of Polish immigrants. Such associations organized Canadian trivia nights, English-language classes and they published news with more Canadian content.

The Polish community also enthusiastically supported the Canadian war effort during both World Wars, and hundreds of Polish volunteers fought in the Canadian Armed Forces. Thus, many Poles were frustrated and dismayed when they were called “enemy aliens” and

¹⁵⁵ William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada*, 80.

¹⁵⁶ In the 1930s, the Alliance added “Friendly Society” to its English name only, thus becoming the Polish Alliance Friendly Society of Canada.

received an unsympathetic reception as “Polacks,” “aliens” and “non-preferred immigrants.”¹⁵⁷ Even Polish consuls complained that their Anglo-Saxons counterparts mocked them as “distinguished foreigners.”¹⁵⁸ A number of Polish self-help organizations, such as the Polish Society for Brotherly Aid (founded in Alberta in 1916) were created in part to protect Polish immigrants against discrimination and to confirm that their members were not “enemy aliens.”

A vicious circle of prejudice and discrimination became further entrenched after the Great Depression. Its impact can be measured by the rapidly rising number of deportations of immigrants that occurred between 1930 and 1935. Between 1930 and 1934, 16,765 immigrants were deported from Canada as having become a "public charge;" by 1935, the number of deportations had reached more than 28,000. These numbers were several times the rate of deportation in the 1920s.¹⁵⁹ The grounds for deportation varied: one could be deported for membership in the Communist Party, for union activities, for medical reasons or for petty charges of criminality, such as vagrancy and non-Canadian citizens could be deported if they were on relief. In this context, immigrants found few friends in Canada. During periods of privation and dispossession, they could find some solace in the ethnic neighbourhoods populated by fellow countrymen and in their community associations. There they could converse with priests, workers and sojourners in their native tongue and solicit information about jobs and relief. Some hoped to make contacts with someone who knew a person on the inside – a family member or friend from back home – who might offer a few hours of work. Various forms of

¹⁵⁷ Joanna Matejko, “Polish Immigration to Alberta before the Second World War” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 25; AAN, 897, 28-29. Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London. A report from London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland, October 4, 1919. Some Poles were still deemed “enemy aliens” because they were former subjects (or still subjects) of the German or Austrian emperor.

¹⁵⁸ AAN, Warsaw, 964, 5, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington.

¹⁵⁹ By 1932, only British subjects, Americans and agriculturalists with enough capital to start farming in Canada could be admitted. As a result, the number of immigrants to Canada significantly decreased from 166,783 in 1928 to only 14,382 in 1933. R. Douglas Francis, Chris Kitzan, *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 339.

relief were set up in local ethnic communities by organizations like the Polish Society of Brotherly Aid in Alberta, which provided some relief and a hot meal.

When the Depression hit, immigrants, who were the last to be hired, were the first to feel the effects of the slowdown. At best, immigrants received fewer hours or they were laid off, at worst, they were deported. One Polish immigrant recalled that her husband was unemployed all the time in the 1930s, except for occasional odd jobs. She supported the family by working as a housecleaner and sewed socks for one dollar for a ten-hour working day.¹⁶⁰ Polish miners who lived in the camps around the Alberta Coal Branch were placed on rotating schedules to “six weeks on” and “six weeks off.”¹⁶¹ Despite the risk of being deported as a burden to society, many immigrants applied for government subsidies. The Wozniak family, unaware of such a risk, applied for a government subsidy in 1932 when Antoni was unable to secure a job. They were declined but spared from deportation. Antoni eventually found a job that paid fifty cents per day, and he was fortunate to have received an advance payment in the form of one sack of flour, one sack of sugar and five pounds of lard which helped get the family through the initial crisis.¹⁶² Patrias argued that the state colluded in racializing immigrant groups not just by colour, but by encouraging covert discrimination in the administration of relief. Government officials took advantage of deportation laws to reduce their relief rolls.¹⁶³

The number of deportations rose from fewer than 2,000 in 1929 to more than 7,600 within three years. Almost 30,000 immigrants were forced to return home. The consequences of the Great Depression were staggering, as thousands of jobless men roamed the streets and “rode

¹⁶⁰ Krystyna Łukasiewicz, “Family and Work: Polish Immigrant Women” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 77.

¹⁶¹ Martha and Helen Henderek, “Alberta Coal Branch and the Polish Pioneer Life” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 102.

¹⁶² Izabella Wik; revised by Roman Wozniak, “Conquering the Peace River Country” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 93.

¹⁶³ See: Carmela Patrias, “Race, Employment Discrimination, and State Complicity in Wartime Canada, 1939-1945” in *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 59 (Spring 2007), 9-42.

the rails” across the country in search of work. It was not unusual for 2,000 or 3,000 applicants to show up for one or two job openings. Those who were not looking for work were looking for food. Thousands stood in long bread lines and waited for hours to be fed. As the depression carried on, one in five Canadians became dependent on government relief. About 30% of the Labour Force was unemployed, and the unemployment rate soared to nearly 27% in 1933, resulting in an enormous peak in suicide, starvation and disease.¹⁶⁴

In a world that seemed despondent, Communists offered a way out; a solution to the deplorable state of affairs. As John Kolasky noted, “Heaven for the Christians was in the hereafter; for the communists, paradise was emerging here on earth now.”¹⁶⁵ Men and women who had drifted without direction and purpose could become a part of “an international movement that promised to usher in a just social order with plenty for all.”¹⁶⁶ Slogans pledging unity, emancipation, equality and gain attracted many immigrants who shared a common instinctive hatred for social injustice. The majority of the peasant-migrants remembered all too well the oppressive gentry, which not only taxed and exploited them in the homeland, but even sat in separate pews while worshipping the same God.

Discrimination was one of the factors that led to the transference of the ethnic "pecking order" of immigration policy to a vertical mosaic of occupations and incomes - the British on top and so on down to the Chinese and Blacks who occupied the most menial jobs. This greatly disadvantaged immigrant groups in the labour market and prevented their full incorporation within the body of the nation. Little wonder, therefore, that many Polish immigrants had good reason to reminisce about their homeland and to sing “*czy ci nie żal ... od chodzie od stron*

¹⁶⁴ Suicide in Canada (1994), Mental Health Division, Health Services Directorate, Health Canada.

¹⁶⁵ Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979), 25.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

ojczystych” (Do you not regret leaving your homeland?). The response to the harsh circumstances and discrimination was in some cases return migration to Poland. Between 1906 and 1914, around 25 percent of Polish immigrants to Canada returned to their homeland.¹⁶⁷ In other instances, however, the discrimination and other harsh circumstances led immigrants to support communistic and radically progressive organizations that promised to alleviate their problems.

¹⁶⁷ Donald Avery, J.K. Fedorowicz, *The Poles in Canada* (London, ON: University of Western Ontario, 1982). 9.

Chapter 2

Getting Organized: Polish Reds, Rebels and Radicals

Karl Marx had followers among Poles in Canada since the early 1900s. Diverse forms of social and labour radicalism found expression in various contending groups united in their desire for a society governed by and for the working masses. Polish socialists, who combined social radicalism with Polish nationalist objectives, coalesced around the *Polskie Socjalistyczne Stowarzyszenie im. Stefana Okrzei* (The Stefan Okrzeja Polish Socialist Society) which they established in Montreal in 1906. Its members, mostly intellectuals, favoured a secular trend in education and social life. They were radical patriots who combined their objectives with the national struggle for Polish independence. Many of them supported Józef Piłsudski and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Like their counterparts in Poland, they argued that only ‘the *lud*’ – the peasants, artisans, small shopkeepers and the new class of industrial workers – were the ‘basis of existence’ for the Polish nation. They opted for common ownership of the means of production, better pay, equal opportunities, and above all, for the creation of an independent national life. Information about mass protests organized by radical supporters of the PPS in Toronto and Winnipeg were published in the American *Dziennik Ludowy* (People’s Journal) as early as 1908.¹⁶⁸

There were a number of other Polish radically progressive organizations in Canada before the First World War. These included: *Gwiazda* (Star), which later became the *Towarzystwo Ignacego Daszyńskiego* (The Ignacy Daszynski Society), *Oświata* (Education; 1910-1919), and

¹⁶⁸*Dziennik Ludowy* (USA), June 2, 1908; February 12, 1914; cited in Anna Reczyńska, “Początki działalności radykalnych ugrupowań Polonii” [The Beginnings of the Activities of Radical Groups in the Polonia] in *Przegląd Polonijny* vol. 2, 1994, 84.

the *Towarzystwo Socjalistyczne Potęga* (Socialist Society “Power”) which was formed in Toronto in 1911.¹⁶⁹ Some non-socialist organizations also came under the sway of radical influences. In Canmore, Alberta for instance, Polish miners organized the cultural society *Zgoda św. Andrzeja* (St. Andrew’s Concord), in November of 1911. The local missionary, the Reverend Franciszek Szylla, remembered that “the promoter of the society had a leaning towards atheistic socialism,” which prompted him to lecture the members once a month to “create and uphold a Catholic atmosphere in the society.”¹⁷⁰

The period before the First World War was difficult for organized radicalism in Canada, and even more so for non-English and non-French social radicals. Their organizations had low membership, small budgets, and above all, they suffered from ethnic discrimination and racial tensions. Even mainstream Canadian socialist parties and labour organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Trades Labour Congress (TLC) were generally hostile towards immigrants because immigrants allegedly undercut wages.¹⁷¹

When the Bolshevik Revolution came in November of 1917, socialists of every stripe rejoiced. The news that a workers’ state had been established in Russia revitalized the Left in Canada and elsewhere. The revolutions in Germany, in Finland, and in the Baltic States as well as the short-lived 1919 Soviet Republic in Hungary indicated that the Marxist prophesy of world revolution could come true. But the socialists’ honeymoon was short-lived. Those who began to call themselves Soviet Communists soon alienated the moderate socialists. As elsewhere, the Polish Canadian Left underwent a split. The moderates, being aware of the Soviet dangers,

¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, aside from their names, not much other information is available about these organizations.

¹⁷⁰ Joanna Matejko, “Polish Immigration to Alberta before the Second World War” in *Polonia in Alberta* (Edmonton, AB: The Polish Centennial Society, 1995), 26.

¹⁷¹ See: Robert Babcock, *Gompers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 116.

accepted a program that was analogous with the ideology of the socialists in Poland. They established a number of new organizations, which included the Winnipeg-based *Nowe Życie* (New Life), founded in Toronto in 1919, the Polish Workman's Association *Samokształcenie* (Self-Education) in 1920, and the pro-PPS *Spójnia* (Union) which was established in 1918. The latter group attracted the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officials in 1920, who noted that its members were armed with revolvers.¹⁷² *Spójnia* ran a library, (the only Polish library in Toronto), and it organized a school for children and amateur performances. The members of *Spójnia* relied mainly on information published by the weekly *Trybuna Robotnicza* (Weekly Tribune), which was published in Detroit, Michigan.¹⁷³ The newspaper must have had a correspondent in Canada because it occasionally published information about the Polish Canadian community.¹⁷⁴

Nowe Życie published a newspaper under the same name in 1919, which was printed by the "Slavonia" Steamship Agencies Limited. Its founder and first editor, Maks Major, was in the business of creating false identity papers for Polish immigrants. He allegedly got into trouble as a result of this business and had to leave the country. The paper was later edited by a more conservative-leaning Edward J. Stawicki, who aroused much opposition from the progressive anti-clerical group *Spójnia*. Shortly before the paper folded in 1922, it was edited by a prominent Polish Canadian socialist, Alfons Jan Staniewski.¹⁷⁵

Staniewski's name became synonymous with the Polish socialist movement in Canada. He was a political exile from the Russian part of partitioned Poland, where he had participated in

¹⁷² See: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. *RCMP Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*, (St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993): Register of Bolshevist and Agitator Investigations, 1920.

¹⁷³ Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 119.

¹⁷⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 332): August 19, 1926, 339.

¹⁷⁵ Victor Turek, *Polish-Language Press in Canada* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1962), 116.

the Russian Revolution of 1905 and in various Polish socialist circles. He combined fervent Polish patriotism and fought for workers, who at the time constituted the majority of the immigrants, and the bulk of Poland's population. He maintained a critical attitude towards Pilsudski and the Catholic Church. In fact, he tried to separate the Polish ethnic group in Canada from the Warsaw government and the "excessive" influence of the clergy. This position led many to accuse Staniewski of harbouring pro-Communist sentiments, a charge that was entirely false because Staniewski was in fact a staunch anti-Communist.

The Bolshevik Revolution created difficulties for social and labour radicals in Canada. By 1918, many Canadians were already convinced that labour radicals were Bolsheviks, violent revolutionaries intent on overthrowing the government. The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 only intensified such sentiments and fuelled their hostility. The conservative government under Robert B. Borden declared labour and socialist organizations illegal, and unofficially supported vigilante groups who initiated their own anti-radical campaign by breaking-up Left-Wing meetings and harassing Communists, social radicals and immigrants. It was during this period, that the Polish Canadian communist movement began to crystallize.

Polish communist organizations in Canada were noticed by Polish consuls and the RCMP as early as 1920.¹⁷⁶ That year, the Polish consul in Winnipeg, Valerian Bukowiecki-Olszewski, reported that a Ludwik Cohn (*vel* Kohn; *vel* Konecki; *vel* Luis Cohn; *vel* Ludwik Kohn) was "an agitator, a member of the Bolshevik organization [and] in close contact with the Bolshevik ambassador in Washington." He also suggested that Cohn may have been a Jewish Communist

¹⁷⁶ At around the same time, Polish consuls in the United States were also beginning to notice an emerging radical movement among Polish immigrants. In 1923, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland instructed Polish consuls in the United States to produce two annual reports, in three copies, on communist and anarchist organizations in the United States in each consular jurisdiction. AAN, Warsaw, Polish consulate of the Republic of Poland in Buffalo, 173 (3). Legation in Washington to all Polish consulates in the United States, October 22, 1924.

from Poland.¹⁷⁷ In fact, Cohn was allegedly related to Feliks Kon, a prominent Polish agitator and member of the pro-Communist faction of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS-Lewica). Ludwik Cohn had apparently styled himself as the representative of the Soviet government in Canada. Polish authorities considered him to be a dangerous agitator, although they knew very little about his activities as they noted that he had an enigmatic persona.¹⁷⁸

In 1921, Bukowiecki-Olszewski made another report about the organization *Nowe Życie*, calling it a “Bolshevik group” which “in the past had a substantial membership [...] but not only Poles.”¹⁷⁹ He added that that the organization did not have many sympathizers among Polish Canadians because: “during the Bolshevik offensive on Warsaw [*Nowe Życie*] [...] was abandoned by the majority [...] of its former members [...]. Aside from 8 Poles, several Rusyns belong to the organization. Due to the rift in relations with Polish organizations, it holds its meetings in the Ukrainian Workers’ Hall.”¹⁸⁰ Evidently, *Nowe Życie* had been infiltrated by Communists, who had converted the organization into an anti-Polish bastion. Its members were quite dangerous revolutionaries as reports suggest that in November of 1923 they had conspired to bomb the Polish consulate in Winnipeg.¹⁸¹

At around the same time, RCMP agents, who were assigned to an undercover operative, reported that a new society, the Polish-Co-Operative in St. Catherine’s, Ontario, had “very radical” members. The agents attended a wedding there, and noted that the guests were highly

¹⁷⁷AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Consul Bukowiecki-Olszewski in Winnipeg to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MSZ), August 31, 1920.

¹⁷⁸AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 2352 (1). MSZ to Embassy in Washington, November 8, 1919.

¹⁷⁹AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 1019. Polish Consul in Winnipeg to the Legation in Washington, September 23, 1921.

¹⁸⁰AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 1019. Polish consul in Winnipeg to the legation in Washington, September 23, 1921.

¹⁸¹The Polish consul in Winnipeg informed the RCMP in time to spoil the Communists’ plans to bomb the embassy. AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 1111 (62). Vice-consul in Winnipeg to the legation in Washington, November 29, 1923.

critical of capitalism, the Church and the established order.¹⁸² One of the guest speakers declared that he hoped that “when the first child of this wedding arrived the world would be free from capitalists and kings.”¹⁸³ The society had only two Polish members, the rest were Russians, Ukrainians and Austrians. A few days later, a Polish-Jew named Henryk Dworkin was also noticed by the RCMP while he was making guest appearances in several Labour Temples where he was spreading anti-Polish propaganda.¹⁸⁴ Already in the movement’s nascent stages, the alliance and cooperation between Communists of other nationalities began to play an imperative role.

The history of the Canadian ethnic communist branches, which includes the Polish Canadian communist section, is intimately connected to the history of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Its history provides an important context for understanding and appraising the history of the Polish Canadian Left. The CPC was organized in extreme secrecy in a barn near Guelph, Ontario, on May 29, 1921 by three representatives of the Communist International and twenty-one Canadians.¹⁸⁵ Most of its members came from three socialist parties in existence at the time of the Russian Revolution: the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social-Democratic Party of Canada and the Socialist Party of North America. Its program was based on the writings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, and inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The Party emerged from the conviction that the problems which had frustrated the Canadian socialist movement in the past could be solved by the teachings of Lenin and by its association with the Communist International, or Comintern, which was dominated by leading members of Lenin’s

¹⁸² *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 39): 2nd September, 1920, 92.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹⁸⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 41): 16th September, 1920, 136; (No. 48): 4th November, 1920, 271.

¹⁸⁵ See: Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*. (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004).

own Party. Its members regarded the Party to be a national section of a world party, which was led by the authority of an international committee. The clandestine character of the founding convention set the atmosphere for the Canadian Party which operated underground until 1924. Its public “above-ground” voice was the Worker’s Party of Canada, which was set up in 1922. But in 1924, the Communist Party of Canada no longer had to operate through back channels because it was legalized, and therefore able to operate under its own name.¹⁸⁶

The Party became very active in the 1920s, at a time when much of the labour movement was dispirited after the defeat of the revolt in Winnipeg and elsewhere. In 1928, the Party experienced a serious schism over the character of the Soviet Union and its leadership, which placed Tim Buck at the helm of the CPC. Buck would remain the Party’s leader until 1961. In the 1930s, through the Worker’s Unity League (WUL), which was organized on instructions of the Comintern, Communists struggled to organize those workers whom other unions could not organize. This activity was reflective of the shift in Communist theory during the Communist International's "Third Period," which emphasized creating communist groups to defend the Soviet way.¹⁸⁷ In 1935, the Party experienced another major shift in its orientation when the

¹⁸⁶Irving Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1902-1960*, (The Canadian Historical Association: 1975), 16-19.

¹⁸⁷The policy of the "Second Period," or “Boring from within,” encouraged Communists to join mainstream labour unions and progressive organizations in order to move them to the revolutionary left. In 1938, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MSZ) in Poland intercepted a copy of detailed instructions produced by the Comintern on how communist *conspirateurs* – fanatically dedicated spies, artists, and men willing to work for money - should infiltrate “enemy” organizations in Canada. According to the instructions, the best way was to “bore from within,” by having agents join the “enemy” organizations and participate in their day-to-day activities. The instructions recommended that agents should act “discretely” and earn the trust of the most vocal and active members of an organization. Only then, should an agent begin to “gradually” question and discredit the relations between members in the organization (*psucie stosunków pomiędzy członkami organizacji*). The instructions also noted that agents should spread “private rumours” (*powiem Pani, lecz proszę nie powtarzać...*) about members; make members feel as though their work is not appreciated; harness the support of the most “lazy,” “marginalized” and “untalented” members and undermine the authority of the leaders. Polish consuls, who received a copy of the instructions from the MSZ printed them in the Catholic Gazette (*Gazeta Katolicka*) on May 4, 1938 to warn Polish Canadians about Communist machinations. AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa. MSZ to Consul General in Ottawa. Note on Comintern Instructions, marked “secret”, February 16, 1938; AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to the MSZ, May 19, 1938.

Communist International announced its Popular Front policy. During this period, which lasted until 1939, Communists were directed to drop their harsh critique of social democrats as “social fascists” and they were advised instead to build alliances with them against world fascism.

At its height the CPC reached an official membership of approximately 16,000. The Party was so popular at one point, that it could fill Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto during a celebration marking Tim Buck’s release from prison in 1934. It was the first large-scale party of the left in Canada which was composed of a mix of predominantly non-English and non-French immigrants.¹⁸⁸ In a sense, the CPC mirrored modern-day Toronto, it was a network composed of ethnic enclaves connected to an overarching community. The mass of the Party’s “foreign” membership was generally recruited from among recent immigrants from Eastern Europe - mostly Ukrainians, Jews, Finns, and Russians, as well as Hungarians, Poles, Croats and Slovaks, among others. The majority of them were illiterate or semi-literate peasants and unskilled-labourers who had been subjected to economic and social oppression in their homeland. They came to Canada for a better future, but instead, they found similar deplorable conditions. Ukrainians comprised the bulk of the CPC’s membership and provided many of the Party’s leaders, such as Matthew Popovich, John Boychuk, and Ivan Navizivsk. Most Ukrainian Communists also belonged to the pro-Communist Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA).¹⁸⁹ By 1930, one-third of the CPC was composed of Ukrainians (about 900 -1000 members).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Initially, only about 10 per cent of the Party was composed of Anglo-Saxon Canadians.

¹⁸⁹ Between 1928 and 1931 Ukrainian and other CPC leaders clashed over Ukrainian reluctance to accept the intensification of the class struggle. During the 1930s the CPC's failure to question the Famine-Genocide of 1932–33 and Stalinist purges in Soviet Ukraine led to a clash between Ukrainian and other CPC leaders the defection of Ukrainians under Danylo Lobai.

¹⁹⁰ J. Kolasky, *Prophets and Proletarians. Documents on the History of the Rise and Decline of Ukrainian Communism in Canada*, (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), XXIII.

Among all the radical progressive organizations, the Communist Party of Canada was the most successful in recruiting foreign workers. The CPC had a strong European orientation and it allowed newcomers to obtain leadership positions much easier than in the One Big Union (OBU) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which had a North American orientation. The CPC was also popular among immigrants because the party advocated mass demonstrations and confrontations, which were often more appealing than the less militant tactics of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and other progressive organizations such as the United Farmers of Canada and the Western Social Credit League. There were virtually no other avenues of protest open to most immigrant workers. The majority of them were employed in sectors that were outside the reach of labour unions, which, save for the communist-led unions, were generally hostile towards immigrant workers. The Communist Party made deliberate efforts to recruit foreign-born supporters and to protect them. The ethnic groups formed language sections, or branches, of the CPC, with their own national offices, press agencies, Labour Temples and cultural-educational organizations. Because the CPC's ethnic members worked in the most basic industries, they were the Party's main contact with other workers. Moreover, through their energetic and enthusiastic recruiting and fundraising drives, they contributed significantly to the Party's coffers and its membership. Ethnic Communists backed virtually all of the Party's mainstream initiatives, such as the 1935 "On-to-Ottawa Trek," the recruiting drive for the Spanish Civil War, and they supported communist candidates in election campaigns. In 1952, Tim Buck acknowledged that the Party could not have flourished without its immigrant supporters:

[...] immigrant workers shouldered a very large share of the struggles and sacrifices that went into the building of industrial unions by the Worker's Unity League and the C.I.O. [...]. They have enriched our movement and Canada as a

whole by their contributions to the picket line, in the building of organizations and in their enrichment of our culture.¹⁹¹

CPC members regarded the Party as a vanguard, leading all the political struggles of the working class for the socialist transformation of Canada. For them, revolution was not an immediate possibility, but the main goal. They fought against exploitation, discrimination and imperialism. They preached the abolition of private property and of parliamentary institutions. And they glorified the Soviet Union as the hub of justice, equality and freedom. Such convictions naturally threatened the political, economic, religious and social foundations of the established order. Threatened by the deviant ideology of the CPC, the Canadian government fought back.

From the Party's inception, the RCMP, acting under Section 98 of the Criminal Code, harassed the Party, broke up suspicious meetings, raided Party offices and confiscated radical literature. Individuals caught making “seditious utterances,” distributing “prohibited literature,” especially literature written in an “enemy language” or attending “unlawful associations,” and as in one case, “wearing a button of the Socialist Party of the United States,” were fined or jailed.¹⁹² In an attempt to “crack down” on the Communists, the RCMP arrested eight of its main leaders in August of 1931. Tim Buck was sentenced to Kingston Penitentiary. The CPC was banned in 1931, forcing its members to operate through a series of front organizations: the Workers' Unity League, the Relief Camp Workers' Union, the Canadian Labour Defence League, the National Unemployed Workers Association and a plethora of ethnic language sections.

¹⁹¹Tim Buck, *Thirty Years: 1922-1952. The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952), 28.

¹⁹² See: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. *RCMP Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*, (St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993): Register of Bolshevist and Agitator Investigations, 1920.

Shortly after Tim Buck's conviction, Canadian authorities arrested a number of "foreign born" leaders for deportation. Among them was Dan Chomicki (*vel* Holmes, *vel* Homes, *vel* Homitski) a prominent CPC leader who helped open the first Polish Workers' Hall in Winnipeg in 1929.¹⁹³ Chomicki came to Canada sometime in 1913 and settled, together with his "Canadian wife" and child in Winnipeg. After his arrest, he was immediately sent to Halifax without trial to await deportation. J.S. Woodsworth, the leader of the social democratic Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, brought his case to the attention of the House of Commons, arguing that Chomicki, along with the other convicted Communists, had a right to a fair trial:

I do not think we in this house are concerned with whether or not these men are communists. [...] If they are communists, and if the decision given by the court of appeal stands, I presume it is possible to bring them up for trial as communists and to deport them. But my contention is that there should be a trial. I do not think men should be deported from this country simply after an investigation by the Immigration department. As residents of this country for a considerable number of years certainly they ought not to be deported without a full, fair trial.¹⁹⁴

Chomicki's arrest illustrates the difficult circumstances under which the Communist movement developed, and it is a striking example of how Canadian officials dealt with suspected communist agitators. The authorities could decide to transport convicted immigrants to any immigration station, and deport them without a trial.¹⁹⁵ Allegedly Chomicki's wife was not informed of his arrest, and within hours he was on a train to Halifax. According to Shin Imai,

¹⁹³ Library and Archives Canada, (LAC), RG 76, file 513111, reel C-10274. Dan Chomicki (alias Holmes, Homes or Homitski), Winnipeg, Manitoba; Warrant to search Dan Chomicki's residence; Shin Imai, "Deportation in the Depression" in *Queen's Law Journal*, vol. 7 (1): 1981. See also: Donald Avery, *Dangeours Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932*(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 131; Reczyńska, *Początki Działalności*, 88; Barbara Roberts, "Shovelling Out the "Mutinous: Political Deportation from Canada Before 1936" in *Labour / Le Travail*, vol. 18: Fall, 1986, 77-110.

¹⁹⁴ See: Shin Imai, "Deportation in the Depression" in *Queen's Law Journal*, vol. 7 (1): 1981, 86.

¹⁹⁵ Polish authorities repeatedly helped the RCMP by providing the names, identification documents and addresses of radical agitators, and they also revoked their Polish citizenship to prevent them from becoming naturalized Canadians. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to the Consul General in Ottawa, a note regarding Grzegorz (Harry) Okulewicz, a Polish agitator. January 20, 1939.

the government ensured that immigrants remained vulnerable to deportation by denying them citizenship certificates, or by revoking them. Chomicki had been refused a certificate, even though, as Wordsworth noted, he had resided in Canada for twenty years and had a Canadian wife and child.¹⁹⁶

A New Kind of Polish Canadian Organization

The years 1926-1927 marked the birth of several Polish branches of the Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL) in Winnipeg, Montreal, St. Catherine's, Toronto and Oshawa. The CLDL was a civil rights organization devoted to protecting striking workers from persecution, but as the RCMP quickly found out, it was dominated by Communists. The first "official" Polish communist branch was formed in Winnipeg in 1926. Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel, who was connected with the Communist Worker's International and the Communist Party of Poland (*Komunistyczna Partia Polski - KPP*), was sent to Canada that year to help organize the first Polish communist branch in Winnipeg.¹⁹⁷ Ukrainian Communists apparently also played an instrumental role in its founding. An RCMP security bulletin noted that at a meeting of the City Central Committee of the Communist Party, held on August 26, 1926, "the Ukrainian branch of the Communist Party recommended that a Polish branch of the Labour Defence League" be formed.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Victor Turek noted that the Ukrainian Communists allowed their Polish comrades use their Winnipeg Labour Hall until they had enough money to buy their own edifice. At the time of its founding, the Polish branch had 56 members.¹⁹⁹ Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel lost no time during her stay in Canada. "As a result of [her] activities," noted the RCMP, two

¹⁹⁶Chomicki was eventually deported back to Poland. RG 76, file 513111, Warrant to search Dan Chomicki's residence; Shin Imai, "Deportation in the Depression" in *Queen's Law Journal*, vol. 7 (1): 1981.

¹⁹⁷*RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 333): 2nd September, 1926, 350.

¹⁹⁸*RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 333): 2nd September, 1926, 350.

¹⁹⁹*RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 332): 19th August, 1926, 339; the St. Catherine's branch had 15 members in 1926;

additional branches were formed in Winnipeg: a Ukrainian branch (with about 300 members) and a Jewish branch (with about 35 members).²⁰⁰

The spread of radicalism was restricted mainly to Poles in urban and industrial centers. In 1930, Polish Communists in Toronto came together to form the *Polskie Towarzystwo Robotnicze* (Polish Worker's Association). Władysław Dutkiewicz was quite possibly one of its founders. He edited the Association's monthly newspaper *Budzik* (Alarm Clock), which was a pro-Bolshevik paper with a masthead that read: "Proletarians of all countries unite."²⁰¹ The paper carried little Canadian-content news. Its editors espoused a messianic rhetoric about the role of the Polish masses, not only in liberating Poland from under the bourgeois heel, but in saving the entire "western" civilization. The size of the Association may be gauged by *Budzik's* circulation, which Dutkiewicz estimated at no more than 500.²⁰²

Apparently, the Polish movement was not well coordinated and disciplined. The Winnipeg-based Polish Communist branch published *Czerwona Jaskółka* (Red Swallow), a hard-cover magazine, which was discontinued after only three issues. Turek suggested that it folded because its editors did not conform to the Party line by publishing materials that had been rejected by other communist newspapers, including *Budzik* and *Trybuna Robotnicza*.²⁰³ Members of the Toronto branch accused their counterparts in Winnipeg of factionalism, but the affair did not lead to any serious tension. It appears that after the magazine folded, everything went back to normal.

²⁰⁰RCMP Security Bulletins, Early Years: (No. 330): 5th August, 1926, 320.

²⁰¹Turek, *Language Press*, 119.

²⁰²Dutkiewicz may have been exaggerating, although the number is not very high. It should be noted, that *Budzik* may have had a broader audience since one newspaper was often read by more than one person.

²⁰³Turek, 121. Victor Turek suggests that no more than three copies of *Czerwona Jaskółka* were ever printed.

By August of 1931, Polish Canadian radicals became better organized. At a convention held in Hamilton, Ontario, between August 14-15, they federated all of their organizations into a trans-national body, the *Polskie Towarzystwo Rolniczo-Farmerskie* – PTRF (Polish Agricultural and Farmers’ Association), and moved their Central Office to Winnipeg.²⁰⁴ In January of 1932, the PTRF initiated a campaign to start printing *Głos Pracy* (Voice of Labour), a new Polish-language newspaper which became the voice of the entire Polish communist movement for nearly a decade. According to the RCMP, its founder was an agitator from Poland, Joseph Polka (vel Joe/Jozef, Polka).²⁰⁵ The first issue, under the editorship of Władysław Dutkiewicz, appeared on April 30, 1932.²⁰⁶ The new paper and its editor were immediately noticed by the mainstream Canadian press. *Mail and Empire* warned that “a new Polish newspaper of a highly revolutionary character appeared in Winnipeg for the first time,” and that “a Toronto Communist has recently gone to Winnipeg to edit a revolutionary paper there.”²⁰⁷ In contrast to *Budzik*, the new paper offered broader coverage of international and national news. Correspondents regularly conveyed information about conditions in mines and factories where many Polish immigrants worked, donation lists were published to underscore the paper’s popularity and women’s and children’s sections were later added to attract a broader audience.

The structure of the PTRF was hierarchical, modelled on the structure of Soviet and other Communist Parties. It enabled the Party to promote the proletarian ideology in a disciplined and systematic way. Direction of the federation and the control of its assets were coordinated by the

²⁰⁴*Kronika Tygodniowa* (Weekly Chronicle), September 13, 1947, 14; see also Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 119. Ukrainian Canadians once again played a helpful role in establishing the PTRF. In fact, consul Jan Pawlica noted that Polish branches in Montreal, Toronto, Windsor, Kitchener, Brandon, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Calgary and Vancouver, among others, were established with help from two Ukrainian pro-Communist organizations: Turfdim and Todowyrnazu. See: AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on “Communist organizations in Canada,” Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 5-6.

²⁰⁵*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part I: (No. 711): 20th June, 1934, 79.

²⁰⁶Turek, 121. The newspaper was first published with the help of Ukrainian Communists, who lent their Polish comrades their printing facilities in Winnipeg.

²⁰⁷*Mail and Empire*, Toronto, April 30, 1932.

National Central Executive Board. Special Political, Organizational, Educational, Women's and Press Committees monitored and helped direct activities in their respective jurisdictions.²⁰⁸

Local sub-committees, which included industrial and cultural committees, made regular reports to *Głos Pracy* about working conditions in factories and schools.

The fundamental unit of the PTRF was the branch, which generally had a membership of about five to ten individuals.²⁰⁹ The branches did the "field work," carrying out policy objectives, recruiting members, rallying, etc. Larger branches, as in Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal, had separate women's circles, youth branches, sports clubs, and children's schools. Special handicraft and senior citizens' clubs were also established. Branch delegates convened at national conventions, which were organized annually to formulate new policies and to draw up plans for future activities. Members of a National Committee, which was subordinated to the National Executive Committee, met bi-annually to discuss Party matters.²¹⁰

From its center in Winnipeg, the new federation spread to the industrial mining, lumbering and railroad centers, first in the west and then in the east. By 1936, when the federation adopted a new name, the *Polskie Towarzystwo Ludowe* - PTL (Polish People's Association), Polish Communists had established twenty branches across Canada, including three women's branches, seven children's schools, seven amateur groups, six orchestras and four choirs. The total assets of the organization amounted to \$20,000.²¹¹ *Głos Pracy* also experienced rapid growth, expanding from four pages in 1932, to six pages in 1933 and to eight

²⁰⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 776): 9th October, 1935, 525.

²⁰⁹ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on "Communist organizations in Canada," Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 6.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 817): 29th July, 1936, 311.

pages in 1936.²¹² Subscription rates were kept low in an effort to put the paper within reach of those who had a limited income.

The economic crisis of the early 1930s made Canadians more receptive to worker-friendly organizations. Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett had campaigned on a promise “to blast [Canada’s way] into the markets of the world.”²¹³ His government raised tariffs in 1930 and in 1931, but far from leading other countries to treat Canadian goods more favourably, this reinforced protectionism. As farmers suffered and unemployment increased, criticism of the government mounted. Polish immigrants, who had been relegated to the lowest rungs of the social ladder, constituted a segment of the population that experienced the worst of the Depression. As the crisis deepened, communist overtures began to strike a responsive chord. The Polish consul in Winnipeg observed that, in some Polish communities “the impact of the crisis and difficult material status of our emigration has allowed communist ideas to penetrate a certain, but not substantial, group from our emigration.”²¹⁴

The Polish Consul General in Ottawa was more skeptical, he observed that “by accepting that name [Polish Workers’ Farmers’ Association], [they] avoided calling themselves Communists [because] such a name would hamper their activities [...] among the Polish emigration, which is 80% Catholic [... and immune] to revolutionary slogans.”²¹⁵ Despite their tendencies to marginalize the PTRF’s influence in their reports, Polish consuls regularly marvelled at the Communists’ rapid growth and they believed that the PTRF was a potential

²¹²Turek, 121.

²¹³ Larry Glassford, *Reaction and Reform: The Politics of the Conservative Party under R.B. Bennett 1927-1938* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 78.

²¹⁴AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Jan Pawilca’s confidential report entitled “Poglądy komunistyczne w wychodźstwie polskim w Kanadzie Zachodniej”, September 1, 1933. Pawilca also noted that Polish Communists became quite active in Brandon, a part of Fort William and Port Arthur, and in Beausejour and Edmonton.

²¹⁵AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Consul General to the MSZ, March 3, 1939.

threat to the Polish diaspora in Canada. The Polish consul in Winnipeg noted that the PTRF had 60 members in Winnipeg with “its own Workers’ Hall, library, and [...] substantial capital [...].”²¹⁶ In 1935, an RCMP security bulletin warned that “It is interesting to note that among the guests present [at PTRF meetings] there were a number of people of Polish nationality, converts, who not very long ago would never have crossed the threshold of the Labour Temple. They were from church parishes and other organizations.”²¹⁷

The lack of a talented intellectual leadership proved to be a serious problem for the PTRF. Dutkiewicz, who was the spokesman of the Party, had little formal education. He had worked as a labourer in the west after immigrating to Canada. According to Turek, he had a natural ability, and he was a good public speaker and a capable journalist.²¹⁸ But the Party needed some fresh blood and a competent organizer. In 1935, its members approached Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel for help during her second visit to Canada.²¹⁹

According to Consul General Jerzy Adamkiewicz, between 1929 and 1939, 400 paid communist agents and 60 Moscow-trained agitators were active in the Ukrainian community in Canada.²²⁰ Many of them had received special training at the Lenin School in Moscow and the

²¹⁶AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Jan Pawilca’s confidential report entitled “Poglądy komunistyczne w wychodźstwie polskim w Kanadzie Zachodniej”, September 1, 1933.

²¹⁷*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 757): 29th May, 1935, 312.

²¹⁸Turek, 120.

²¹⁹AAN, Warsaw, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in New York, 403 (171). Tytus Zbyszewski to the Ambassador in Washington, March 1, 1934. It appears that Polish Communists in the United States also benefitted, or at least tried to solicit help from the Communist Party in Poland. In 1934, the Polish Chamber of Labor held a meeting calling secretly for the infiltration of the Embassy in Washington. Harry A. Jung of the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation warned that members of the Polish Chamber of Labor prepared a program “which seems to be under way, of obtaining from Communist comrades in Poland, with whom they seem to be in correspondence, the names of some Washington DC comrades who might be persona grata, that is, without knowledge of the Embassy of their communist connections – should such make application for employment at the embassy in the capacity of guards or on the clerical staff. See: AAN, Warsaw, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in New York, 403 (173). Harry A. Jung (American Vigilant Intelligence Federation National Headquarters) to Tytus Zbyszewski, March 5, 1934.

²²⁰ Consul Juliusz Szygowski made a similar observation in his 1938 report to the MSZ. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled “Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada,” January 13, 1938.

Institutes of Marxism-Leninism in Ukraine. Some of the distinguished and able leaders were sent to the CPC's private summer resort near Grafton, Ontario, where they were enrolled in special political training courses for six months.²²¹ According to Adamkiewicz, the PTRF was also supposed to have received instructors, teachers and agitators from Moscow.²²² There were also reports suggesting that "in 1928 the Soviets sent 600,000 gold rubles to support the Communist Party of Canada."²²³ Unfortunately, the consul did not reveal his source of information, and it is difficult to verify these facts. An earlier report also warned that communist literature was being sent from the Soviet Union to Poland through Canada.²²⁴ Information gathered by the RCMP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland suggests that such efforts were orchestrated in conjunction with Canadian and Ukrainian Communists.²²⁵

One may only speculate as to why the Comintern wanted to expand its resources into Canada. The reason may have been Canada's close geographical proximity to both the Soviet Union and the United States, or it may have been purely ideological, to export the revolution and to combat Western capitalism. Whatever the reason may have been, it is certain that Canada was an important transit point between the United States and Europe for many agitators. Already in 1919, Polish consuls in Canada were informed that a radical *conspirateur* by the name of Count Maximilian Egon Potocki, who was considered to be a dangerous anarchist suspected of plotting

²²¹Kolasky *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979), 8.

²²²AAN, Warsaw 11430 MSZ files, Consul of the Republic of Poland in Winnipeg to MSZ, January 8, 1939.

²²³ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Consul General Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, "confidential report," March 7, 1939. In the United States, communist literature was also imported from Poland and sold at very low prices, from one to ten cents, and in other instances, it was distributed for free. See: AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 1051 (32).

²²⁴ AAN, Warsaw, 1372. Pawlica to MSZ, August 3, 1933; AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, MSZ to the Consul General in Ottawa, note on Polish immigrants in Canada, 11 January, 1937. One must question the consuls facts in this report, because it seems unlikely route for communist literature.

²²⁵ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372. Jan Pawlica to MSZ, August 3, 1933.

the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was arrested in Montreal before he had a chance to depart for Europe. *The New York Times* reported that Potocki, who was travelling as “James Dunn” with his wife, “Mrs. Dunn”, was captured with \$3,473 in cash, about \$48,000 in letters of credit and over \$5,000 worth of jewellery. Authorities considered him to be one of the main “red” agitators on the North American continent. Potocki was interned in Kapuskasing, Ontario.²²⁶

According to Reczynka’s interview with leading communist activists, Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel helped arrange that at least two individuals were sent by the Communist Party of Poland to Canada. The first, Joseph Polka, was a metal worker from Łódź connected with International Red Aid. But he was accidentally killed when a freight train crushed him near Indian Head, Saskatchewan on May 27th, 1934.²²⁷ As a result of this incident, a second individual, Albert Morski, was sent a year later.

There is a possibility that other “organizers” were sent to Canada, including Zygmunt Majtczak, who created a Polish Communist Youth Section in Winnipeg in 1935.²²⁸ In 1939, a consular report revealed the names of eighteen “communist activists of Polish nationality who were active among the Polish emigration in Canada.”²²⁹

Albert Morski was born Edward Damięcki to a peasant family on September 29, 1909 in Gerwatach, Poland. He completed high school in 1929. In 1930, he apparently became a law

²²⁶See: AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 2352 (1). MSZ to Embassy in Washington, November 8, 1919. See also: “Canadians Arrest Count Max Potocki” *New York Times* October 9, 1919.

²²⁷*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part I: (No. 711): 20th June, 1934, 79. See also “*The Worker*”, June 9; June 25, 1934. Polka was a veteran of the First World War. He came to Canada on May 1, 1926 at the age of 24. He worked at the Ford plant in Windsor, Ontario. He was a member of the CPC and National Secretary of the Polish Workers’ and Farmers’ Association in Winnipeg. He was crushed by freight train on May 27, 1934, in Saskatchewan while on an organizing trip. He was buried by the Department of Health but his body was exhumed and the Communists buried him in Winnipeg on June 9, 1934. Jacob Penner, a prominent Canadian Communist, spoke at his funeral.

²²⁸*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 748): 13th March, 1935, 167.

²²⁹AAN, Warsaw, MSZ files 11470. Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Ottawa to the MSZ, March 7, 1939. A. Morski is not on that list. See also: Reczyńska, 92.

student. He interrupted his studies in 1932 due to material and health reasons. In 1933, he joined the Polish Communist Party and edited one of its newspapers. He was jailed for Communist Party activities in Poznań on March 13, 1933. In 1934, he returned to Warsaw but was arrested again in April. After his release, sometime in 1935, he was sent by the Communist Party of Poland to work among Polish immigrants in Canada.²³⁰

Morski was a talented writer and a brilliant speaker. He recognized that Polish immigrants were too conservative and too traditional to accept atheism and international radicalism. One year before his arrival, the National Executive Committee resolved to encourage Poles to fight openly on the streets and in factories.²³¹ Morski criticized such an approach. He insisted that the PTRF should abandon “Hurrah revolutionism” and the theory of class struggle, which he termed “the childhood’s disease of leftism.”²³² His arrival coincided, (probably intentionally) with the Comintern’s decision to adopt the Popular Front policy at its 7th World Congress, held in July-August, 1935. In line with this policy, Morski urged party

²³⁰ Albert Morski served on the editorial committee of the newspaper, *Głos Pracy* in Winnipeg. By 1937 he was the representative in Canada of the Polish Communist Party, the International Union of Workers and the Red Aid. In February, 1941 he became the first editor of *Kronika Tygodniowa* in Toronto. He also served in the Canadian Army Reserves during the Second World War. In August of 1943, he joined the Labour Progressive Party. He left the editorship of *Kronika Tygodniowa* in 1945 when he was appointed chief of the Ottawa office of the Polish Information Agency. In this capacity he began to represent the new Polish government in Ottawa and on July 3, 1945 made inquiries about Polish property in Canada, including the Polish Treasures brought here for safekeeping during the Second World War. He was involved with the Polish Repatriation Committee in Montreal. He returned to Poland in March, 1947 and worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. He was the Chief of Division in the Political Department. In 1947; he was appointed Counsel-General at the Polish Embassy in London, and later the chief of the Polish delegation to the International Armistice Commission in Korea in 1955-1956. He was then appointed Polish Ambassador to Norway in 1957-1961. He was Chief of the Polish Delegation to the International Control Commission in Laos and later Director of a Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. He was also Ambassador in Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Somalia. He retired in 1971 and died on July 17, 1994 in Warsaw. He was one of the leading Communists among the Polish community in Canada. See: Victor Turek, *The Polish-Language Press*; Longin Pastusiak, *Polska Kanada 1945-1961, Kraje odległe a jednak bliskie* (Toruń, Poland: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1994); See: Anna Reczyńska, *Początki działalności and Piętno Wojny; The Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, Vol.L (No.17), April 27th, 1948, 291; “Sen Finds ‘Encouraging Signs’ in Laos” in *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, May 10, 1961), 1; Ang Cheng Guan, *Vietnamese communists’ relations with China and the second Indochina conflict, 1956-1962* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1997), 210; “Laos Control Unit to Meet Rebels” in *Evening Independent* (Florida), May 10, 1961.

²³¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 776): 9th October, 1935, 525.

²³² Turek, 123.

leaders to abandon international radicalism in favour of a united front against fascism. The policy had some Communists confused. At a Communist leader's convention in Manitoba, ex-judge and Manitoba MLA Lewis St. George Stubbs had some trouble coming to terms with the Comintern's new directives: "If anybody had told me one year ago that I would now be on the platform of a Communist convention, advocating war, I would have said they were crazy, but that is just what I am doing." He was speaking about the Spanish Civil War, which he concluded was a war that "should be endorsed for the eradication of brutal Fascism by every peace-loving citizen."²³³

In July of 1936, Morski orchestrated a complete reorganization of the PTRF during its 6th national Convention, and changed its name to the *Polskie Towarzystwo Ludowe* - PTL. It was decided to move the headquarters of the National Executive Committee to Toronto, together with *Glos Pracy*. This was a strategic move, since most Polish newcomers were beginning to gravitate to eastern Canada. The first Toronto-based issue of the paper was printed on December 16, 1936 from the PTL's new office at 544 King Street, West.²³⁴ The resolutions adopted at the PTL's first Convention illustrate the new direction of the Party and its reorganized structure:

- 1) The convention decided to divide Western Canada into two territorial divisions:
 - a. Western district (B.C., Alta., Sask.) with district headquarters at Edmonton, Alta.
 - b. Manitoba district with district headquarters at Winnipeg, Man.
- 2) To launch a drive with [the] view of doubling the membership of the association and its Youth Sections to commence 1st February, 1937; the drive to be linked up with the cultural-education fund drive.
- 3) Appoint a Cultural Educational Committee with J. Bobak as secretary-director.
- 4) Establish a Women's Department headed by M. Bobakova.
- 5) Launch a press drive to commence on 15th April; the Central Executive Committee to collaborate with the directorate of *Glos Pracy*.
- 6) The Seventh national Convention of the Polish People's Association to take place in October 1937.

²³³*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 870): 16th September, 1937, 370.

²³⁴*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 836): 9th December, 1936, 537; *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 842): 3rd February, 1937, 71-72.

- 7) The convention recommends that a school of three months' duration be held in the summer of 1937 at Toronto and that all expenses in connection therewith be borne by the branches and sections.
- 8) The convention strongly urges all branches to organize courses for the teaching of the English language, also schools in Polish for those branches which, up to now, neglected to introduce same.
- 9) The convention instructs all branches to elect industrial committees who, in collaboration with the local industrial bodies, shall constantly and accurately inform *Głos Pracy* on conditions in the factories in their respective localities.
- 10) To establish a women's magazine to appear monthly with a children's department; funds for this purpose to be raised in conjunction with the drive for the people's cultural and educational fund.
- 11) The convention greets the Polish youth in the independent Youth Clubs and instructs all the sections of the association to support such clubs and assists in organizing them in localities where none exist. The convention suggests the calling of general Canadian Polish Youth Congress and the building up of a Polish youth organ in Canada.
- 12) The convention instructs the management of *Głos Pracy* to publish the results of the press drive.²³⁵

The communist movement in Canada experienced accelerated growth during the Popular Front period. After having hit rock-bottom in 1931 at around 1,400 members, CPC membership increased to nearly 15,000 in 1937.²³⁶ The PTL also experienced an increase in popularity. In March 1937, *Głos Pracy* reported that it had opened three new branches with thirty-two new recruits.²³⁷ The Toronto branch had increased its membership from thirty in 1936 to eighty-nine, and six new members were recruited in Sydney, Nova Scotia.²³⁸ In 1937, an RCMP security bulletin reported that Polish Communists made up 12.6 percent of the CPC's total membership in Manitoba.²³⁹ A year later, Consul J. Szygowski suggested that there were "at least 162 conscious Communists" among Poles in Western Canada.²⁴⁰ *Głos Pracy* also reported that its subscription

²³⁵RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 842): 3rd February, 1937, 71-72.

²³⁶John Manley "Introduction" in RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years, Part II. See also: Ian Angus *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*.

²³⁷No. 847, 10th March, 1937 The following three new branches were organized: Montreal (St. Charles District – 7 members); Spruce Valley, Alberta (16 members); Cadomin, Alberta (9 members).

²³⁸RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 847): 10th March, 1937, 125.

²³⁹RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 862): 30th June, 1937, 278.

²⁴⁰AAN, Warsaw, MSZ files 11430, Szygowski to the MSZ, December 31, 1938.

quota for May 1937 had been oversubscribed by nearly 200 new members, and that its fund-raising campaign raised the expected goal of \$2,000.²⁴¹

Open communist agitation was almost entirely avoided and replaced with cultural-educational work. The Party made appeals for Polish patriotism, thus competing with patriotic groups which tried to dissuade immigrants from joining pro-communist organizations, and it urged “all persons who are not hostile to labour,” to join the PTL.²⁴² *Glos Pracy*’s publications included patriotic symbols and slogans as well as illustrations of illustrious Polish national heroes like Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Adam Mickiewicz. The Communists were willing to collaborate with all other groups, including religious ones, and they called for unity among all Poles in Canada.²⁴³ An RCMP security bulletin noted that the PTL’s successful campaign had cost Polish consular officials some supporters, and it highlighted the PTL’s clever new strategy:

The change of the name “Polish Worker’s and Farmer’s Ass’n” into Polish “People’s Ass’n”, the acceptance of the names of famous Polish democrats, writers, and heroes by the branches, the transfer of the centre and of the “Glos Pracy” from Winnipeg to Toronto – helped a lot in broadening of the influence of the Ass’n, and increased the number of members and readers by a couple of hundreds, but this is still way behind the possibilities which now exist.²⁴⁴

The Communists’ momentum continued until the outbreak of the Second World War. Polish consular reports no longer hinted that the Polish Canadian communist movement was dangerous, they bluntly warned against it. In 1938, consular reports noted that 32 PTL branches existed in Canada (19 in Western Canada and 13 in Eastern Canada). A year later, consuls reported an increase to 35 branches (21 in Western Canada and 14 in Eastern Canada).²⁴⁵ In May 1938, the Polish consul in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica, wrote: “the Communists activities, whether

²⁴¹*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 861): 23rd June, 1937, 266.

²⁴²Turek, 123.

²⁴³Turek, 123; “*Glos Pracy*”, March 3, 1938. .

²⁴⁴*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 874): 27th October, 1937, 433.

²⁴⁵AAN, Warsaw, 1372, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, March 7, 1939; Archives of Ontario, Malatyński Papers, 9695.5.Consul in Winnipeg to the MSZ, confidential, January 1, 1938.

in Western Canada or in Eastern Canada, and particularly in Ontario, are being developed with a lot of energy, and pose a threat to our emigration.”²⁴⁶ Consul Jan Szygowski made a similar observation about the Polish communist movement in Western Canada, noting that “the Communists are trying to occupy the national domain” and “lure many uncritical elements in the Canadian Polonia, of which unfortunately there are many.”²⁴⁷

As we will see in the subsequent chapters, the Polish communist movement in Canada was not as large as its Ukrainian, Finnish or Jewish counterparts. But although they were numerically smaller, Polish Communists made up for it with enormous enthusiasm and dedication. By the late 1930s, they established branches in every major Canadian city and countless cells in remote farming communities where isolated Poles became easy prey. Converting itself into a “cultural-educational” organization, the PTL hoped to make significant gains by masking its political allegiance. After all, what better way to attract nostalgic Poles to Communism than with folk songs, Polish-language schools and patriotism? Morski sensibly recognized that if the Communists were to survive in the Polish community, they would have to drop their atheist and revolutionary facade. This strategy later enabled the Communists to infiltrate several patriotic organizations and veterans’ associations. They also created a network of spies and agents who worked as domestics in “patriotic” homes and as members of Polish non-communist organizations.

While the Polish communist movement faced bitter opposition from the state and, arguably, even tougher resistance from Polish patriotic organizations, it made considerable headway. As we have seen earlier, the Polish consuls, who previously undermined the

²⁴⁶ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa. Pawlica to the Polish Consulate in Montreal, May 27, 1938.

²⁴⁷ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled “Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada,” January 13, 1938.

Communists' influence, began to seriously consider the Polish movement as a dangerous threat.

The Polish Communists are a classic example of how relatively small organizations, whose members are motivated by a messianic ideology, bound by strict discipline and guided by devoted leaders, can exert an influence that is far out of proportion to their numbers.

Chapter 3

Gaude, Mater Polonia: The Battleground

The “Polonia”, in many respects, is an “imagined community” in the sense described by Benedict Anderson.²⁴⁸ Though a Polonia may be “imagined,” this does not preclude its actual existence. The community organizations are real and the people that are associated with them hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity to the Polonia. Poles residing in Canada and their compatriots in Poland commonly refer to the Polish-Canadian diaspora as the *Polonia Kanadyjska* (Canadian Polonia). The term *Polonia* is derived from the Latin name for Poland, but it is widely used, both in popular and official discourse, to refer to Polish groups in diaspora. Each Polonia – whether it is the American Polonia, the French Polonia or the Canadian Polonia – has its unique sense of identity, which is distinguished from national identity. Helena Znaniecki-Lopata defined the Polonia as an ethnic community which:

[...] encompasses all those who identify with it and are engaged in some form of interaction and activity contributing to its existence. The members can be scattered in a variety of work and residential centers; the community is maintained through superterritorial organizations, mass communications, and personal contact²⁴⁹

Although there is a distinct Polish-Canadian identity, which has been influenced by Canadian values, attitudes, culture, politics and the English language, it also has strong roots in Polish national identity. Emigrants from the migratory wave at the turn of the nineteenth century did not form a self-conscious and unified group. The majority of these newcomers did not identify with the Polish nation or Poland – the latter being non-existent on the geopolitical map

²⁴⁸ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

²⁴⁹ Helena Znaniecka Lopata with Mary Patrice Erdmans, *Polish Americans, 2nd Edition* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 55.

since the last Polish partition in 1795. Illiterate peasants, who constituted the bulk of this migratory wave, identified more with their primary communities, whereas the Polish nation was an abstract idea.²⁵⁰

One of the fundamental problems that Polish Canadian Communists faced in their efforts to propagate the communist ideology in the Canadian Polonia, was opposition from two camps: the Church and the “nationalists.” In order to understand the environment in which Polish pro-Communists vied for power and to help evaluate their failures and successes, it is necessary to examine the structure of Polonia and the schisms between the competing cohorts; the clergy, the nationalists and the Communists.

The Bulwark of Faith: The Catholic Church

Churches were part of the human and physical infrastructure of the village in the Old World. Priests were not only dispensers of sacraments, but they were expected to solve conflicts, give guidance on planting crops and raising stock and to read documents from secular and Church authorities for illiterate parishioners. In other words, Christianity was a matrix of ideas and modes of behaviour not easy to dislodge from the mindset of the majority of men and women in the Polish countryside. It was only natural, therefore, that the first form of organizational life to appear in the New World was of a religious nature.

The Polish migrants who arrived in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century were raised in an environment in which the Catholic Church played a central role in their everyday lives. Their lives were synchronized by the sound of church bells tolling for *Angelus Domini* three times a day. Their families and communities absorbed the Church’s rhythm and revolved around its liturgical seasons. Nearly all aspects of peasant life were wrought with rituals and

²⁵⁰ William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Volume 5: Organization and Disorganization in America* (Boston, Mass.: Badger, 1920), 99.

symbolism. Before slicing bread, a woman would make the sign of the cross on it. A farmer, returning from a hard day of toiling in the field, knelt at the foot of a tall village cross or by a small roadside shrine on his way home. The entire calendar was created with reference to Holy Days. Nearly all of the important events of the villagers took place within the confines of the Church or churchyard - births, weddings, funerals, the opening of new schools, the blessing of homes, and the arrival of important visitors from other towns.

The church was usually the largest building at the center of the village. Paintings and stained-glass windows on the walls of the church explained the meaning of biblical stories. And the priest was recognized as the intermediary between God and man. Peasants had a strong sense of the existence of God, believing that God was directly involved in human affairs and could reward the virtuous. They also believed that God punished men and women for their sins with disease, plague, poor harvest, and war.

When Polish migrants began to settle in Canada in the late nineteenth century, many of them soon discovered that they had to not only clear wilderness for farming and build log cabins for shelter, but that they also had to erect their own churches if they wanted to practice their faith. Polish immigrants had little understanding of the Canadian principle of voluntarism, which allowed for church independence from the control of the state. Many of them donated what little money they had to help lay the first cornerstones of their local churches, which became the only familiar landmarks in a world that was entirely foreign to them. A church was, therefore, not only the site where religious rituals were given expression; it was also a symbol of success in the New World.

Since Polish settlers did not have consular representation until after the First World War, clergymen naturally assumed leadership roles among Polish immigrants. In Edmonton, for

example, Polish priests helped organize a delegation to the premier of Alberta in 1919, to seek recognition of the Poles as a separate national group, since Poland had regained independence. According to Joanna Matejko, the measure of esteem in which clergymen were held “was apparent in the willingness of parishioners to contribute two to four dollars yearly for church support, though occasionally they were too poor to do so.”²⁵¹

As in the Old Country, the clergy claimed the natural right to lead Polish immigrants in the New World based on doctrinal grounds, giving religion priority over national responsibilities. After all, the Church claimed that it had played an important role in preserving Poland’s national identity during the partition era. The Polish-language Catholic press equated Polish patriotism with Catholic faith, claiming that “only a Catholic Pole can be a good Pole – while the clergy alone can determine who is a good Catholic.”²⁵² Increasingly however, Polish immigrants who favoured a secular trend in education and social life began to challenge the Church’s rights to primacy over community affairs.

Religious Nationalists and Not-So-Religious Nationalists

The progressive anti-clerical camp was composed of men and women who were generally devout Catholics and nationalists and who did not question the authority of the Church in religious affairs, but who preferred a secular trend in community organizations and education. Despite efforts made by the clergy to establish societies and clubs that were organized as non-religious and extra-Church institutions, the anti-clerical camp wanted to emancipate Polish immigrants from the religio-cultural and the dominational principles that governed such organizations.

²⁵¹ Joanna Matejko, “Polish Farmers in Alberta, 1896-1939” in *The Polish Presence in Canada and America*, ed. by Frank Renkiewicz (Toronto: The Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1982), 57.

²⁵² Victor Turek, *Polish Language Press* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1962), 65.

The “progressives” preferred ethnoculturally-based organizations and changes to governance that required a direct involvement of community members in the selection of their leaders. This trend was consistent with the changing nature and needs of the growing number of community organizations, which introduced democratic or quasi-democratic processes in the choice of their leaders. Others simply felt that the parish priests were too uncompromising and that they abused their positions of authority. Such was the case in Melchior Wankowicz’s account of a meeting held by a group of Polish immigrants. The group had asked their priest for permission to use the local parish hall to celebrate Poland’s Constitution Day. One of the assembled Poles, a Mr. Ludwiczak, relayed the response:

Father Szalkowski won’t have anything to do with it [...]. “He said ‘If you want to organize anything then organize it among yourselves. There are among you people who write against the Holy Father in the papers.’ I told him it’s none of our business what’s in the papers’. I told him that he couldn’t say anything against us, we’re all good Poles and good Catholics. The older people have come to something in life, raised fine children, so why shouldn’t they be trusted to run the business of the community? But he said No and that’s that. I told him that he closed the hall to the children so they couldn’t get an education. I was about to remind him of the chalice I gave the church, but decided not to be rude. I don’t know how it is, the priests live off the people but they don’t care much about the people and what we want.”²⁵³

In that same account, Wankowicz described a conflict over financial matters with the parish priest:

The people on the church committee all pitched in, they took up a collection for the school, even Klekot didn’t refuse to give money. But when they wanted to check the ledgers, the priest said that he didn’t need controllers, that the people were too dumb for that. Funny, Father Szalkowski didn’t call us dumb when it came to getting the money. He’s too greedy. One time he said to a man who asked him to say Mass for a member of the family, ‘You’ll get only as much heaven from me as you pay for. Otherwise, don’t come here and stink up the place.’ Later he said he was only joking. But it was the truth. For instance, there’s a big hall in the basement. There are no benches there. I myself could make the benches in my free time. Ludwiczak promised to give the lumber. Tereska talked her son into getting the Klekot boys, Pawel and Piotr, to cut and haul the logs. The Klekots said they are willing. But because they speak Ukrainian, Father Szalkowski said he didn’t need any Russians around. All that was just a smokescreen, the

²⁵³ Melchior Wańkowicz, *Three Generations* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1973), 381.

fact of it being that Father Szalkowski holds bingo games in the basement, and he knows he wouldn't get as much money from collections for the school as he does from the bingo games. What gets me mad is that he doesn't see that when the Polish language dies out, he won't have a praish anymore.²⁵⁴

The initiative for politically oriented secular institutions came from a small intelligentsia and working-class segment that had settled mainly in urban centers like Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto. The leaders were generally better educated immigrants who had been influenced by the Polish national awakening at the hands of a secular intelligentsia and the reading circles and enlightenment societies which had sprung up in the Old Country towards the end of the nineteenth century. Some of them founded the early socialist organizations like *Polskie Socjalistyczne Stowarzyszenie im. Stefana Okrzei, Gwiazda* (Star), which became the *Towarzystwo Ignacego Daszyńskiego* (The Ignacy Daszynski Society) and *Oświata*. They were radical socialists who were highly patriotic and nationistic in outlook and they had a liberal attitude toward religion.”²⁵⁵ According to Turek:

These leaders resented the intolerance of the clerical camp, its boycott of the few non-Catholic Poles and its efforts to subordinate the entire life of the Polish immigrants in America to the clergy. They pointed to the American principle of separation of church and state, while criticizing the shortcomings of the social activities of the clergy.²⁵⁶

Secular organizations began to flourish in the Canadian Polonia in the early 1900s. This was much later than in the United States, where Polish Americans had founded the Polish National Alliance in 1880 to counter the Polish Roman Catholic Union, which had been established seven years earlier. According to Turek, the gradual secularization of Polish institutional life occurred along two parallel lines: organizations either broke away entirely from

²⁵⁴ Melchior Wańkowicz, *Three Generations* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1973), 361.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 361.

²⁵⁶ Turek, 65.

the clergy; or they gradually emancipated themselves from clerical control, often against the will of pastors, but they generally retained their formal associations with the parish.²⁵⁷

The oldest Polish-Canadian associations were established in Western Canada. More than a dozen lay organizations, which mirrored the reading circles, mutual aid and recreational associations and other popular clubs from the Old Country, were founded in Winnipeg by the 1920s. One of the earliest Polish secular associations in Canada, the Polish Sokol (Falcon), was established in 1906 in Winnipeg as a counter to the oldest church-based organization in that city, the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society, which had been founded by the Oblates four years earlier.

The history of the Polish Sokol reaches back to the partition period. In 1866, students in Lwow (today L'viv), organized a gymnastic circle patterned on the already existing German Turnvereins and the Czech Sokol.²⁵⁸ The organization emphasized physical fitness with the motto "*w zdrowym ciele zdrowy duch*" (a healthy spirit in a healthy body). Its principal aim was to cultivate and develop national awareness among Poles in the partitioned territories. Polish immigrants, particularly the better educated ones, imported the ideas of Sokol to North America, where they aimed to cultivate patriotic values, especially among younger generations. Before the First World War, the Polish Sokol in the United States had 12,000 well-trained members ready to serve in the war.²⁵⁹ The movement was much smaller in Canada, and its links with the American Sokol were relatively tenuous, but it nevertheless played a highly influential role among many Polish Canadians. During the First World War, the organization guided the War

²⁵⁷Turek, *Poles in Manitoba* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1967), 197.

²⁵⁸ See: Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

²⁵⁹ Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (Boulder Colorado: East European Monographs, 1987), 39.

Relief Service and constituted the largest recruiting center for volunteers for the Polish Army in France.

The leaders of Sokol often collided with the clergy over a myriad of issues pertaining to the community and to nationalist aspirations. As the earliest fully secularized organization in Canada, the Sokol had to withstand the main impact of clerical opposition. It weathered the storm successfully and it began to encourage and support other secular organizations and the secular Polish-language press. Its members generally resented discrimination based on religious affiliation. When some parishioners joined the schismatic Polish National Catholic Church²⁶⁰ and other dissident Catholic movements, leaders of Sokol defended the dissidents against criticism from the Church, arguing that many of them were “selfless social workers and educators” and that the “boycott of these people by the Catholic clergy contributed to a splitting of the unity of the Polish ethnic group in Canada.”²⁶¹

The trend towards secularization found a responsive chord for many Polish organizations, including those that had been founded alongside the parish churches. The Society of St. John Cantius, which was established as a fraternal-benefit society affiliated with the St. John Cantius parish in Winnipeg, separated over a conflict with the parish priest over who should have the right to control the Society. In 1924, the same parish priest founded a new mutual aid society, the St. Joseph Fraternal-Benefit Society, but a similar conflict over governance forced its members to sever their ties with the parish in 1950 and to amalgamate with the Society of St.

²⁶⁰ Fragmentary sources make it difficult to reconstruct the exact circumstances under which the Polish National Church of Canada was formed. Following disagreements over the seemingly authoritarian attitude of the Oblate priests of the Holy Ghost Parish in Winnipeg, a group of Polish parishioners broke away and formed an independent congregation in 1904. By 1907, they made contacts with the U.S.-based Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC), and began to set-up a “National Catholic” parish in Manitoba. In later years parishes were formed in Montreal, and in Ontario, with a bishopric in Toronto. Over time the PNCC gained eleven parishes in Canada, with nearly five thousand members at its peak in the 1960s. For a discussion on the Polish National Catholic Church see: Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 176-182.

²⁶¹ Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 67.

John Cantius. According to Turek, together with Sokol, the St. John Cantius Society “represented the block which maintained a counterpoise against the clerical camp” in Winnipeg.

Relations between nationalists and the Church were not always black and white. That is, both groups did not form antagonistic camps that tried to remove one another from the political and socio-cultural landscape of the Polish community. The term “anti-clerical” did not mean that nationalists were against religion; rather they preferred to establish organizations outside the control of the Church. Most nationalists attended mass regularly and raised their children as devout Roman Catholics. And Polish priests preached about maintaining the Polish heritage and about being patriotic Poles. In most instances, the nationalists and the church coexisted, especially in cases where parish priests were willing to be more moderate. The Holy Ghost Society, for example, which was administered by Polish Oblates since 1902, underwent gradual secularization, but the restrained policies of the Oblates prevented the Society from entirely severing its ties with the parish. Even when the Society built a new hall far away from the parish premises in 1949, it continued to be formally a Catholic parochial organization.²⁶² The Society enjoyed the autonomy of other secular organizations, but the pastor of the Holy Ghost parish had a say in the Society’s affairs, owing to his “personal prestige and authority rather than to formal provisions of the Society’s constitution.”²⁶³ Whatever their disagreements may have been, however, Polish “nationalists” and clergy agreed that communist organizations posed the greatest threat and had to be destroyed.

Creating a Super-Territorial Polonia: Clerics, Anti-Clerics and Polish Consuls

The 1920s and early 1930s ushered in the founding of several competing federative bodies which aspired to become the chief representatives of the Polish community in Canada.

²⁶² Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 197.

²⁶³ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 197.

The Polish Communists, as we have already seen, established the *Polskie Towarzystwo Rolniczo-Farmerskie* – PTRF in 1931, which became the *Polskie Towarzystwo Ludowe* – PTL in 1936.

The clerics and the patriots had attempted to create federative bodies of their own in various centers in earlier periods, but the Communists were the first to establish a viable and successful super-territorial organization that represented all Polish communist organizations across Canada.²⁶⁴ The clerics formed a Federation that brought together parishes and their affiliated organizations, but its stronghold remained in western Canada, principally in Manitoba. The patriots split into two competing federations: The Alliance of Poles in Canada which favoured a ‘Canada-first’ attitude and the Federation of Polish Societies in Canada, which favoured a ‘Poland-first’ attitude. The influence of the former federation remained largely limited to Ontario, whereas the Federation of Polish Societies represented organizations across several provinces, though its activities were mainly limited to Winnipeg and Toronto.

Until the late 1920s, the majority of Polish organizations were scattered all over Canada and, by and large, they maintained an institutional life that was separate from other Polish organizations. Early attempts to federate Polish organizations started in Winnipeg, the largest center of Polish life in Canada. The St. Michael Union, also known as the Union of the Polish Catholic Societies in Canada, formed in 1909 by the Oblate Fathers of the Holy Ghost, was one of the earliest attempts to federate Polish organizations in Canada. The Union consisted of six scattered organizations that were mainly parish associations, but its reach never went beyond Winnipeg and it was dissolved in 1919.

By 1915, the clerical and the anti-clerical camps possessed the necessary ingredient for initiating transnational unification – a newspaper. The founding of *Gazeta Katolicka* (Catholic

²⁶⁴ The Alliance of Poles in Canada, which was established in 1922, was the oldest Polish federation in Canada, but unlike the communist federation, its activities were mainly limited to central Canada.

Gazette), by the Oblate Fathers in 1908 was a victory against the anti-clerical camp, which struggled without a newspaper for another seven years. In 1915, the anti-clerical camp established *Czas* (Time), which was mostly associated with the Polish gymnastic association Sokol. It was the main bastion against the clerical camp and its organ the *Gazeta Katolicka*. Although their newspapers reached well beyond local boundaries, attempts to amalgamate Polish organizations into a transnational federation remained futile for both sides.

The influx of better educated and nationally conscious immigrants in the 1920s renewed aspirations for a secular trans-national federation. Between 1921 and 1931, 92,100 Poles came to Canada. Many of them had served in the Polish army, where they received occupational training; others had been members of secular organizations in Poland. They were less interested in working on farms, so they gravitated towards larger industrial centers where they sought more lucrative occupations. During this period several secular organizations were organized, which included the Association of Merchants and Businessmen, new youth circles, self-help organizations and a Polish Academic Club at the University of Manitoba.²⁶⁵

In 1922, talks between representatives of the Association of the Sons of Poland, the Society of St. Stanislaus and the socialist pro-PPS *Spójnia* (National Union) resulted in the birth of the *Związek Polaków w Kanadzie* (Polish Alliance in Canada), in Toronto. In 1923, the Polish Progressive Society, an affiliate of the Polish Socialist Party, also joined the Alliance. The Alliance developed its own independent program which included a liberal attitude towards religion, a non-conformist position towards successive Polish governments, and it stressed the principles of tolerance, brotherhood and education. Emphasis on the latter was particularly strong, owing perhaps to the fact that the leaders of the Alliance wanted their children to

²⁶⁵ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1979), 134.

receive a better education. For this reason, the educational program of the Alliance included not only Polish-language schools, but also amateur theatres, orchestras and artistic presentations.

The Alliance was neither anti-Catholic, nor anti-religious, although it was so labelled by other segments of the Polish community because of its progressive outlook. Many of its members had belonged to the Sons of Poland which encouraged its members to “uphold the Catholic religion and [to] establish Polish parishes.”²⁶⁶ The constitution of the Alliance emphasized its status as a lay organization and mentioned the Christian religion without specifying Catholicism, but its members were mainly Catholics who attended mass and baptized their children. They argued that priests had “enough other responsibilities” and thus “do not need to look for additional, social ones.”²⁶⁷ Some Alliance members later parted ways with the organization because of its excessive liberal attitude towards religion.²⁶⁸

By 1927 the Alliance had spread outside Toronto and established a second branch in Hamilton, Ontario. Throughout the 1930s it founded branches in Preston, Kitchener, St. Catherine’s, Brantford, Guelph and Welland. In 1933, the Alliance established its own newspaper, *Zwiqzkowiec* (The Alliancer). Its first editor was Alfons Jan Staniewski, who was connected with the Polish socialist movement.²⁶⁹

The Alliance’s greatest conflict with other Polonia organizations was derived from the position it had adopted towards successive Polish governments. From the moment of consolidation, the Alliance adopted a ‘Canada first’ attitude. Its members considered themselves to be proud Poles, many of them volunteered for the Polish Army, but they believed that they

²⁶⁶ William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada* (Montreal, Tundra Books, 1987), 82.

²⁶⁷ Heydenkorn, *Past and Present* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1974), 127.

²⁶⁸ Patriotic Poles and the Polish consuls were occasionally suspicious of the Alliance and thought that it had communist tendencies. In later periods, Polish Communists tried to capitalize, but with little success, on the Alliance’s left-leaning outlook by encouraging its members to join their federation. When the Second World War broke out, the Alliance adopted a more conservative outlook and waged a vicious anti-Communist campaign.

²⁶⁹ Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 133.

should be loyal Canadian citizens first. Canada was not a “transit station,” they argued, “but a new, accepted homeland.”²⁷⁰ As a result, at the second congress of the World Alliance of Poles in Warsaw in 1934, Alliance delegates refused to swear a loyalty oath to Poland and its president on the grounds that it was an organization serving Canadian citizens.²⁷¹

The *Alliancer's* left-of-center editor, Jan Alfons Staniewski, adopted a radically progressive stance towards politics in Poland. His articles were occasionally critical towards the Polish government, and he demanded more liberalization and democratization of political life in Poland. On Canadian issues, the *Alliancer* often took a partisan approach. When W. L. Mackenzie King was elected to office in October of 1935, the newspaper expressed doubt that his new government would improve conditions for workers and immigrants, especially for Poles.²⁷² Its radical and left-leaning outlook garnered the Alliance much criticism from its opponents, who accused it of having communist tendencies. Polish consuls sent reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland (MSZ), to inform authorities about the Alliance's potentially dangerous pro-Communist leaning. As a consequence of its critical attitude towards the Polish government, the Federation's newspaper, the *Alliancer*, lost its right to be distributed in Poland in 1937.²⁷³

The ZZPwK: Poland is for Poles, but Poles are for Poland

In November 1931, a new kind of trans-national organization was founded, which, unlike the Alliance, gravitated towards a “Poland-first” attitude. The *Zjednoczenie Zrzeszen Polskich w*

²⁷⁰ Heydenkorn, *Past and Present*, 126.

²⁷¹ William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada*, 83.

²⁷² Benedykt Heydenkorn, *Monografia Pisma Polonijnego* (Monograph of the Polonia Newspaper), (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1972), 65.

²⁷³ LAC, Benedykt Heydenkorn Fond, MG 31 D237 vol. 7, “Consulate of the Republic of Poland, Montreal-Ottawa, 1937-1942,” letters from *Zwiqzkowiec* to the Consulate, December 1937; “Consulate General of Poland, Montreal, 1931-1941,” letter to the Consulates in Montreal and Winnipeg from the Consul in Ottawa, December 23, 1937; Turek, *Language Press*, 135.

Kanadzie - ZZPWK (Federation of Polish Societies in Canada), which was inspired and initiated with the help of the Polish government, was to be an organization that ensured that Polish immigrants remained patriotic and loyal to the *ojczyzna* (fatherland). Increasingly, the Polish government began to view Polish diasporic communities as “an extended arm of Poland,” and considered them to be valuable resources.

The surge in nationalist activities during the First World War had indicated that the local and regional consciousness that had characterized earlier immigrants had been replaced by national awareness. Prior to 1914, Polish experts and commentators thought of Canada as “a bad destination” because Polish emigrants “depolonize there,” and they argued that the consequences of immigrating to Canada were “clearly negative”. For some commentators, the massive emigration of Poles meant an increase in the prominence of Ruthenians and Ukrainians in the homeland, and a depletion of the nation’s manpower and wealth.²⁷⁴

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare acknowledged that migration problems were “closely linked with the ideas of general foreign policy, because [migrants] make an impact on attitudes of various countries towards Poland.”²⁷⁵ The Polish Emigration Society, which was run by politicians representing various factions, from the national democrats to Pilsudskites and moderate leftists, worked on establishing closer links with Polish diasporic communities to help nurture and protect “independent and creative Polish lives.”²⁷⁶ Although emigration was still criticized by some experts as having a negative impact on the Polish economy and its resources, the Polish government began to implement policies to

²⁷⁴ Adam Walaszek, “Wychodzcy, Emigrants or Poles? Fears and Hopes about Emigration in Poland, 1870–1939” in *AEMI Journal 1* (2003), 4-5. Available at: <http://www.utvandrercenteret.no/doc/Adam%20Walaszek.PDF>

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

harness the Polish Diaspora.²⁷⁷ By 1923, Polish authorities considered it desirable to create an organization to “prevent the denationalization of the Polish element,” in Canada and elsewhere.²⁷⁸ In 1929, the First Congress of Poles Abroad was organized in Warsaw to coordinate with Polish settlements around the globe. The Congress declared that “Poles from abroad, wherever they live [are] linked with the Motherland by indissoluble ties of blood, culture and history [and] form one big, spiritual family.”²⁷⁹

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jozef Beck, believed that the interests of Polish diasporic communities should be subordinated to those of Poland, and that they should offer “unconditional support for Polish internal and external policy.”²⁸⁰ Many influential Polonia leaders shared such sentiments. J.M. Kreuz, one of the founding members of the ZZPwK, wrote that “the Polish population in Canada can be counted as a part of the Great Polish Nation, and not as a group of pariahs and outcasts battling with fate.”²⁸¹ To ensure that the Polish Diaspora would remain obedient, the Polish government established the *Światowy Związek Polaków z*

²⁷⁷ The Polish government had good reasons to maintain a loyal Polonia, especially from an economic perspective. While there is no data available to quantify how much money was sent from Canada to Poland, it is possible to illustrate the importance of remittances by examining the Polish community in the United States. According to Adam Walaszek, 3.5 million dollars in money orders was transferred from the U.S. to Galicia in 1902; an additional 4 million was brought by re-emigrants; 3.5 million was sent to Russian Poland and an estimated 12 million dollars was sent privately in letters. Mieczysław Szawleski noted that 200 million dollars was transferred from the U.S. to Poland between 1921 and 1923; and Zbigniew Landau estimated that 291 million złoty was transferred to Poland in 1930. The Polish community in Canada was smaller than in the United States, but considerable sums were also undoubtedly sent by Polish Canadians to their homeland. Edward Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939: studia nad polityką emigracyjną II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1982), 61; Adam Walaszek, “Overseas Migration Consequences: The Case of Poles Returning from the USA, 1880-1924,” in John Morrison, ed., *Eastern Europe and the West. Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 194; Celina Bobiński and Andrzej Pilch, eds., *Employment-Seeking Emigrations of the Poles World-Wide, XIX and XX* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University, 1979), 119.

²⁷⁸ AAN, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 964, 19-28. Report of the Consulate General in Montreal, June 14, 1923.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 15.

Zagranicy – Światopol (the World Union of Poles from Abroad) in 1934. Its slogan read: “Poland is for Poles, but Poles are for Poland, Poland exists wherever there are Poles.”²⁸²

Since the majority of Polish immigrants had retained their Polish citizenship in Canada, Polish consuls were quite naturally responsible for protecting them. They used their influence to maintain Polish patriotism. From their three centers in Canada (Winnipeg, Montreal and Ottawa) the consuls promoted pro-Polish sentiments and unreserved loyalty to the Polish government. Because it was difficult for the consuls to exert their influence via several scattered intermediating organizations, it was decided to form one central organization.²⁸³ It is not clear from the consular reports whether the Consul General, Jerzy Adamkiewicz initiated the idea, or whether authorities in Poland instructed him to help establish such an organization. But whatever the case may be, it is clear that the initiative and much of the actual organizing came from outside the Polish Canadian community.²⁸⁴

One of the founders of the ZZPWK, Julian Topolnicki, maintained that Adamkiewicz “was the chief organizer” and that he applied considerable pressure to organize a convention in November 1931 for the purpose of organizing the ZZPWK. The month of November may have been hastily chosen, noted Topolnicki “because it is a historic month” for Poland, marking the country’s Independence Day. Topolnicki viewed the Consul’s participation pessimistically, and claimed that Adamkiewicz organized the convention in a “chaotic and sloppy” manner.²⁸⁵

²⁸² Adam Walaszek, “Wychodźcy, Emigrants or *Poles*? Fears and Hopes about Emigration in Poland 1870 - 1939” in *AEMI Journal* 1 (2003), 11. Available at: <http://www.utvandriersenteret.no/doc/Adam%20Walaszek.PDF>

²⁸³ Archives of Ontario (AO), Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) Fond, Federation of Polish Societies in Canada Paper file, POL0236, MU 9066, Speech “Zagadnienie rozwoju działalności zjednoczenia zrzeszeń polskich w kanadzie oraz wzmocnienia jego podstaw finansowych,” 1938.

²⁸⁴ In 1938, Consul Juliusz Szygowski stressed that it was of utmost importance that the Polish government’s support for the ZZPWK be “entirely hidden, in such a way, that only necessary consular functionaries know about it.” AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled “Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada,” January 13, 1938.

²⁸⁵ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, ft.1; 48.

For reasons one can only speculate, Adamkiewicz and the authorities in Warsaw wanted to establish the organization as quickly as possible. The impetus for quick action may have come in part from the fact that the PTRF and the Polish Alliance were already coordinating their efforts through federations and influencing a considerable segment of the Polish population. Both organizations did not profess loyalty to the Polish government. In their reports, Polish consuls also frequently noted that the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy should be limited. Consul Jan Pawlica declared that the “Catholic character” of the religious organizations forced non-Roman Catholic Poles to deviate towards radical organizations. As a result, the founding of the ZZPwK, which was open to both religious and non-religious members, helped veer many non-practicing Poles away from communist and “less patriotic” organizations.²⁸⁶ To ensure that the ZZPwK would follow the government’s line, Polish authorities paid the ZZPwK’s secretary and editor of *Czas*, Jan Sikora, a monthly salary of \$100. No one was supposed to find out that his obedience had been purchased, but some Communists became suspicious when Sikora was able to afford certain luxuries on a secretarial salary, and they exposed the affair in their newspaper.²⁸⁷

Correspondence between the consuls in Montreal and in Winnipeg, and their reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, reveal that the consul in Winnipeg was not even informed about the plans or about the date and the location of the ZZPwK’s first convention. That the convention was organized hastily is also evidenced by the fact that erroneous information about the date of the first convention circulated in Polish-language newspapers. In

²⁸⁶ AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 10838, 237. Pawlica to MSZ, November 16, 1938; Archives of Ontario (AO), Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) Fond, Federation of Polish Societies in Canada Paper file, POL0236, MU 9066, Speech “Zagadnienie rozwoju działalności zjednoczenia zrzeszeń polskich w kanadzie oraz wzmocnienia jego podstaw finansowych,” 1938.

²⁸⁷ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, report entitled “Counter-actions against Communist influences among Polish immigrants in Western Canada,” January 13, 1938.

October of 1931, the *Polish Word* in Montreal incorrectly informed its readers that the convention would be held between November 7-8 (it was actually held on November 3-4), and it did not specify a location. Dismayed by this lack of information, Julian Nowacki, the editor of the *Polish Times*, vented his frustrations in a public reply to Adamkiewicz's communiqué about the convention:

We stress that the issue of the Federation of Polish Societies in Canada has so far been totally unknown not only to the board of editors, but, we believe, also to many of the Polish organizations in Winnipeg and probably also in the rest of western Canada. The communiqué gives no indication of the goals and aspirations of this Convention, of its instigators, or of the time and place thereof.²⁸⁸

The decision to withhold the date of the convention until the last possible moment may have either been a result of poor organization, or to prevent Polish Communists and other opponents from having sufficient time to organize a protest. Only three PTRF delegates came to the convention in Toronto. One of the delegates, T. Rózalski, represented the Hamilton branch of the PTRF. Had there been more notice, perhaps more delegates would have come from other provinces. The decision to hold the convention in Toronto was also criticized, since "more than fifty percent of the Polish immigrant population lived in the West – in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan."²⁸⁹

In the course of its existence, the ZPPwK brought together about eighty Polish associations and clubs across Canada. It concerned itself with the problems of education, preserving "Polishness" among immigrants, and of course, maintaining loyalty towards Poland.

The ZPPwK's statute declared that the aim of the organization was to:

Wield the banner of national honour, while drawing strength from the inexhaustible source of national ideals and the heroic past of our Mother-country; defending Poland and its people from enemy attacks.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 12.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

In 1933, the Polish consul in Ottawa received instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on how to organize Polish-language schools that were associated with the ZZPWK.²⁹¹ The newspaper *Czas* came under the influence of the Polish consuls and it supported the policies of the Polish government. In 1934, *Światopol* proposed that the ZZPWK send young students to Poland for various courses and instruction, which Benedykt Heydenkorn noted “would help, indirectly, to prepare them to take over leadership of the organization.”²⁹² The Polish consulate initially screened the candidates, but *Światopol* intervened in 1935 and assigned the task to the Federation. The consuls still took part in the selection, and they arranged transportation for the candidates on Polish ships.

In 1934, Jerzy Adamkiewicz reported that Mackenzie King’s trusted advisor, Oscar D. Skelton, and other members of the Canadian government had received complaints that the Polish consuls attempted to “force” Polish Canadians to join the federation.²⁹³ Members of the Polish Alliance were also concerned that excessive Polish nationalism slowed the assimilation of Poles into Canadian society.²⁹⁴ Ultimately, the federation never met its ambitious goal of becoming the chief representative of the whole Polish community in Canada. Adamkiewicz’s replacement, Consul Jozef Marlewski, tried to convince the Polish Alliance to join the Federation, but his efforts were futile. This was a big letdown for the consuls, which undoubtedly contributed to the ban that was placed on the distribution of the Alliance’s newspaper in Poland. Consular reports reveal that Polish authorities thought that the success of the Federation depended, in part, on a

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁹¹ AAN, Warsaw, Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Winnipeg, 599, 2.

²⁹² Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 26.

²⁹³ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 898, 3. Pawlica to MSZ, November 14, 1933.

²⁹⁴ AAN, MSZ, 9825, 118-34, Wnioski i umotywanie w sprawie kolonizacji i wychodźstwa do kanady, January 11, 1930.

partnership with the Alliance. Polish consuls tried to convince the Alliance of the necessity of joining the Federation, but its platform was too different and prevented them from finding common ground with the ZZPWK. In Western Canada the clerical camp not only opposed the idea of the Federation, but in 1933 it formed its own federation, the *Towarzystwo Polaków w Kanadzie* (The Association of Poles in Canada). The Oblate Fathers justified the founding of their Association on the grounds that the secular federations practiced religious indifference and excessive nationalism.²⁹⁵ The priests claimed that secular organizations such as the ZZPWK opened their doors to Protestants and to communist agitators. They believed, with reason, that secular organizations would force the priests to deal with community politics that would not necessarily serve the interests of the church.

Doing Battle: Clerics, Consuls and Communists and the Fight for Supremacy

Despite their different views, the clerics and nationalists occasionally found common ground.²⁹⁶ Polish Communists on the other hand, stood far from it. Their program was neither “Canada-first” nor “Poland-first.” It was certainly not religious. They understood that their ideology required a reversal of traditional symbols and systems and a revolution in the thinking of Polish-Canadians if they were to abandon the religious and the patriotic camps. Their strategy was to “enlighten” the Poles about the corrupt and demonizing nature of the consuls and the clergy, and to expose the “fascist” government for which they worked. Neither group was

²⁹⁵ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 216.

²⁹⁶ Despite their antagonisms, the competing patriotic and religious groups came together occasionally and combined their efforts. In fact, some Polish consuls, namely Juliusz Szygowski, believed that only the Church could hinder Communism in the Canadian Polonia. He argued that Polish consuls should work closely with clergy members and use the parishes to inform Polish immigrants about the dangers of Communism. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled “Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada,” January 13, 1938. The Polish Alliance and the ZZPWK gradually overcame their sharp differences. In 1938 for example, the two federations, together with several Polish parishes, formed a Canadian branch of the National Defence Fund (Fundusz Obrony Narodowej -FON) and collected money for Poland.

spared vulgar attacks and boorish criticisms. “The consuls and the clerics” charged a PTRF leaflet, “are agents of bloody fascism.”²⁹⁷ The “Priests receive lavish salaries in Poland from the government” and “Therefore, even here as servants [...] they help fascism.”²⁹⁸ Knowing that many Polish immigrants had an interest in the welfare of their compatriots in Poland, the Communists portrayed conditions there as savage and crude. They charged that workers in Poland were “being terrorized, imprisoned and murdered” by a “bloody dictatorship.” Our “brothers and sisters” they told the immigrants “are already fighting.” A “storm of discontent” is growing and “threatening the existence of the capitalist system in Poland.”²⁹⁹ The “war with agents of fascism in Canada - is a war with the murdering fascist government in Poland.”³⁰⁰ The brunt of the Communists’ attack was launched against the ZZPwK. In a leaflet produced by the Hamilton branch of the PTRF, the Communists declared: What is in fact this national unity? We have seen it many times before. The fascists consuls, Roman Catholic Clergy, Canadian Police, Jewish and Ukrainian fascist advocates – this is their unity – the unity of fascists against workers.³⁰¹

At the ZZPwK’s founding convention in 1931, the 14th paragraph of its statute declared that “no organization whose intentions include sudden change of the existing social order of the world, by revolution, will be permitted to belong to the Federation. The term “Communist” was deliberately omitted, since the Communist Party of Canada had been outlawed several months earlier. Polish Communists had tried to join the Federation. Three PTRF delegates were present

²⁹⁷ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 86-91.

²⁹⁸ Reprint of a PTRF poster published in: Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 88.

²⁹⁹ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 87.

³⁰⁰ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 88.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 93. The Communists’ attacks struck a responsive chord among some ZZPwK members. By 1938, several important functionaries left the organization on account of *Glos Pracy*’s vicious propaganda. According to Consul Jan Pawlica, some of those who left had been “patriotic” Poles who worked for the benefit of the Polish community for more than twenty years. AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to MSZ, a chronicle of Communist activities in the Canadian Polonia, 4.

at the first convention in Toronto, but they were asked to leave by a vote of 27 to 18.³⁰² The intentions were clear. The ZZPwK was set up to represent all Poles in Canada, save for radicals and Communists. It should be noted briefly, that the vote by which the Communists were asked to leave (27 to 18) reveals that they were not as marginalized as some scholars have suggested, since more than half of the voters at the convention wanted them to stay.

Immediately after the convention, Polish Communists organized a protest against the ZZPwK and declared the following:

We, the workers of Toronto, gathered 300 strong at a mass meeting this 4th day of November, 1931, at 1 Denison Ave., after hearing speeches by the delegates to the First Convention of the Federation of Polish Societies in Canada, held November 3-4, 1931 in Toronto, recognize that this convention, having been called together and organized by agents of the Pilsudski Government, Consul Adamkiewicz, Dr. Nalecz-Dobrowolski, Mr. Kreutz and a few priests of the Roman Catholic Church, was a complete instrument of Polish fascism, and had as its aim, through the consolidation (if only possible), [to] make the entire [sic] Polish emigration in Canada subordinate to the direct influence and control of the Polish fascist authorities and the Roman Catholic clergy, so that in the future they would be assured of volunteers for the Polish armed forces of Pilsudski, for the renewed “defense [sic] of the western civilization against eastern barbarism”, which issue [sic] was openly discussed at the Convention.

We here gathered acknowledge that this Convention was exclusively geared against the working class and its interests, which fact is proven by the refusal to let representatives of the organized working class participate in the Convention, as well as by the fact that the Convention was patrolled by police and spies. We here gathered appeal to all Polish labourers in Canada to join Polish Workers’ Leagues, and to fight, together with the rest of the working class, against the bourgeoisie and its agents.

We here gathered denounce the sending of greetings by telegram from the Polish emigration to the fascist leaders, Pilsudski and Moscicki, which were sent without so much as a formal decision by the Convention.

Let us be rid of the agents of bloody fascism!
Long live the unity and solidarity of the working class!
Long live the Polish Workers’ Association!³⁰³

³⁰² Ibid., 88. Heydenkorn provides conflicting information, on page 14 he notes that the Communists were asked to leave by a vote of 29 to 18. On page 88, which contains a typed version of an original PTRF poster indicates that the result of the vote was 27 to 18.

³⁰³ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 14-15.

In 1931, the Communists hastily established the *Krajowy Komitet Polskiej Ligi Antyfaszystowskiej* (the National Committee of the Polish Anti-Fascist League).³⁰⁴ Aside from its name, no other information is available about the League's operations in Canada, though its purpose and allegiance, as its name suggests, was clear.

The Communists' success and popularity in the Canadian Polonia was as much linked to social and economic circumstances as it was to the efforts employed by local clerics and patriotic leaders in their attempts to curb Communism in their communities. In Sydney, Nova Scotia, the majority of Polish males worked in the Sydney Steel Plant, which had suffered noticeably during the Depression. Steel prices and wages had decreased dramatically. By 1932, the average miner worked only 102 days per year, compared to 230 in 1926.³⁰⁵ By 1935, nearly 8,000 miners supported the Amalgamated Mineworkers of Nova Scotia, led by the popular trade unionist and Communist J.B. McLachlan. The hardship and unemployment caused some Polish workers and their families to turn towards Communism. In 1938, a consular report noted that 25 out of 100 Polish families in Sydney, Nova Scotia "fell under Communist influence."³⁰⁶

In other instances, the economic downturn and even the absence of a local Polish church did necessarily increase the Communists' influence. Far from Polish consular jurisdiction and without a parish until 1945, the Polish immigrants in Vancouver appeared to be vulnerable to communist agitation. Like the rest of Canada, Vancouver had suffered considerably during the Depression and became a hotbed of leftist agitation. In 1935, a two month protest against unemployment, involving thousands of unemployed men, culminated in the decision to head east to protest in Ottawa, thus igniting the "On-to-Ottawa Trek." Polish Communists had

³⁰⁴ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 964 (55). Adamkiewicz to MSZ, November, 6, 1931.

³⁰⁵ Paul MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton* (Toronto: S. Stevens, 1976), 176.

³⁰⁶ AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 10466, Consul in Montreal to the Consul in Winnipeg, October 29, 1938.

successfully infiltrated one of Vancouver's oldest non-religious organizations, the *Zgoda* (Harmony), which was founded in 1926. *Zgoda* was a Polish patriotic organization, which helped maintain Polish culture through its branches in British Columbia and its youth choir, physical education club and amateur theatre group. Although the Communists had successfully besieged *Zgoda*, its membership quickly dropped from 177 to only eight in 1933 - suggesting that its members were impervious to communist overtures.³⁰⁷ Polish consuls also noted that Poles employed in the lumber mills in The Pas, Manitoba were also "under a strong communist influence under the leadership of two agitators named Takowski and Maria Dubieńska."³⁰⁸

While the PTRF and the PTL were active in centers all across Canada they were most active in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg.³⁰⁹ These growing population centers were vibrant hubs of activity. Factories tended to congregate in urban areas, near transportation facilities and financial centers, where labour was available. The push-pull phenomenon in the 1930s led to ever larger city populations, as people left farms to seek employment in urban areas. Ethnic enclaves were constantly fed by the influx of immigrants seeking employment and people of common background. Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg had the largest concentrations of Polish Immigrants in Canada. Out of a total of 40,866 Poles who lived in metropolitan areas in 1931, about two-thirds lived in these cities: 7,184 in Montreal; 8,484 in Toronto and 11,228 in Winnipeg.³¹⁰ In these centers Polish Communists could gather crowds of several hundred at their rallies and the bulk of their political and cultural agitation was done there.

³⁰⁷ B. Liszkowski, *Kronika Towarzystwa "Zgoda" od 1926 do 1966 roku* [Chronicle of the "Zgoda" Society from 1926 to 1966], (Vancouver: Głos Polski, 1966), 11.

³⁰⁸ AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 10466. Polish Consul in Winnipeg to MSZ, August 25, 1938.

³⁰⁹ AAN, Warsaw, 1372, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, March 7, 1939; Archives of Ontario, Malatyński Papers, 9695.5, Consul in Winnipeg to the MSZ, confidential, January 1, 1938.

³¹⁰ Heydenkorn, *Past and Present*, 35.

Polish authorities maintained a steady interest in the activities of Canadian Communists, and especially (for obvious reasons) those who belonged to Polish organizations. They also monitored Ukrainian Communists (particularly organizations like *Todowyrnazu* and *Turfdim*) and the Jewish Communist branches.³¹¹ The consuls were aware that Ukrainian and Jewish Communists cooperated and supported the PTRF and the PTL. They even thought that some of the Polish leaders, namely Albert Morski and Gronowicz, were Jews.

In their efforts to monitor the communist movement, the consuls prepared black lists, they recorded the names of several hundred individuals who subscribed to *Głos Pracy*, and they even tried to chronicle the histories of several communist organizations.³¹² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MSZ) in Poland frequently sent detailed instructions to the Polish consuls on how to subvert the communist movement. In 1938, the MSZ sent 150 books, anti-communist propaganda, instructions, and “anti-Bolshevik” declarations to be used by Polish consuls in the fight against Communism.³¹³ That year, Polish authorities also made plans to send Włodzimierz Baczkowski on a speaking-tour to Canada. Baczkowski, who was an expert on Polish-Soviet relations and fluent in English and Ukrainian, was supposed to speak to Ukrainian, Polish and Anglo-Saxon audiences about the dangers of Communism. It was also hoped that he would repair some of the damage made by the Communists’ anti-Polish attacks although his visit never materialized.³¹⁴

³¹¹ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, MSZ to the Consul General in Ottawa, note on Polish immigrants in Canada, 11 January, 1937.

³¹² AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on “Communist organizations in Canada,” Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 6. Polish authorities were also occasionally interested in monitoring Rusyns and the Lemko Association of U.S.A. and Canada and its mouthpiece *Lemko* which was published in Cleveland, Ohio. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to MSZ, note on Lemko organizations in Canada.

³¹³ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, MSZ to Polish Consulate in Ottawa, report entitled “*paczki*” (packages), March 26, 1938. The consuls also sent American students who finished a special course entitled “Knowledge about Poland” (*Wiedza o Polsce*) to speak to students in Canada.

The MSZ was also repeatedly informed about communist agitators and their organizations. In 1939, Consul Tadeusz Brzezinski sent the Ministry a list containing the names of three Polish Canadian Communists: Albert Morski, Tadeusz Lewandowski and Józef Bloch. He proposed that they be tried in Warsaw for their anti-Polish activities. The MSZ however, advised against such action, fearing that such a trial could potentially increase the popularity of the movement and be used by *Głos Pracy* to spread anti-Polish propaganda.³¹⁵ This decision however, does not mean that the MSZ did not take seriously the activities of Polish Canadian communists. The distribution of *Głos Pracy* was banned in Poland. One worker, who was receiving the newspaper in Poland wrote to his brother urging him to stop sending *Głos Pracy* because he had problems with the police, who came to his home and told him that if did not want any trouble he should stop reading the newspaper.³¹⁶ Polonia organizations and their members were also warned, or as one report stated, “enlighten[ed] in an appropriate way” by the consuls about “the Communists destructive work.” On some occasions, Polish consuls also “assisted silently and delicately in liquidating” branches which had been “entirely conquered by communists.”³¹⁷

Polish consuls continually worked to isolate politically deviant views in the Canadian Polonia. In 1933, Jan Pawlica, the Polish consul in Winnipeg, notified the MSZ that he had influenced Polish veterans in western Canada to change the name of their organization from the Polish Veteran’s Association in Canada (*Stowarzyszenie Weteranów Polskich w Kanadzie*) to a more patriotic sounding name: the Union of Polish Defenders of the Fatherland in Western

³¹⁴ Ibid. After the Second World War, Baczkowski moved to Washington, where he wrote several studies on Soviet policy, including *Soviet Policy in the Middle East* which was published in 1958.

³¹⁵ Archives of Ontario, 9695, cited from Tadeusz Brzeziński’s correspondence with the MSZ in 1939.

³¹⁶ “Przesladowany za “Głos Pracy” in *Głos Pracy*, November 16, 1933.

³¹⁷ Anna Reczyńska, “Początki działalności radykalnych ugrupowań Polonii” [The Beginnings of the Activities of Radical Groups in the Polonia] in *Przegląd Polonijny* vol. 2, 1994, 101. This report made references to a Polish Veterans Association which was liquidated by the Polish consuls because it had been infiltrated by Communists.

Canada (*Związek Polskich Obrońców Ojczyzny na Kanadę Zachodnią*). Pawlica declared that he initiated this change because the previous name was too similar to the Association of Polish Veterans' in the United States which was open to various political lines, namely that of Dmowski's National Democrats who opposed Piłsudski in Poland.³¹⁸

The editors of the Canadian communist newspaper *Daily Clarion* correctly suspected that the Polish consulates had a network of informants in the Polish community. In July 1938, they ran an article entitled "Polish Consulates in Canada Centres of Espionage Activity" in which they noted that "Polish consulates are staffed with officers of the Polish reserves [...] who are officers of the Polish intelligence service," and that they "posses detailed files of the activities of Canadians of Polish extractions and use this information to practice various forms of intimidation against those who show progressive tendencies."³¹⁹ In 1946, the authorities of the People's Government in Poland discovered that the Polish consulates had in fact, two trusted informants in the communist movement in Canada.³²⁰

Conclusion

The first Polish settlers who arrived in Canada were predominantly unskilled and unfamiliar with the Canadian social and cultural structure. This created a feeling of isolation and deprivation which fuelled the need to establish organizations that helped navigate the inimical environment. The organizations, as Turek observed, were born partly out of the peculiar needs of the ethnic group, and partly out of the cultural background of its members.³²¹ The Polish Communists, through their organizational astuteness, were able to establish a trans-national organization, which, given the unfavourable conditions, was very successful. The PTRF, and

³¹⁸ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London 898(3). Pawlica to MSZ, November 14, 1933.

³¹⁹ *Daily Clarion*, July 9, 1938.

³²⁰ Reczyńska, 99.

³²¹ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 184.

later the PTL, not only had to combat anti-communist forces in Canadian mainstream society, but also three influential and well organized trans-national religious and patriotic Polonia organizations. While the three non-communist federations desperately tried to marginalize the communist movement, their own conflicting views prevented them from joining a common front, although they significantly contributed to diminishing Communist influences. Despite their efforts, however, the Polish communist movement was not entirely ostracized as the clergy and the patriots had hoped. Polish Canadian radicals had a comparable membership to the non-communist federations and an equally well-functioning press, as well as branches in almost every major Canadian city and countless cells in remote farming communities which enabled them to wage an organized struggle against their opponents. The vote mentioned earlier, by which the Communists were asked to leave the founding convention of the ZZPwK (27 to 18), is additional proof that the movement was not entirely marginalized, as some have suggested. Dutkiewicz later contentedly recalled, “despite their best efforts to wipe us away, like a smudge on the kitchen counter, ours was a presence to be reckoned with”.³²²

³²² Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz, private notes, undated.

Chapter 4

The Law of Appeal: Joining the Revolutionary Movement

Some historians of Canadian immigration and labour history have described Communism as a manifestation of migrants' desolation, or as a movement of the disenchanting and disenfranchised who felt bypassed by the opportunities to enter mainstream society.³²³ Although disillusionment and defeat were decisive factors in turning the immigrant towards radicalism, such an explanation alone does not suffice. Many immigrants had the opportunity to become associated with the radical movement but consciously chose not to. For all its negative associations with atheism and violent revolution, Communism was not simply a negative philosophy opposed to the *status quo*. It was an alternative to existing arrangements, based on precepts that for many newcomers seemed to offer a more plausible solution to the state of affairs than those offered by mainstream society. It is precisely such alternative visions, argued Ian McKay, which help us to understand why immigrants, sometimes even conservative ones, were drawn to the radical movement.³²⁴

Some Polish immigrants who joined radically progressive organizations in Canada had already come in contact with social radicalism and the peasant movement in the Old World. Alfons Jan Staniewski, one of the founders of the earliest Polish socialist organizations in Canada, had been active in the socialist movement in Poland before he was forced into exile.³²⁵ In Canada, he published the pro-labour, socialist and anti-clerical newspaper *Nowe Życie* (New

³²³ Sean Purdy, *Radicals and Revolutionaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); A.R. McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

³²⁴ See: Ian McKay *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008).

³²⁵ Staniewski was a political exile from the Russian part of partitioned Poland.

Life) and *Związkowiec* (Alliancer). Other immigrants had also been predisposed to progressive ideas in their local peasant and worker-friendly organizations. One immigrant, who had been active in his local branch of the Polish Peasant Party in Poland, claimed that this experience had influenced his decision to join the Polish communist movement in Canada. Other immigrants who joined the communist movement may have grown up in communist households and naturally progressed into the Party. Just like the children of patriotic Poles who joined the Sokol and the Boy Scouts, many children whose parents were Communists joined the Young Communist League. Władysław Dutkiewicz and Dan Chomicki had joined the communist movement as young adolescents, almost immediately after they settled in Canada. Both of them were active in the Young Communist League before they entered the mainstream Party.

The large majority of foreign-born radicals however, were not radicals at the time of their arrival in Canada. Rather, the thousands of immigrants who supported and sympathized with the communist movement did so as a result of their experiences in North America. In some cases, these immigrants were traditionally conservative and even religious individuals who had been critical of the communist movement in earlier periods. Throughout the mid-1930s, Polish consuls and RCMP officials made regular reports about “converts” – members of Polish parishes and other patriotic organizations – who began to attend communist meetings as a result of the difficult economic situation. The RCMP observed that in earlier periods these “converts” would have never dared to cross “the threshold of the Labour Temple.”³²⁶

Most professionals and intellectuals from eastern and southern Europe had difficulty pursuing their professional careers in North America for a number of reasons. Many entered the

³²⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II (No. 757): 29th May, 1935, 312. Polish authorities also noticed that the pro-Communist Ukrainian organization *Todowyrnazu* attracted individuals from Ukrainian nationalist and religious organizations who previously would have never considered joining a pro-Communist organization. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on “Communist organizations in Canada,” Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937.

industrial workforce and underwent proletarianization. This experience placed them among their disillusioned and exploited fellow migrants and bridged the gap between intellectuals and workers. As a result, workers and intellectuals began to compete for the same jobs, read the same newspapers and they rubbed shoulders at social events. Raya Dunayevskaya wasn't far off when she noted: "It wasn't out of malice, nor out of stupidity, that [...] intellectuals were sucked into Communis[m]. They were sucked in because they were driven by despair over the economic chaos and saw no other way out."³²⁷

In the United States, Polish consular officials frequently warned that the communist movement was attracting Polish intellectuals and veterans who had previously been impervious to communist overtures. In July of 1933, the death of a Polish Army veteran by starvation provided a spark for the Communists to gain influence in a Polish Veteran's association in Chicago. The Communists organized a commemoration for the deceased soldier and made several anti-Polish speeches. They also collected the veterans' documents and medals and sent them to the Soviet Union to be used for propaganda among Polish soldiers.³²⁸ According to the Consul General in New York, around eighty veterans from the Chicago branch came under the spell of Communism.³²⁹

In Cleveland, several veterans also joined a communist rally and made "inappropriate" anti-Polish speeches. One individual even threw a Polish Legion cross onto the ground and declared that Poland had done nothing for him. A left-leaning priest, Father Mazur, from the

³²⁷ Raya Dunayevskaya in *News & Letters*, August 19, 1955.

³²⁸ AAN, Warszawa, 403 (4), Consul General of the Republic of Poland in New York. Consul General in Chicago Zbyszewski to MSZ, July 7, 1933.

³²⁹ Ibid.

Independent Polish National Catholic Church, also joined the Communists with the hope of converting Polish Catholics to Communism.³³⁰

Perhaps one of the most obscure figures who joined the communist movement in North America was Father Orlemanski. Orlemanski was a second-generation American priest who was catapulted to fame, virtually overnight, after he met with Stalin in Moscow in April of 1944. The Russians recognized the tremendous influence of the Catholic Church – an influence which had been almost uniformly exercised against the interests of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin thought that if the Catholic Church could somehow be wooed, it would greatly ease the suspicion and intolerance accorded to the Soviet Union in the West, especially in the United States. Orlemanski was to become Stalin’s apostle of reconciliation. During a private meeting Stalin assured Orlemanski that the Soviet Union was not hostile to the Catholic Church and that it was a friend of Poland. After the meeting, the Communist newspaper *Pravda* printed a photograph on its front page with a beaming Stalin, flanked by Molotov and Father Orlemanski. *Time* magazine noted that “If Russia gasped that day, it had a good excuse: this was the first time atheist Stalin had been photographed with a Catholic priest.”³³¹ Orlemanski returned to America with Stalin’s written support for religious freedom in Russia. He was convinced that the Soviet Union was misunderstood in the West. He tried to repair this misconception by organizing several speaking tours in the United States and in Canada. Polish Canadian Communists invited Orlemanski on a cross-Canada tour to speak about his meeting with the Soviet leader. They also hoped that Orlemanski could be used to appeal for the sympathies of Catholic immigrants and the lower clergy.³³²

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ “Local Boy makes Good” in *Time*, May 8, 1944.

³³² Orlemanski’s visit to Canada is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

The paucity of membership lists, subscription rates and other records make it difficult to estimate the total membership of the Polish Canadian communist movement. Polish consuls could not come up with accurate estimates. They thought that there were anywhere between less than 1000 to around 5000 Polish Communists in Canada.³³³ Since there are some inconsistencies in the consular reports, their estimates should be accepted with caution. It is unclear whether the officials included other ethnic groups, namely Ukrainians and Jews, in their estimates. Polish Jews such as Henryk Dworkin were active in Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish communist circles, making it difficult to discern to which ethnic organization they actually belonged.³³⁴

RCMP officers often confused aliases, Slavic surnames and national origins, making it difficult to form accurate estimates about the total size of the Polish communist movement. Some sources provide conflicting information about the origins of several communist members. Franciszek Baryla for instance, who was a Polish communist activist, appears as a Ukrainian national in some reports.³³⁵ Immigrants also tended to state a more favourable nationality to help them secure a better job or a more favourable status in society. Jewish immigrants from Galicia sometimes declared themselves to be Polish nationals to avoid discrimination. In other instances, immigrants declared a different nationality to secure consular protection. During the First World War Ukrainians and Poles were denied Canadian citizenship. The situation changed for Polish immigrants after Poland regained independence in 1918. Ukrainians, however,

³³³ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), R3920-0-9-E . Tadeusz Brzezinski to MSZ “top secret.” July 17, 1939.

³³⁴ AAN, Warsaw, 1372, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London. Consul Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, March 7, 1939, 2.

³³⁵ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 196; Consul General in New York, 399: 133, Lista inwigilacyjna, June 28, 1937.

continued to be barred from naturalization until 1920. One way of circumventing this situation was by claiming Polish nationality.³³⁶

Głos Pracy's circulation rates help gauge the approximate size of the Polish communist movement in Canada. According to the *Canadian Almanac and Directory*, *Głos Pracy* had a circulation of 2,900 in 1937; 4,735 in 1938 and 5,786 in 1939.³³⁷ A “private individual” informed the consul in Montreal, Władysław Kicki, that *Głos Pracy* had a circulation of 5,200 in 1937.³³⁸ Most scholars suggested that *Głos Pracy* had an average circulation of around 3,000.³³⁹ This figure however, does not account for the “second circulation,” which consisted of individuals who did not subscribe to the newspaper, but who read it.³⁴⁰ Tadeusz Lewandowski, who was a member of the PTL’s Central Executive Committee, said that the paper had about 5,000 readers.³⁴¹

Victor Turek and Benedykt Heydenkorn estimated that the PTL had between 3,000 and 4,000 members. Henry Radecki concluded that there were about 4,000 Polish Communists in 1938.³⁴² With the help of RCMP records, circulation figures and Polish consular documents, it is

³³⁶ In other instances, the Slavic surnames of many communist activists appear in an Anglicized form: Karol Fraczysty, a volunteer for the Spanish Civil War and a member of the PTL, was also reported as a Karl Francis. Władysław Dutkiewicz was also listed as Walter or Wasyl Dutkiewicz in some Canadian security and immigration reports.

³³⁷ Turek, 154.

³³⁸ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Władysław Kicki to the MSZ, “Polish immigration in Canada,” March 3, 1937.

³³⁹ See: Turek, *Polish Language Press* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1962); Henry Radecki, *Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: The Polish Group in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980); Anna Reczyńska, “Początki działalności radykalnych ugrupowań Polonii” [The Beginnings of the Activities of Radical Groups in the Polonia] in *Przegląd Polonijny* vol. 2, 1994, 84-102.

³⁴⁰³⁴⁰ As mentioned earlier, Consul Jan Pawlica reported that around 40,000 Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish immigrants allegedly read *Głos Pracy* in 1938. AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to MSZ, a chronicle of Communist activities in the Canadian Polonia, 4.

³⁴¹ Reczyńska, 98.

³⁴² Henry Radecki, *Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: the Polish Group in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press), 72; Henry Radecki, “Poles” in *Encyclopaedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999), 1064.

possible to estimate that the Polish Canadian communist movement had at least 4,000 to 5,000 members in the late 1930s.

There were close to 150,000 people of Polish descent in Canada in 1931, but not all of them were members of Polish organizations. Unfortunately, census statistics do not indicate how many Polish immigrants participated in the life of the Polish Canadian community in the 1930s. Heydenkorn claimed that less than five percent of the total Polish population in Canada joined Polish community organizations during the interwar period.³⁴³ Large Polish non-communist federations like the *Zjednoczenie Zrzeszen Polskich w Kanadzie* (Federation of Polish Societies in Canada) and the Alliance of Poles in Canada had around 5,000 members in the 1940s.³⁴⁴ With a membership of around 4,000 – 5,000, the PTL was certainly one of the major Polonia organizations during the interwar period.

The Social Mosaic of the Polish Canadian Communist Movement

Polish consuls, generally referred to everyone associated with the PTRF and the PTL as “Communists.” They understood that “not all sympathizers belong to the Communist Party of Canada [...]. But they considered “all official Polish Communists” to belong to the PTL whose goal they said, was “to capture as many members to then systematically mould them in the spirit of the communist ideology.”³⁴⁵ In other instances, consuls sometimes distinguished between sympathizers and “conscious Communists.”³⁴⁶

As in any organization, there are likely to be significant differences between those who sample the group and those who stay with it. Theodore Draper made an accurate observation

³⁴³ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, 11.

³⁴⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The War Series, Part II: February 1, 1945, 259.

³⁴⁵ AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 11470, Cited from a confidential note produced by the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Ottawa on communist activities among Polish immigrants.

³⁴⁶ AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 11430. Consul Szygowski to the MSZ, December 31, 1938.

when he noted that there is an important distinction between those who “go into the communist party and those who go through it.”³⁴⁷ There is also a significant difference between the members who make up the organization’s inner core and its followers. While on the outside, the organization may appear to stand for freedom and democracy in order to lure new recruits, the inner core actually stands for unconditional allegiance to the Soviet Union. Membership figures cannot help differentiate between the samplers and the veterans of the Party, as many veterans were not always members of the inner core. Moreover, members gave varying degrees of allegiance to the Party, which was largely influenced by their social background, where they lived and how they earned a living. Members ranged all the way from those who were used to conduct espionage, to those whose affiliation was largely based on fraternal and social bonds.

Several immediate factors generally predisposed immigrants to Communist ideas. Among these was a belief in secularism, self-improvement and social responsibility – ideals that may have also attracted some Poles to Nihilism, Populism and other radical progressive movements. Such beliefs may have been triggered by economic, social and psychological conditions, such as poverty, with no hope of improvement; social discrimination; loss of religious faith; real or alleged corruption in government; impatience with the gradual, orderly democratic process; a sense of being uprooted and ignorance and illiteracy. The inability to read or write made individuals susceptible to communist word-of-mouth propaganda.

Another factor was the romantic and the intellectual legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution and of Marxism-Leninism. Two influential books that circulated among Polish radicals were Lenin’s *What is to be done?* and Nikolaj Czernyshevsky’s novel *What is to be Done?* Both emphasized the role of the individual in consciously bringing about historical change by helping to enlighten the working masses. Immigrants who were receptive to communist overtures,

³⁴⁷ *Theodore Draper. American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1960), 195.

especially those who took part in the day-to-day life of the movement, had to have an inner desire to convert their beliefs into direct action – through social, political or artistic activism – in order to bring about immediate change in the social order.

Finally, radical ideologies unfolded and manifested themselves because of material and social circumstances. Growing bread lines and the pinch of unemployment during the Great Depression caused some people to seek in Communism an answer to the nation's economic ills. Discrimination, exploitation and a heap of other factors that limited the immigrant's ability to scrape out a living in the New World prompted some of them to find in Communism a guiding light. Working-class immigrants, who lived in the context of these circumstances, first had to come into contact with radical ideas and recognize and sympathize with the movement's critique of the *status quo* and find in its program a viable solution to bring about a change in the future that they considered desirable. For this to occur, a large number of immigrants had to be exposed to articulations of radicalism through symbols and a language which they understood.

Individuals who were influenced by the communist movement can be divided into three groups: adherents, sympathizers and passive sympathizers. Adherents were fully aware of their commitment to the movement and to the proletarian ideology. They constituted the Party's backbone, or inner core, and they realized its goals. In the Polish movement, this group consisted of only a handful of individuals. Frank Meyer called this group "the cadres" and he argued that they formed a "distinct elite" within the Party.³⁴⁸ They were characterized by a deep commitment and unquestioned loyalty to the Party line. As one Polish official noted, "they are moscowphiles for whom the word 'Russia' is god."³⁴⁹ Even when it appeared that there was no overt interference from Moscow, the Party's adherents anticipated foreign reactions and

³⁴⁸ Frank S. Meyer, *The Moulding of Communists (The Training of the Communist Cadre)* New (York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1961), 13.

³⁴⁹ AAN, Warsaw, 599. Muszynski to Podoski, July 20, 1942.

developed their program to gain the Comintern's approval. The adherents differed significantly from the rank-and-file members of the Party. As Phillip Selznick noted, they were "emotionally dedicated, physically mobile and prepared to sacrifice time, career and life itself."³⁵⁰ Members came and went in response to domestic and international developments, but adherents remained loyal to the Party and its program, often until their deaths.

Sympathizers were typically committed to the announced goals and intentions of the movements' overarching agenda. They subscribed to leftist newspapers, attended meetings and rallies, and occasionally protested in front of Polish consulates, but their support did not necessarily originate in ideological convictions, but rather from an appeal to the movements' worker-friendly slogans, its progressive rhetoric and militant politics. Sympathizers did not join the communist movement because they were necessarily searching for a guiding light or a dominant authority, but because they were sympathetic to its strategies, and because they could become politically active. Sympathizers generally followed the Party's policy twists, but they did not adhere to an esoteric doctrine that prompted them to become unconditionally loyal to the Communist ideology. After the Second World War, as many loyal adherents returned to Poland to build a utopian society, most sympathizers refused to return because the social realities did not suit them. One Polish communist sympathizer, who travelled to the southern United States to escape the cold winters and to Poland to the Baltic Sea in the summertime after the war, said that Canada was a democracy in appearance only because "it is ruled by big business." But when asked why he did not want to return Poland, he exclaimed "Oh no! [...] Visit yes. Live there permanently, definitely no!"³⁵¹ As William Makowski noted, in most cases, sympathizers

³⁵⁰ Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952).

³⁵¹ Makowski, 230.

remained members until their deaths, “partly out of loyalty, partly because they were ostracized by the rest of the Polish community.”³⁵²

Even though the bond between sympathizers and the movement was weaker than that of adherents, the two groups formed the type of “imagined community” as described by Benedict Anderson, in which individuals shared a common affinity to symbols and values and a commitment to a common cause. The American screenwriter, Albert Maltz, best described why belonging to a global “imagined community” of Communists had appeal:

When I joined the Communist movement in 1935 it was based upon the belief that mankind's future was to be found there. Certainly, millions who joined it the world over, like myself, didn't join it for profit. There was nothing to be gained out of joining it: It could be time-consuming. It could prevent you from reading a number of books that you wanted to read or go to a number of films because you were doing other things. But there was a belief that you were working with others toward making the world a better place to live in.³⁵³

The third group, which is the most difficult to define consisted of passive sympathizers. Their support for the communist movement correlated to periods of the CPC's popularity. Generally, passive sympathizers may not have known that they were supporting a communist-sponsored organization. This was particularly the case in remote areas, where Polish Communists set up cultural-educational organizations to attract new recruits. The Communists often helped organize a community's first Polish library, school or amateur theatre, as well as various outdoor festivals, sports clubs, and song and dance groups. Some branches also managed adult schools, daycare for children, and poetry readings.³⁵⁴ Many immigrants joined such organizations strictly because they were Polish, and not because they were communist-sponsored. When asked why he joined the PTRF in Winnipeg in 1933, one Polish immigrant said: “Well it happened to be

³⁵² Makowski, 230.

³⁵³ John C. Hopwood, “Albert Maltz: Conscience of the Hollywood 10” (October 2007).
<http://voices.yahoo.com/albert-maltz-conscience-hollywood-10-600273.html> (Accessed, June 2009).

³⁵⁴ AAN, Embassy in London 1372, Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, August 3, 1933. See also Reczyńska, 89-90.

there. It recruited new members.”³⁵⁵ Far from the watchful eyes of priests and patriotic leaders, there was no one around to enlighten the locals about the nature of such organizations.

Many did not sympathize with the radical movement out of ideological convictions, but rather because of the poverty and discrimination which they had experienced. “Lucky me” recalled one Polish worker, I was “buffeted from one end of Canada to another; chased by police, beaten by gangs, starving, half naked,” while searching for food and money.³⁵⁶ In a world of hardship and despair, the Communists offered a simple, and what appeared to be a logical, explanation for the deplorable state of affairs. Tadeusz Lewandowski said that many joined the movement “hoping it would provide some sort of answer, would help them to alleviate their misery.”³⁵⁷ As one immigrant remembered, they “talked about workers and farmers [...they] promised a better life.”³⁵⁸

Polish immigrants, who were attracted to the worker-friendly orientation of the communist organizations, may have also equated them with progressive and moderate socialist groups like the Polish Peasant’s Party (PSL) or the Polish Socialist Party of Poland (PPS). Like the communists, these parties fought for universal voting rights, agrarianism, an eight-hour workday, minimum wage, free education, freedom of the press, equality and other civil rights. Since the Communists did not openly disclose their affiliation with Moscow, many immigrants, especially those living in remote areas, sympathized with the communists’ program because in its outward appearance, it appeared to mirror the national socialist organizations in Poland. W. Szarek, who was active in the Polish Peasant’s Party before moving to Canada in 1928, recalled that socialist ideals had appealed to him. He said that he liked democracy but that he was not

³⁵⁵ William B. Makowski, *Poles in Canada* (Montreal, Tundra Books, 1987), 230.

³⁵⁶ Makowski, 229.

³⁵⁷ Makowski, 230.

³⁵⁸ Makowski, 230.

interested in a Poland that was “ruled by large landowners.”³⁵⁹ Many immigrants like Szarek were disillusioned with the situation in Poland. They tended to be workers who could not find jobs in postwar Poland, and they were bitterly critical of the established order. Since the communist organizations claimed to be antithetical to Polish organizations that supported “bourgeois exploiters” and “Polish fascists,” many immigrants were drawn to their democratic, worker-friendly and patriotic orientation.

The Party’s Core: Adherents and Intellectuals

The cadre of the Polish communist movement was not a representative cross section of the Polish working-class population. Those who formed the “inner circle” were better educated, they had a good command of the English language, some of them were great orators and they had received special ideological training.

Albert Morski was undoubtedly the most capable and the best educated Polish communist leader in Canada. Turek described him as “a brilliant speaker, a skilled dialectician and journalist” and he observed that “Morski was far above the other members of the organization in education and ability.”³⁶⁰ Morski certainly stood apart from the rest of the Polish Communists in dedication and verve. He gave the movement its ideological direction; he carried the greatest burden of work and dealt with many of the movements’ day-to-day problems. It was under his direction, as we have seen, that the Polish communist movement flourished as a cultural-educational organization and attracted significantly more recruits. Morski’s commitment to Communism was unwavering. He occasionally got into rows with Polish consular officials who represented the “new” communist-backed Polish government after the war, and he questioned their loyalty. In a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Morski accused the new Polish

³⁵⁹ Makowski, 229.

³⁶⁰ Turek, 122.

legation, which included the *Envoy* Extraordinary and Minister *Plenipotentiary*, *Alfred Fiderkiewicz*, of being “politically weak” and “negligent.”³⁶¹

Władysław Dutkiewicz represented the old guard. He was one of the main founders of the Polish Canadian communist movement and its press. At one time, Tim Buck applauded his abilities, declaring that Dutkiewicz had turned the Polish communist press into a “propeller of the movement.” Dutkiewicz had little formal education, although he was quite capable. Victor Turek noted that it was through “application and natural ability” that he “developed into a capable agitator, public speaker and a fairly competent journalist.”³⁶² He came to Canada in April of 1927, and worked as a labourer in British Columbia. Shortly after joining the communist movement, he moved to Toronto to help establish the Polish Worker’s Association in 1930. He immediately rose to the top of the Association and became the voice of the Polish communist movement until he was displaced by Morski in 1934-1935. Dutkiewicz was the chief speaker at Party events and funerals and he was the inspiration behind dozens of successful fund drives. His name became synonymous with the Polish-language communist press. He edited *Budzik*, *Głos Pracy* and *Kronika Tygodniowa* until he retired in 1979.

Although Dutkiewicz remained a communist until his death in 1981, his dedication to the communist cause was questioned by some comrades. There was some animosity between Dutkiewicz and Morski after the latter arrived in Canada. Shortly after Morski reorganized the PTRF, an RCMP bulleting reported that “W. Dutkiewicz, the editor of *Głos Pracy* was severely criticized for having formed cliques in the organization and was accused of factionalism. Although refused a seat on the Executive Committee, he was retained as editor of *Głos*

³⁶¹ Reczyńska, *Piętno Wojny* (Kraków, Poland: Nomos, 1997), 286.

³⁶² Turek, 120.

Pracy.”³⁶³ Dutkiewicz was also accused of mismanaging the newspaper and of wasting money by unnecessarily expanding the paper’s size from eight to twelve pages.³⁶⁴ In 1937, Dutkiewicz was reinstated on the Central Executive Committee, but he was marginalised within the organization. In 1938, Morski replaced him as editor-in-chief of *Głos Pracy*, but Dutkiewicz was allowed to remain on the editorial committee.³⁶⁵

Other members who emerged as leaders and devoted organizers in the ranks of the Polish communist movement included Tadeusz Lewandowski, who was a member of the Central Executive Committee in 1939 and an editor of *Kronika Tygodniowa*; Zygmunt Majtczak who arrived from Poland around 1935 and helped organize a Polish Youth Section in Winnipeg; Michał (Micheal) Malisz, who was one of the founders of *Kronika Tygodniowa* and chief organizer of the socialist organization *Towarzystwo im. Stefana Okrzei* in Montreal; Joseph Polka, who was the National Secretary of the Polish Workers and Farmers Association in Winnipeg until his tragic death in 1934; as well as J. Kazmierczak, Jozef Bloch, Gronowicz and Paulin Falkowski.

These leaders were distinguished by their dedication and a deep and enduring faith in the proletarian cause. Some of them, namely Morski, Dutkiewicz, Falkowski and Lewandowski, remained loyal Communists until their deaths. Even Victor Turek, who considered the influence of Polish Communists to be “infinitesimal” could not help but admire the “strict discipline, efficient organization and fanatical dedication on the part of the leaders.” It was thanks to their rigid discipline, noted Turek, that the Polish Communists were able to survive.³⁶⁶ As children of poor immigrants, they were unable to obtain a higher education. The Communist Party offered

³⁶³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 817), 29th July, 1936, 311-312.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Turek, 120.

³⁶⁶ Turek, 119-128.

them special training and above all, an outlet where their beliefs in a better world and their desires for political activism could be expressed. Many of them had joined the communist movement as hopeful young adults who saw in the movement an active program for improving the conditions of workers and their society.³⁶⁷ Whether they were writing petitions, helping to organize Polish immigrants into unions or participating in broad-based Hands Off China Committees, they were part of what appeared to them, to be a single and indivisible struggle of the working class.

Single men far outnumbered women in the PTRF and the PTL, although the decision to create a Women's Department and to start publishing a costly women's magazine in 1936, suggests that there was a fairly sizeable female representation. Women were by no means relegated to the periphery of the Party. They were frequently featured as protagonists and as comrades and placed in roles of authority. We have already seen the importance played by Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel in founding Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish communist branches during her two trips to Canada. Merkel was frequently aggrandized by Polish Communists, who described her as a "great intellectual," although they tried not to publicly connect her with the communist movement, perhaps because they were instructed not to do so.³⁶⁸

During her second organizing trip to Canada in 1935, she officially claimed that the Polish Writers' Association had sent her to write a book based on her impressions of North America.³⁶⁹ She organized lectures, poetry readings, and a workers theatre in Toronto, as well as a collection drive for International Red Aid (MOPR). She toured Polish settlements where she met with immigrants and spoke to them about Poland. In the Polish Hall and the Palace Theatre

³⁶⁷ Władysław Dutkewicz, Dan Chomicki, Tadeusz Lewandowski and Jozef Polka had all joined the communist movement as young adults in their early twenties.

³⁶⁸ AAN, 385/III. Jan Sikora to Consul General in Winnipeg. September 6, 1935.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

in Winnipeg, she spoke about the peasantry (“*Sprawa Chłopska w Polsce*”), and said that the Polish peasants suffered greatly from excessive exploitation and discrimination. She urged her audience to join the revolutionary movement to save their compatriots in Poland from bourgeois captivity.³⁷⁰

Unaware of Sokolicz-Merkel’s communist connections, Polish consuls in the United States committed a grave *faux pas* by sponsoring one of her lectures. They advertised her appearance as “a once in a lifetime opportunity.”³⁷¹ It was not until they heard her lecture that the consuls realized their blunder. The affair unleashed a wave of criticism from patriotic Poles and consular officials in other jurisdictions who chastised the sponsors for endorsing a dangerous communist agitator.³⁷²

Sokolicz-Merkel also had tea with the Polish consul in Winnipeg, Jan Pawlica, and the Canadian scholar Watson Kirkconnel in September of 1935. The meeting was organized by Kirkconnel in an effort to meet Sokolicz-Merkel and to learn about the purpose of her stay in Canada. Pawlica noted that “it was really rather painful to have tea with a woman who in her public lectures draws my country in the worst communistic colours with wrong and false statements.”³⁷³

At least two other women also participated in the intellectual life of the party. Maria Bobak was appointed as secretary-general of the PTL’s Cultural Educational Committee and headed the Women’s Department and Irena Morska, Morski’s wife, was an artist who worked as a correspondent for *Głos Pracy* between 1938 and 1940.³⁷⁴ Unfortunately, very little

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ AAN, 385/III. Jan Sikora to Consul General in Winnipeg. September 6, 1935; AAN, 385/III. Pawlica to Watson Kirkconnel, September 17, 1935.

³⁷⁴ Turek, 122.

information is available about their activities. Those women who were not involved in the intellectual life of the Polish-Canadian communist movement played a crucial role in organizing young girls' handicraft classes, Polish-language courses and a variety of socio-cultural events.

Patriotic Poles and the Politics of Resistance

Despite the Communists' lucid propaganda and clever cajoling, many Polish immigrants remained skeptical, and they often played a major role in informing Polish authorities about communist activities. Some "informants" were truly concerned citizens who often urged immediate action. In other instances, they were overzealous and, at times, spiteful individuals who tried to get a neighbour in trouble or remove potential job competitors. Whatever their motives, the "informants" rarely spared harsh words and they frequently underscored the treasonous nature of suspected communist agitators. One Polish immigrant, who testified that a co-worker, a Jan Piękoś, was a communist sympathizer, explained:

...[he] calls Poland a prostitute...despises everything that is good for Poland, but what is made in Soviet Russia and [by] Stalin is supposed to be paradise... and that only one weekly [the squalid] *Głos Ludowy* [People's Voice] published by Communists in Canada is supposed to be the newspaper of the people.³⁷⁵

Scholars of the North American Polonia have generally attributed the weakness of social radicalism among Polish emigrants to the traditionally religious and conservative outlook of most Poles.³⁷⁶ More than eighty percent of Polish-Canadians declared themselves to be Roman Catholic in 1941.³⁷⁷ The clergy, which had traditionally held a position of authority in Polish society, maintained its status among Poles in Canada. And this status and authority was

³⁷⁵ AAN, Warsaw, Polish Legation in Ottawa 761d, Letter from M. Sasiela, October 5, 1938. r.

³⁷⁶ See: Thomas and Znaniecki, *The Polish peasant in Europe and America. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Vol. 4* (Boston, Mass.: Badger, 1920); Thomas and Znaniecki, *The Polish peasant in Europe and America. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Vol. 5* (Boston, Mass.: Badger, 1920); Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 300.

³⁷⁷ Rudolf Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976), 46. According to the 1941 census, 135,405 Poles declared themselves Roman Catholic; 7,674 Lutheran; 5,039 Greek Orthodox; 2,994 Baptist; 1,812 Presbyterian; 6,304 belonged to the United Church of Canada and 3,374 to the Anglican Church of Canada.

legitimized by the support that it received from Canadian officials. Moreover, the traditional rites - births, marriages, deaths - that marked important occasions in the immigrants' lives, tied them to the Church. It was difficult, as we shall see in chapter 6, for Communists to try to supplant these rites with communist ideology. Above all, the church, like its secular counterparts, offered a vibrant associational life through church-sponsored benefit associations, schools, soup kitchens, and a variety of socio-cultural activities that retained many immigrants within its orbit.

The ingrained historical aversion towards Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union contributed to anti-communist attitudes and a general suspicion of any organization that had associations with Moscow. New immigrants who came to Canada often brought with them their European controversies and antipathies. Many Polish immigrants who came to Canada in the 1920s, were veterans of the Polish-Bolshevik War. They were aware of the dangers of Bolshevism through their first-hand experiences, and they transplanted their anti-Communist sentiments to the New World.

Together with the Church, the Polish Consulate represented the bulwark against Communism in the Polish community. Polish consuls developed efforts to liven up institutional life in order to ensure that the Polish community remained patriotic. The crowning achievement of such initiatives was the *Zjednoczenie Zrzeszeń Polskich w Kanadzie* –ZZPwK (The Federation of Polish Societies in Canada). The ZZPwK represented about seventy-five Polish cultural, educational, womens' and veterans' organizations in Canada. It was established in part, to limit the influence of communist agitators who tried to penetrate the Polish organizations that were not federated.

By joining the communist movement, immigrants risked not only separation from familiar symbols and traditions, but they were defying traditional figures of authority. The Communist Party made efforts to protect its supporters, but its limited resources and periods of illegality made it very difficult to offer stable and effective support. In a society that was generally hostile towards immigrants, most Polish arrivals hoped that their consuls would mitigate on their behalf. By associating themselves with the PTRF and the PTL, immigrants essentially forfeited their chances of obtaining help from the Church and the Polish government.

Clergymen and patriotic leaders often had connections in the host society that they used to help non-Communists find housing, employment and relief. Immigrants were well aware that employers tended not to hire anyone with a reputation for radicalism. Communists deserved to be fired, noted one immigrant employer “because of their alleged duplicity, dogmatism, and disloyalty to their nation and employers.”³⁷⁸ Workers faced dismissals and blacklists, especially if they were active in the locals of left-wing unions. Merely being seen at a communist-led concert or demonstration often sufficed to disqualify immigrants from being hired. Anti-Communists, in an effort to eliminate job competition, informed employers and consular officials about the suspected political activities of their rivals. Many workers who were fortunate enough to have a job during the Depression stayed away from communist organizations, or they maintained their anonymity. Many donors who contributed financially to *Głos Pracy* preferred that the editors not publish their names.

Associating oneself with the Communists also meant dealing with the full weight of the Canadian government and the RCMP.³⁷⁹ For immigrants, Canadian state surveillance and police

³⁷⁸ Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz clippings (undated).

³⁷⁹ It appears that some Polish consuls were disappointed with the RCMP’s efforts to curtail Communism. In a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland, Consul Adamkiewicz questioned whether the RCMP, which he claimed had only 1225 members, was capable of combating Communism, especially in a vast country like

attacks differed from the state repression of their old countries only in kind. One immigrant compared the RCMP's tactics to the Cossacks, noting that the officers rode into groups of demonstrators swinging their clubs and shooting their rifles.³⁸⁰ Under Section 98 of the criminal code it was illegal to attend a meeting of an association deemed to be revolutionary, to participate in a communist-led demonstration or to pass out radical literature. The slightest hint of such activity could get an immigrant deported.

Naturalized citizenship did not guarantee immunity from deportation. In June of 1919 the citizenship laws had been amended to permit revocation of naturalization certificates, as a preliminary to deportation. This was the greatest fear among immigrants. Stripped of citizenship, they would revert to being a member of the prohibited classes, unable to gain domicile no matter how long in Canada, because persons of that class could never legally enter. As we have seen earlier in the case of Dan Chomicki, immigrant radicals were rarely granted a trial and removed from their place of residence without being given the opportunity to inform their kin.³⁸¹

Barbara Roberts observed that between 1900 and 1935, deportation served as an important feature of Canadian immigration policy. In fact, she said that it was "the equivalent of the sewage system for cities." She argued that Canadian immigration authorities worked with neither the knowledge nor the consent of Parliament to rid Canada, often illegally, of the social and political "undesirables." Roberts observed that even in the few cases where alleged radicals

Canada. Moreover, he noted that Canadian government was open to leftist tendencies. "Since the Communist party was banned," reported Adamkiewicz, "the government has allowed another party to maintain power, the Cooperative Commonwealth Party under J.S. Woodsworth," which he claimed professed "communist principles." See: AAN Embassy in London, 1372 (21) Adamkiewicz to MSZ, September 2 1933. Consul Juliusz Szygowski also complained that the Canadian authorities "had offered them little effective protection against Communist attacks." AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to the Consul General in Ottawa, July 9, 1939, 2.

³⁸⁰ Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983), 30.

³⁸¹ Chomicki's case is discussed in chapter 2.

received a trial, the evidence presented against them was often flimsy. One immigration official seemed to be troubled by the undemocratic handling of an alleged radical. He noticed that the charges against the man, who had been arrested for writing seditious articles in the *Montreal Star* and *The Worker*, were not even “of a seditious nature.” The only evidence given at his trial, noted the official, was the testimony of two RCMP “secret agents.”³⁸²

The Department of Immigration seldom bothered to hire lawyers for the Boards of Inquiry. As long as the Department followed all the procedures correctly, there was little probability of a successful challenge, even by the courts. In the 1930s, the city of Winnipeg requested the deportation of several Polish immigrants, allegedly “members of organizations connected with the communist movement.” Some of them hired lawyers to represent them at the Board of Inquiry, but the Department did not even bother to hire its own lawyers. Thousands of immigrants, many of whom were charged for political activities were deported under the convenient heading of “public charge.” In a similar case, a group of Polish nationals detained in Winnipeg refused to provide information to arrange their deportation. The Winnipeg immigration official contacted his superiors in Ottawa for advice on how to proceed. Eventually, the immigrants were deported on the grounds of “public charge.”³⁸³ Attempts to challenge such accusations were futile, because although their real crimes were “illegal political affiliation,” their deportations were ordered on grounds of “public charge.”³⁸⁴

Although the public was generally not troubled by the deportation of radicals, it began to protest the mass deportation of the unemployed. Mackenzie King opposed Bennett’s Iron Heel policies, and promised, if elected, to repeal Section 98. The Co-Operative Commonwealth

³⁸² Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900 - 1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 130.

³⁸³ *Ibid*, 132.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 131 -153.

Federation (CCF) also opposed mass deportation and Section 98 as violations of civil liberties. Gradually, the Department of Immigration had to tighten up on irregular or illegal practices. By 1935, deportations returned to “normal” levels. The following year, King repealed Section 98, making it far more difficult for immigration officials to orchestrate deportations based on grounds of public charge. As a result, more immigrants were emboldened to join the communist movement, which in turn experienced significant growth and popularity. By 1937, CPC membership, which had plummeted to less than 2,000 in 1931, had increased to nearly 15,000 in 1937.³⁸⁵

Conclusion

Those who associated themselves with the communist movement gave varying degrees of allegiance. Members ranged all the way from those who were willing to give their lives to the cause to those whose affiliation was largely fraternal and social. Undoubtedly, even a minimal commitment to the PTRF and the PTL involved more than a commitment to other organizations. By becoming associated, immigrants essentially forfeited their connections with mainstream society and betrayed their traditional values. Because of the Communists’ emphasis on cultural-educational work, many passive sympathizers did not have the faintest idea that they supported a communist-led organization. Only the “inner core” – Morski, Dutkiewicz, Lewandowski, Sokolicz-Merkel – formed the PTL’s esoteric knowledge. But aside for ideological reasons, members of the “inner core” had another attachment to the Party: they made a living from it. In 1937, consul Jan Pawlica reported that Polish communists received \$15.00 a week and special travel and lodging subsidies.³⁸⁶ Even if they were not receiving money from PTL activities,

³⁸⁵ John Manley “Introduction” in *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II. See also: Ian Angus *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*.

³⁸⁶ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on “Communist organizations in Canada,” Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 6.

however, the PTL was connected to organizations that offered employment. The majority of members who were recruited during the Popular Front, and particularly during the Second World War, were “samplers” who might have paid their dues and attended occasional meetings, but they were not ideologically committed. This proved to be a serious problem for the Party, especially during the Second World War, when its turbulent policy reversals tested and strained their members’ allegiance and ideological endurance.

Chapter 5

Treading on Hostile Ground: Promoting Proletarianism, Mutualism and Internationalism in Canadian and Polish Canadian Society

The Communist Party of Canada has often been portrayed as “a franchise-holder of an international radical brand,” which was “little more than a passive recipient of Moscow directives.”³⁸⁷ Ian McKay has challenged this assumption, arguing that radical formations in Canada change over time: “They start off by borrowing massively from other countries. [...]. Then, after a decade or so [...], the formation changes. It starts to generate interesting idiosyncrasies that set it apart on the world stage.”³⁸⁸ The Communist Party of Canada was certainly riddled with idiosyncrasies that set it apart from other communist parties. Not only did it have to consider the Francophone element in Canadian society, which exerted a considerable influence over national politics, but it also had to accommodate a plethora of ethnic branches, which articulated the strategy and tactics of the proletarian revolution in varying ways.³⁸⁹ For many ethnic Communists, the culture and the economic and political developments in their ancestral homeland had a significant bearing on how they transferred the general language of socialism.

³⁸⁷ McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 124.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

³⁸⁹ Norman Penner. *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1977), 85. The Comintern occasionally complained that the CPC had done practically nothing to organize French Canadian workers. The virtual absence of Communists in Quebec and their failure to examine Quebec as a national question weakened the CPC as a Canadian political Party. Up until the 1930s the Communists in Quebec remained a mere sect without an audience or any real strength. Led by the well known pamphleteer Albert St-Martin, the Quebecois Communists generally limited their activities to propaganda and minimal agitation, and extremely vitriolic attacks on the Catholic Church.

The Polish People's Association (PTL) certainly generated idiosyncrasies which were unique to the environment in which it operated. PTL branches had to learn to adapt to local circumstances because they had to survive. Their survival hinged on their ability to appropriate the *mentalité* and the language and culture of their audience. But while there certainly were idiosyncrasies and *ad hoc* developments that were unique to the PTL, it was disciplined and closely guided by the authority of the CPC and the Communist International. According to Victor Turek, the PTL's "general policy was always directed from outside, and the local leadership was charged only with its execution."³⁹⁰ The PTL was in fact, a "franchise-holder" of the radical brand. Polish Communists noted in 1938, that they constituted a "Polish Bureau of the Communist Party of Canada" which was entrusted with leading "purely political activities among the Polish population."³⁹¹

The "Polish Bureau" was a highly-disciplined and tightly-structured organization, with leading committees and decision-makers who were in charge of giving the organization direction. All activities in which the members engaged, such as education, trade unions, mass demonstrations, were coordinated by the PTL's leaders, who in turn received their guidance from higher echelons. Like all ethnic branches, they adopted diverse methods to disseminate the Party line in their communities, but they never veered away from the basics. In 1938 for example, it was decided that the PTL should concentrate mainly on cultural and educational activities instead of political agitation. It was hoped that this new strategy would encourage more Polish immigrants to join communist-sponsored cultural-educational organizations, and that they could be converted from within.³⁹² This strategy involved an almost complete reversal of previous policies. Polish Communists were told to become more patriotic and to establish connections

³⁹⁰ Turek, *Polish Language Press* (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1962), 118.

³⁹¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 904): 1st November, 1938, 323.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

with religious organizations in order to form a Popular Front. Plans were also made to reduce the size of *Głos Pracy* from eight to four pages, so that it could be published tri-weekly, rather than as a weekly, to reach a larger following.³⁹³ While this strategy was in line with Comintern theory, the tactics that Polish Communists developed to implement the overarching theory were tailored to suit the unique circumstances in which they operated.

Canada

Unlike other Polish Canadian organizations, Polish Canadian Communists assaulted the very foundations of the established political and economic order, condemning social injustices and unemployment. They were highly aggressive and used every opportunity to pounce on the capitalist system with disdain and to blame it for every ounce of misery, abuse and corruption. Already in 1920, before the communist movement became organized in Canada, RCMP agents reported that “very radical” Polish immigrants who were hostile to capitalism, the Church and the established order were operating in Ontario.³⁹⁴

The Polish-Bolshevik War appeared to be a catalyst for radical activity among Polish and other Communists in Canada. A “well-informed” RCMP agent blamed the Polish-Soviet conflict for reviving radical activity in Canada: “It appears to me that since Russia has attacked Poland most of these radicals, who were rather quiet previous to this incident, now they seemed revived against [*sic*] and support the most radical movement in existence, none of them were as bold as they are now.”³⁹⁵ On August 18th 1920, the Dominion Labour Party organized a “Hands Off Russia” meeting in Winnipeg, which was attended by 1,500 people, including several Polish

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 39): 2nd September, 1920, 92.

³⁹⁵ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 39): 2nd September, 1920, 97.

radical delegates who came “to protest against the interference with the Soviet conquest of Poland.”³⁹⁶ Four resolutions were passed at the meeting:

- 1) Protesting against any intervention by the Imperial or Canadian Government in Russia.
- 2) Congratulating British labour “on their deliberate opposition to attempted intervention in Russia, and endorsing the means employed to prevent it.
- 3) Assuring the people of Russia of the entire opposition of “the Winnipeg Workers” to “intervention of the Imperialist Power.”
- 4) Congratulating Soviet Russia on its success in meeting the aggression of the Poles and the intrigues of the Allies.³⁹⁷

According to Polish Communists, among the “enemies of the working class” in Canada were railroad barons and shipping agents who benefited most from exploiting the immigrants. Polish Communists “exposed” the collaboration between these agents and politicians, and scowled at the high profits earned from the sale of railway tickets. The immigrants who “paid to become slaves” they charged, were transported “no better than cattle” to “wild jungles.”³⁹⁸

However exaggerated, the Communists communicated their empathy for Polish immigrants who found themselves jammed into tenements and shoddy houses with few sanitary facilities. They often discussed issues that were of special significance to immigrants, such as exploitation, unsteady employment and deportation. *Głos Pracy* compared Canadian authorities and the RCMP to terrorists and agents of injustice. Letters were occasionally published in *Głos Pracy* from immigrants who were suffering at the hands of the authorities and exploitative factory bosses.

For some Poles, the communist attacks struck a responsive chord. As Canada plunged into the Depression, and pockets of violence, strikes and mass protests engulfed parts of the country, those Polish-Canadians who were sympathetic to the communist rhetoric could be found

³⁹⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 37):19th August, 1920, 58.

³⁹⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 37):19th August, 1920, 59.

³⁹⁸ Authors’ collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz clippings (no date).

in the mix. Some committed acts of sabotage (one Pole was caught putting broken glass into a car engine³⁹⁹) others participated in hunger strikes, relief strikes, mass demonstrations, picketing and street fights.

On June 8, 1935, about 300 Poles and Ukrainians from the Edmonton area were organized by CPC leader Mathew Popovich, and sent east as a contingent of the on-to-Ottawa trekkers.⁴⁰⁰ The “trekkers,” mostly single unemployed men, travelled across the country to Ottawa, to protest against Bennett’s conservative government, the dismal conditions in federal relief camps and to show their support for workers’ solidarity. Together with thousands of protesters, Polish radicals and their sympathizers united under slogans such as, “Declare Yourself Against Slave Labor!” and “Unite Against The Hunger And Forced Labour Regime Of The Government Of Multi-Millionaire Bennett!”⁴⁰¹

Using the unemployment crisis as a catalyst, Polish Communists encouraged immigrants to use violence and to fight the Canadian government. At the fourth annual convention of the Polish Workers’ and Farmers’ Association (PTRF), which was held in September of 1935, twenty-five delegates representing ten branches of the Central Executive Board resolved to “call upon Polish immigrants to fight against the “class enemy” on the streets, in factories, in the city and on the farm.”⁴⁰² After Władysław Dutkiewicz presented news about the international situation, the delegates also resolved “to fully support and defend the Soviet Union.”⁴⁰³ At the Polish People’s Association’s (PTL) 8th annual convention, held in Toronto in October of 1938,

³⁹⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins: Early Years, 1919-1929: Register of Bolshevist and Agitator Investigations*, 1920.

⁴⁰⁰ *RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years, Part II (No.760): 19th June, 1935*, 349.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁴⁰² *RCMP Security Bulletins, Early Years: (No. 776): 9th October, 1935*, 525.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

Polish Communists appealed to all worker-friendly immigrants to take “a stand against the home government, and to come to some understanding for the purpose of common action.”⁴⁰⁴

Together with Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, Finns and Hungarians, Polish supporters rallied on the streets across Canada during May Day celebrations. At the May Day demonstration in Regina in 1935, approximately 10,000 people assembled at Stanley Park for a mass meeting. Some of the demonstrators had created a model of a relief camp, which was mounted on the back of a truck. An RCMP report noted that approximately 900 public and high school pupils joined the relief camp strikers. Members of the Worker’s Sports Association, “arrayed in white duck trousers, white singlets, red sashes and crests bearing the hammer and sickle” also filed in line behind the strikers.⁴⁰⁵ At a May Day parade organized in Winnipeg in 1938, Poles and other ethnic supporters wore their traditional folk costumes to underscore their ethnic background.⁴⁰⁶

But while Polish Communists enthusiastically exposed the evils of Canadian capitalism, the leaders invested more energy in criticizing the Polish government and its representatives in Canada. As their articles and resolutions suggest, they never considered one to be a lesser evil. The “fascist consuls, Canadian Police, and social-fascists are all alike” charged a PTL leaflet. But because the majority of Polish immigrants had a deep interest in the affairs of Poland, Polish Communists could not afford to ignore developments in their ancestral homeland if they wanted to expand in Canada.

⁴⁰⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 904): 1st November, 1938, 324.

⁴⁰⁵ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 755): 15th May, 1935, 268.

⁴⁰⁶ John Manley, “The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?” in *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V, 14.

Poland

Communists never forgave Jozef Pilsudski for his “treason” in 1926, when he ordered his gendarmes to brutally disperse communist demonstrations of support during his coup. His ultra-nationalist and highly anti-Russian successor Rydz-Śmigły garnered even less sympathy. “The fascist Pilsudski and its troop,” charged the Polish-Canadian Communists “is trying to ensure new recruits for his army among Polish emigrants in Canada [...] Let us rid ourselves of bloody butchering fascists!”⁴⁰⁷ The “fascist government” in Poland, noted Dutkiewicz, “must be exposed in the worst possible way.” “Do not ask us to be silent” charged a *Głos Pracy* article, “or laud the exploiters of our old country, since we all see that the present rulers lead the people towards poverty, ignorance and diminishing rights, and the country towards stagnation and weakness.”⁴⁰⁸ Such bold charges constituted only the tip of the iceberg in the communists’ arsenal of anti-Polish propaganda.

On August 18, 1935, S. Iwaszczyszyn, a member of the PTRF gave a highly anti-Polish speech at a meeting organized at the Worker’s Theatre in Winnipeg. Iwaszczyszyn had just returned from Poland, where he, along with several other Communists, travelled as part of an international delegation to investigate conditions in Poland. He had been officially sent as a representative of the Canadian Labour Defence League to meet other delegates in Paris before proceeding to Poland. It is unclear who Iwaszczyszyn was, and why he was chosen to represent Canadian Communists as a delegate. The RCMP reported that he “had no outstanding ability,” and that “the mandate was more or less forced on him.” As one RCMP official explained, the

⁴⁰⁷ Heydenkorn, *Organizational Structure of the Polish Canadian Community*, (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1979), 89-91.

⁴⁰⁸ *Głos Pracy*, May 9, 1936, 2.

decision to send Iwaszczyszyn may have been purely pragmatic, “because [since] his wife and children [were] still living in Poland, he would not be molested by Polish authorities.”⁴⁰⁹

The delegation had a “distinct international complexion”, composed of “professors, lawyers, writers and workers.” Iwaszczyszyn complained that Polish authorities barred the delegates from visiting “prisoners and workers in jails and factories.” It was only in “Lemberg [Lwow/L’viv], were they [were] allowed to see a prisoner who told them whatever he was allowed to say in the presence of the guard, and that most of what the prisoner had said was refuted by the guard afterwards.”⁴¹⁰ Iwaszczyszyn charged that “the workers and peasants in Poland were being treated in a most inhumane and cruel way, that they are being jailed, beaten and kept in dark dungeons.” In stark contrast, he reported that the delegation had briefly visited the Soviet Union, where it did not see any oppression. While “some people are not as well off as others” Iwaszczyszyn remarked smugly, “there is plenty to eat for those who work in the Soviet Union.”⁴¹¹

In August of 1920, Henryk Dworkin, a Polish Jew from Toronto, also returned from a European tour and spoke about his experiences in Poland at a gathering in Welland, Ontario. RCMP sources noted that his speech was highly anti-Polish and that he represented the Poles as being “victimized by capitalists.”⁴¹² Dworkin, together with several associates, including a Jewish garment maker from Toronto, Samson Koldofsky, travelled to Poland and to other European countries to “expose” the Polish government. As sources suggest however, “delegates” like Dworkin did more than just investigate political and social conditions. In November of 1920, the RCMP reported that Dworkin was allegedly arrested in Poland and

⁴⁰⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 756): 22nd May, 1935, 297.

⁴¹⁰ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years: (No. 770): 28th August, 1935, 462.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 38): 26th August, 1920, 74; *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 41): 16th September, 1920, 136.

“charged with smuggling men through for the Soviet Government.” Two of his associates had apparently been shot in Poland.”⁴¹³

In May of 1935, a PTRF member, K. Wiczowski, was invited to an international mass meeting organized under the joint auspices of the several revolutionary labour organizations, including the League against War and Fascism, in the Thalmud Torah Hall in Winnipeg. Wiczowski, together with speakers representing Russian, Jewish and Ukrainian communist organizations, addressed the guests in their native tongue and “dwelt upon conditions in Poland” and condemned the “Polish Fascist terror.”⁴¹⁴

Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel also played an instrumental role in spreading “first-hand knowledge” about the realities in Poland. Throughout 1935, she appeared at several PTRF banquets and party meetings, where she “enlightened” Polish immigrants about the “horrors” in Poland. On one occasion, she and Tim Buck were invited as honorary speakers at a banquet organized by the editors of *Głos Pracy* in Winnipeg. Sokolicz-Merkel addressed 214 guests with a brief speech, warning “workers to watch the enemy of the working class” which she charged “is always awake and in readiness to deal a blow to the cause of the workers.”⁴¹⁵ She cited two stanzas from a working class poem which depicted the shooting of a political prisoner in Poland when he attempted to escape from prison.⁴¹⁶

Polish Communists understood that the majority of immigrants considered Canada to be their new home, and that many of them cared about how they were perceived by mainstream Canadian society. As a result, they tried to persuade patriotic Poles into thinking that the “fascist” Polish government and its representatives in Canada were “putting the good name of

⁴¹³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 49): 11th November, 1920, 293.

⁴¹⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 756): 22nd May, 1935, 296.

⁴¹⁵ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 785): 11th December, 1935, 630.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

our people and our great country in a bad light before the Canadian public.”⁴¹⁷ In a resolution adopted at the PTL’s 8th annual convention, Polish Communists condemned the Polish Consul General for rendering “bad service” to “the Polish people in this country by trying to employ [...] fascist measures here in Canada.”⁴¹⁸ They urged Poles to “become organized and [to] expel from their midst all “misleaders” who are in the employ of the Polish bourgeoisie.”⁴¹⁹

To contrast the oppressive nature of the “fascist” government in Poland, Polish Communists continually maintained a high level of enthusiasm for the USSR. In their agitation and propaganda, they underscored the “Soviet paradise,” noting that it was not only a just society, but also the vanguard of humanity. Reports about the Soviet Union were written in highly eulogizing tones. As the “impregnable fortress of Socialism,” it was regarded as the mainstay of peace, justice and equality. The Soviet Union was described as a federation of free and equal republics, which were able to maintain and develop their language and culture. The Polish government, on the other hand, like all capitalist states, had altruistic motives; it was run by dishonest politicians who manipulated the masses to subvert them to capitalist control.

Relations with the CPC and Fellow Ethnic Comrades

Compared to other ethnic groups, namely the Finns, Ukrainians and Jews, who constituted approximately ninety-five per cent of the CPC’s membership, Polish Communists did not form a significant element in the Party. Unlike Ukrainian comrades, they did not form the core of the communist trade unions, nor were they able to contribute a major share of the funds for carrying on Party work.⁴²⁰ Turek noted that “at mass meetings the Polish communist

⁴¹⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 904): 1st November, 1938, 323.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No.749): 20th March, 1935, 175.

⁴²⁰ John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979), 18.

delegations were merely an addition to the far more numerous Ukrainian ones.”⁴²¹ But what the Polish movement lacked in size, it certainly made up for in dedication and enthusiasm.

In November of 1935, Tim Buck praised Polish Communists in their Winnipeg Workers’ Hall for the “splendid support they had given to the Revolutionary Movement in Canada,” and he congratulated them for establishing a newspaper which he described as “a propeller of the movement.”⁴²² He recalled how “Polish workers commenced publishing a mimeographed sheet under diverse names in [eastern Canada] just shortly before he [Buck] and the other leaders of the Communist Party of Canada went to Kingston Penitentiary; and now in hardly more than four years, the Polish comrades had built up the biggest and best working class paper published in the Polish language on the North American Continent.”⁴²³

As one of the language sections of the CPC, the PTL actively promoted the Party through much of the typical work, such as distributing leaflets, soliciting subscriptions and recruits, organizing collection drives and public demonstrations, and endorsing its leaders.⁴²⁴ In 1935, Polish Communists in their Winnipeg Hall organized one of their largest meetings in support of Tim Buck’s election campaign. Władysław Dutkiewicz, who presided over the meeting, referred to Buck as “the saviour of the working class.” RCMP sources described the meeting as “highly enthusiastic” and “crowded to capacity” with “some 12 or 14 representatives of various organizations.” Many of them made contributions ranging from \$1 to \$10, making a total of \$56 for Buck’s campaign.⁴²⁵ Considering that most immigrant workers received less than fifty

⁴²¹ Turek, 120.

⁴²² *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 785): 11th December, 1935, 630.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 629.

⁴²⁴ Some Polish Communists, like Franciszek Baryla and Dan Chomicki, became affiliated with non-Polish communist organizations before they became organizers in the Polish-Canadian communist movement. Baryla first joined the Young Communist League and became a member of the CPC in 1931. After becoming a member of the Executive Committee of the CPC in Kenora, Ontario (between 1935-1937), he assisted in founding the PTL.

⁴²⁵ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 749): 20th March, 1935, 174.

cents per hour, the contributions were quite generous. Most workers made donations of no more than twenty-five cents.⁴²⁶

Buck thanked the organizers and his supporters for their confidence and promised that, “if elected to Parliament he will utilize his position to further the interests of the class and the Revolutionary Movement in general.”⁴²⁷ Taking advantage of the large gathering of Poles, he petitioned Polish War Veterans, pointing out “that what they had been fighting for was the lot of the starving workers and not the promised democracy.”⁴²⁸

Prominent guests from the upper echelons were regularly hosted in the Polish Worker’s Halls. These were opportunities for Polish Communists to showcase their organizational abilities and their dedication to the movement. Some of the prominent guests included Lewis St. George Stubbs, a well-known judge and politician from Manitoba who promoted left-wing and socially progressive causes. In 1936 Stubbs presented a motivational speech to the Poles in Winnipeg, telling them that “Lenin was right,” because they must all fight together for the revolution in Canada. No one made an effort to translate for Stubbs. He expressed his regrets for not being able to understand what was being said in Polish, though he assured the audience that he understood almost all of the remarks for “the spirit of the workers is one, no matter in what language it may be expressed.”⁴²⁹

In their efforts to maintain ethnic solidarity, Polish Communists enthusiastically supported and co-organized numerous concerts, lectures and meetings with other Communists. Polish speakers regularly visited other ethnic organizations, or invited ethnic speakers to their

⁴²⁶ W. Chuchla, “Na roli i w kopalni” [On farms and in mines] in *Pamiętniki imigrantów* [Memoirs of Immigrants], Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1975), 118; S. Konopka, *Wspomnienia działacza społecznego* [Memoirs of a Social Activist], in *Pamiętniki imigrantów* [Memoirs of Immigrants], vol. III, Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1978), 184

⁴²⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 749): 20th March, 1935, 174.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 836): 9th December, 1936, 537.

meeting halls. At least eight concerts organized in 1935 were coordinated with other ethnic communist organizations to emphasize fraternity and unity. Concerts regularly showcased young talents, who performed the “Internationale,” “The Communards,” “Long Live Soviet Russia” and other “red” songs. Polish language schools for children were also maintained through contributions from ethnic comrades. In 1934, the Polish consul in Winnipeg reported that “rise of such schools was made possible by money donated mostly from Ukrainian Communists.”⁴³⁰

Perhaps the numerous trans-organizational collection drives, which were coordinated to support each ethnic organization’s newspaper, are the best indicators of inter-ethnic solidarity. In November of 1934, Russian, Hungarian, Yugoslav and Polish Communists gathered at a meeting in Toronto to support a campaign to help publish the Lithuanian communist paper *Darbininku Zodis* (The Workers’ Word) as a weekly. Three hundred supporters gathered at the meeting and donated \$156.70 in support of the newspaper, which its founder, Vladas Strazhevichus proudly announced, would help draw Lithuanian workers “into the revolutionary organizations for the overthrow of the Capitalist society and the establishment of a Soviet Government in Canada.”⁴³¹

Glos Pracy also regularly benefited from inter-ethnic assistance. When the newspaper was founded in 1932, Ukrainians, Russians, Hungarians and Yugoslavs donated money to help its editors secure the necessary \$600.00 to start printing the paper.⁴³² Turek noted that:

The Polish communists in Canada have been helped, especially in the beginning, by the more numerous and better organized Ukrainian communists. They lent their Polish comrades halls for their meetings, printed their publications and participated in their manifestations. [...] The Ukrainian communists also participated in fund drives for Polish

⁴³⁰ AAN, Warsaw, 599 (13), 298/46 J. Pawlica to MSZ, Section E.II, June 23, 1934.

⁴³¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part I: (No. 732): 14th November, 1934, 392.

⁴³² Turek, 120.

communist publications and made donations to the publishing funds of the Polish communist press.⁴³³

Since Ukrainian Communists were the Polish Communists' closest Slavic brothers, and also the largest ethnic group in the CPC, PTL members frequently interacted with their Ukrainian comrades. At the 15th National Convention of the Ukrainian mass organizations, Zygmunt Majtczak, the General Secretary of the PTL, gave assurances that "Polish Workers will fight shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainians against the bourgeoisie."⁴³⁴ They made good on that promise on many occasions. In July 1938 for example, Polish Communists joined their Ukrainian comrades to "vugoriously [sic] protest" against "snatching away the people's square [by Polish authorities] in Lemberg."⁴³⁵

Polish-Ukrainian comradeship climaxed during a vulgar anti-Polish campaign which was launched to protest the status of Eastern Galicia. The territory had been incorporated into Poland after the First World War. In Europe, the conflict resulted in the Polish-Ukrainian war and the short-lived West Ukrainian People's Republic. Polish Communists kept their promise to fight "shoulder to shoulder" with their Ukrainian comrades, and they viciously denounced "the imperialist claims of the Polish government." The campaign was spearheaded by *Todowyrnazu*, the Society for the Liberation of Western Ukraine. Canadian communists and their supporters raised several thousand dollars to aid Ukrainian political prisoners, and they organized at least two international delegations to investigate the political situation and the treatment of prisoners in Poland. The campaign was also extended against the Romanian and Czechoslovak

⁴³³ Turek, 121.

⁴³⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 750), 27th March, 1935, 198. See also: *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 749): 20th March, 1935, 174-175.

⁴³⁵ AAN, Polish Legation in Ottawa 761d, Resolution of Protest to the Polish Consulate in Canada, July 14, 1938.

governments' treatment of Ukrainian minorities in their countries.⁴³⁶ In 1935, Ukrainian Communists reported that just over \$20,000 had been collected to help Ukrainians in Poland since 1931.⁴³⁷ A year later, approximately \$22,000 had been raised "to help the Ukrainian victims "of the ruthless Polish regime in Western Ukraine."⁴³⁸ Todowyrnazu gave more funds to help the Ukrainians in Poland than to the CPC. In 1936, \$10,217.05 was sent to help Ukrainians, while \$6,677.30 was given to help the revolutionary movement in Canada, and \$3,453.43 to the Canadian Labour Defence League.⁴³⁹ This created some friction between Ukrainian Communists and the CPC leadership and eventually deprived the Party of much Ukrainian support. Many Ukrainian supporters had already left the CPC earlier, because of its failure to question the Famine-Genocide of 1932–1933 and Stalinist purges in the Soviet Ukraine. While the communist press and leadership stressed ideology over ethnicity, such episodes clearly indicate that ethnic culture and homeland politics transcended notions of working-class solidarity.

In July of 1934, Polish Communists, together with their Ukrainian and Russian comrades, demonstrated in front of the Polish consulate in Montreal, protesting the treatment and harassment of Polish workers' organizations in Poland. The secretary of the Canadian Labour Defence League, J. Wallace, led a delegation of eight Communists, which included one Polish worker, to meet the Polish consul. After consulting with the police, the consul accepted the delegates, but he did not answer their questions. The police supervised the entire affair and

⁴³⁶*RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 743) 6th February, 1935, 90. The anti-Polish propaganda campaign was also portrayed by Ukrainian Communists as a nationalist crusade in order to attract new recruits. An RCMP report noted: The Ukrainian Communists in Canada, in their endeavour to build a United Front among the Ukrainian people, are using the alleged persecution of Ukrainians in Poland by Polish authorities as a lever to obtain recruits for their movement. The result was quite successful. Todowyrnazu reported that it received 362 new members in January 1936, and 600 new members during that entire year. *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 826): 30th September, 1936, 415; *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 807): 20th May, 1936, 208.

⁴³⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 807): 20th May, 1936, 208.

⁴³⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 797) 11th March, 1936, 121.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

prevented the delegates from reading their protest proclamation, which was later mailed to the consul:⁴⁴⁰

This delegation, representing wide masses of Montreal workers, places before your Consulate, for transmission to the Polish government, our protest against the political trials in Lutsk, Poland. Intolerable taxes, intolerable rents, intolerable oppression by the occupying forces drove the masses of Western Ukraine into mass revolt in 1930.

Thereupon the worst terror was launched against them, terror particularly in the prisons where officials, gone mad with the lust for torture, worked their abominations on the helpless men and women in their hands.

Now 57 of these prisoners, after being kept without trial for 3 ½ years, face the Polish courts. The period of their detention without trial is proof without further evidence of the treatment they have received, of the weakness of the Government's case against them, of the kind of "justice" they can expect from the Polish courts.

In the name of the workers we represent, we demand the release of the prisoners and warn the Polish government that the toiling masses will note and remember the treatment these heroic prisoners receive.⁴⁴¹

The Communists tried to persuade immigrants and Canadian officials, including the Prime Minister, to condemn the Polish government for its "atrocities in Western Ukraine."⁴⁴²

Many protest letters and resolutions signed by hundreds of protesters were addressed to

"Occupant Governments of Western Ukraine."⁴⁴³ Weekly demonstrations were organized in

front of Polish consulates to protest against "terrorist rule of the Polish bourgeoisie."⁴⁴⁴ In some

instances, the communists' anti-Polish propaganda was far reaching. A *New York Times* article

⁴⁴⁰ AAN, Warsaw, General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in New York, 403. Consul J. Marlewski to MSZ, Political Department in Warsaw, July 5, 1934. Polish Communists organized similar demonstrations in the United States. In 1934 Polish supporters of the International Labour Defence and the Polish Chamber of Labor demonstrated on Washington Square in Chicago and sent a resolution to the Polish consulate declaring: "As the Negroes are lynched in the United States and the Scottsboro boys are held by the landlords of the South here in the United States, so the Ukrainians in Poland suffer the most outrageous persecutions. The Polish workers have time and again demonstrated for the release of Tom Moonet and the Scottsboro boys. International Solidarity demands of us that we here in America raise our voices high for the release of the Ukrainian Fighters."

⁴⁴¹ AAN, Warsaw, General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in New York, 403. Consul J. Marlewski to MSZ, Political Department in Warsaw, July 5, 1934.

⁴⁴² *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 866): 5th August, 1937, 323. See also: *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 743) 6th February, 1935, 90. See also: No. 743, 6th February, 1935.

⁴⁴³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No.743): 6th February, 1935, 91.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 90. See also: *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No. 739): 9th January, 1935, 32.

entitled “Police Terrorism in Poland Charged” portrayed Poland as an undemocratic state which force[s] churches away from orthodox groups, and imprison[s] thousands of Ukrainians and tortur[es] them.⁴⁴⁵ The Communists estimated that 54,000 Ukrainian prisoners were tortured and kept in dungeons in Poland.⁴⁴⁶ Other estimates charged that there were over 60,000 people incarcerated in Poland, 95 percent of whom were Ukrainians.⁴⁴⁷

Communists who had died while trying to help Ukrainians in Poland were turned into martyrs. On Remembrance Day, November 11, 1934, Ukrainian Communists commemorated their own fallen “soldiers” - three Polish Communists “who had given their lives for the emancipation of Ukrainian workers and farmers from the yoke of Polish Capitalists.”⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ “Police Terrorism in Poland Charged” in *New York Times*, May 20, 1927. Patriotic Poles wrote letters and petitions to protest the communists anti-Polish propaganda. Polish consular officials also intervened and contacted police authorities to disperse the demonstrators. Some non-Polish immigrants also protested against the communist propaganda. One German-American, who described himself as a self-professed critic of Poland, objected to the anti-Polish propaganda in a letter to the communist-sponsored International Committee for Political Prisoners in New York: Gentlemen: I read your pamphlet “Political Prisoners in Poland” but I am surprised to see that you Americans print such fiddle-faddle about Poland. I am a German and I cannot say that I do sympathize (sic) with Poland, but in the name of truth I must say that all “brutalities and persecutions” of political prisoners in Poland is a lie. Why? For this simple reason that I know Poland better than you do, being born in Posen, the German land taken forcibly by Poland. I hope that Posen my birthplace will be retaken by Germany some day. But this is her own affair. I hate to see and read any lie against anybody and any country. If anybody wants to fight, let him fight for his rights but honestly and in a gentlemanly manner. Only recently I received a letter from my brother-in-law who has been imprisoned in Poland for a certain crime (political). He served two years in a Warsaw prison but he frankly admits that Germany and any other country would punish him for similar offense much more severely. He has not been treated brutally and never heard about maltreating of any other fellow-prisoner confined in the Warsaw prison. And this happened only five months ago. And again I say: you may hate Poland as you please, but do hate her honestly. Do not promote any crooked Jewish or Bolshevick (sic) work against Poland just because you hate her. This is my opinion about your silly book, and I hope that no well educated (sic) American having heard reports of different American missions that were sent to Poland for investigations against this and other similar atrocities will pay any attention. Hoping that my opinion will help you to fight this Jewish propaganda against Poland and hoping that Poland will begin modus Vivendi with Germany, I remain very respectfully yours, - signed. See: See: AAN, Warsaw, Polish Embassy in Washington, 873 (67). Letter sent to Polish Ambassador Ciechanowski by a Herman E. Brandmeier.

⁴⁴⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No.743): 6th February, 1935, 9. See also: *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part II: (No.747): 6th March, 1935, 154; *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 789): 15th January, 1936, 41.

⁴⁴⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part IV: (No. 866): 5th August, 1937, 323.

⁴⁴⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part I: (No. 733): 21st November, 1934, 403.

The Spanish Civil War

One of the crowning achievements of the international communist movement was a recruiting drive for the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Shortly after the Civil War broke out in the summer of 1936, some 40,000 foreign nationals traveled to Spain to fight the nationalist rebels led by General Francisco Franco who was supported by the fascist governments of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Members of the PTL, acting in concert with the goals set by Moscow and all “progressive” organizations affiliated with the CPC, enthusiastically dedicated their energies to strengthening the global anti-fascist front. Through personal contacts and informal meetings organized by the PTL, individuals were encouraged to volunteer for Spain. *Głos Pracy* ran regular appeals to young Polish-Canadian men to fight for democracy and freedom. The PTL organized several drives for “the purpose of equipping Polish members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.”⁴⁴⁹ In some instances, this aid was sent abroad officially by the PTL, but more often “it was sent through a selected individual so that the organization should not be involved.” The RCMP reported that Polish Canadians had donated thousands of dollars for the war effort in Spain.⁴⁵⁰

The exact number of Polish-Canadian volunteers is difficult to determine as information in the available sources is not consistent. RCMP intelligence reports and Polish consular officials estimated that there were around forty Polish volunteers. According to *Głos Pracy*, thirty-two volunteers were serving in the International Brigade by April, 1938.⁴⁵¹ Michael Petrou, in his recent study of Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, noted that fifty-nine ethnic Poles volunteered for Spain. Anglicized versions of some of the Slavic volunteers’

⁴⁴⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The War Series, 1939-1941 (January 15, 1940), 117.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Głos Pracy*, April 30, 1938. Information about Polish-Canadian volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil war appeared in *Głos Pracy* from May 22, 1937 until February 8, 1939.

surnames on the roster sheets make it difficult to determine their ethnic origin.⁴⁵² Canadian-born volunteers were also sometimes listed as Poles or Hungarians because they fought in units composed primarily of volunteers from these countries.⁴⁵³

The majority of Polish-Canadian volunteers came from Port Hope, Fort William (now Thunder Bay), and Toronto, but some also came from Winnipeg and Montreal. All these locations had active PTL branches. Young men with previous military experience in the Polish Army who were members of “progressive” organizations were considered preferred recruits. In 1937, the year most volunteers enlisted, their average age was thirty-two, but most volunteers were in their mid-thirties. The youngest volunteer was twenty-two years old, and the oldest was forty-one. Most of them were labourers and unskilled workers – farmers, miners, construction workers, painters and mechanics. One of the volunteers, Stefan Kozłowski, was a teacher.⁴⁵⁴

The Polish-Canadian volunteers went to Spain in 1937 as part of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, but most were transferred in Spain to the Polish Dąbrowski Battalion, named after the Polish left-wing nationalist, General Jarosław Dąbrowski.⁴⁵⁵ The Battalion took heavy casualties during the siege on Madrid and at the battle of Jarama. Only twenty-five Polish Canadian volunteers returned to Canada after the war.⁴⁵⁶ Among them was Franciszek Baryła, who served in Spain from August 14, 1937. He was wounded, but he returned to the front after he was

⁴⁵² Petrou, 202. For instance, Karol Frączysty, a Polish-Canadian volunteer, was also recorded as a Karl Francis. Karol Frączysty was a Polish citizen born in Chochołów (near Nowy Targ) in Poland. He was a frequent contributor to the Polish communist newspaper *Głos Pracy*. See: AAN, Warsaw, Polish Consulate General in New York, 398 (34), March 28 1934.

⁴⁵³ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto and Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 12.

⁴⁵⁴ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, a report entitled “Polish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War,” March 6, 1939, 2.

⁴⁵⁵ For more information about the Dąbrowski Battalion see: Józef Mrozek, *Dąbrowszczacy* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1956); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 323-325.

⁴⁵⁶ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, May 9, 1939.

hospitalized. He was later decorated for his efforts and he returned to Canada in February of 1939.⁴⁵⁷

Thirteen Polish-Canadian volunteers died in Spain. Among them were two PTL activists – Karol Frączysty and Stefan Kozłowski.⁴⁵⁸ Frączysty was born in Poland in 1903. He was a farm worker from Winnipeg. He died, together with an estimated 500 International Brigades volunteers, onboard the troop ship *Ciudad de Barcelona* when it was torpedoed and sunk by the Italian submarine *General Sanjurjo* on May 30, 1937.⁴⁵⁹ The second PTL volunteer, Stefan Kozłowski, was killed in action in unknown circumstances in September of 1937.⁴⁶⁰

Those who returned were greeted as national heroes by the PTL and its supporters, while those who had died were turned into martyrs.⁴⁶¹ *Głos Pracy* published stories about their sacrifices, and one PTL branch named itself after Karol Frączysty. The Polish consulates, on the

⁴⁵⁷ Franciszek Baryła was born on April 1, 1908 in Zawala, Austria-Hungary, to a peasant family. After completing school he worked as a farm labourer, and completed his military service in the Polish Army. In 1929 he immigrated to Canada. He worked as a farm labourer in Manitoba and with the Canadian Pacific Railway in Winnipeg. He joined the Young Communist League. In 1930 he worked in Kenora, Ontario as a driver for various firms, road construction and as a lumberjack. In 1931 he joined the CPC and in 1935-1937 he was a member of the executive committee CPC in Kenora and assisted in founding the Polish People's Association. In March, 1937 he volunteered for Spain. From August 14, 1937 he served in the 13th International Brigade. In March, 1938 he served in the Taras Shevchenko Company. After returning to Canada in February 1939, he returned to Winnipeg and worked in the Ukrainian Cooperative. When the CPC was banned in 1940 he worked as the local Secretary. At the beginning of 1942 he left for England and in March, he joined an armoured unit in the Polish Army (most likely in the First Polish Armoured Division). He helped found *Jedność i Czyn*, an association of Polish Communists. He was also active in the Polish Section of the British International Brigades Veterans Association. In July 1944, he took part in the invasion of France. He was wounded in November and was shipped back to England. He returned to Poland in February, 1946 and worked as an information officer in the Polish People's Army in Gdansk and Warsaw. He held various administrative positions and in 1968, he fell sick and died on February 6, 1969 in Gdansk, Poland. Feliks Tych, ed., "Franciszek Baryła" in *Słownik Biograficzny Działaczy Polskiego Ruchu Robotniczego*, Vol. 1, A-D, (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1978); LAC, RG76 - IMMIGRATION, series C-1-c, Vol. 4, 159. The author would also like to thank Myron Momryk for providing additional information about Franciszek Baryła.

⁴⁵⁸ In some records his name also appears as Stefan Koslowsky. See: Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, 190-241; AAN, Warsaw, Polish Legation in Ottawa 761d, Jan Pawlica to the Polish Embassy in Washington, February 21, 1939; AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 5289, Consul in Montreal to the MSZ, March 8, 1939.

⁴⁵⁹ Petrou, 202.

⁴⁶⁰ The service records of many Polish-Canadian volunteers were lost. At least one Polish volunteer made his way to France in search of sanctuary. During the last chaotic months of the Spanish Civil War, many volunteers were separated from their units. Their fate became unknown and they were reported as "missing in action."

⁴⁶¹ Most of the Polish Canadian volunteers returned to Canada on the ship *SS Duchess of Richmond* which arrived in Halifax in February of 1939. LAC, Immigration Branch Records, RG76, vol. 429, file 635107, pt.2.

other hand, sent lists of the volunteers to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland and revoked their Polish citizenship.⁴⁶²

One Polish Canadian volunteer, Ignacy Witzcak, became a victim of identity theft. Witzcak was a Polish farm labourer and casual worker from southern Ontario. He was also active in the Communist Party of Canada.⁴⁶³ He volunteered for Spain in 1937, and participated in the various battles of the Dąbrowski Battalion. When he arrived in Spain, he was advised (together with other recruits) to give his Canadian passport to an officer of the International Brigade for safekeeping.⁴⁶⁴ Although Witzcak kept his Canadian naturalization papers in his pocket, they were destroyed during the Battle of the Ebro in July 1938, when Witzcak was ordered to swim across a tributary of the Ebro River. Since his documents were water-damaged and unreadable, Witzcak decided to discard them.⁴⁶⁵ While he was waiting for demobilization in October 1938, he made a request to the commander of the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, Major Edward Cecil-Smith, to arrange for the return of his passport. Two weeks later, however, he was informed that the truck that was transporting his documents was bombed by a plane and destroyed, together with the documents.⁴⁶⁶ His identity was confirmed by a special Military Commission and Witzcak returned to Canada on February 3, 1939 to resumed his life as a general labourer in Ontario.⁴⁶⁷

Witzcak's passport, however, had not been destroyed during the war. Soviet intelligence officials in Spain, who assumed that Witzcak had died during the war, got a hold of his passport and forwarded it to Moscow where it was used to create a Soviet agent who assumed Witzcak's

⁴⁶² AAN, Warsaw, Polish Legation in Ottawa 761d, Jan Pawlica to the Polish Embassy in Washington, February 21, 1939; AAN, Warsaw, MSZ 5289, Consul in Montreal to the MSZ, March 8, 1939.

⁴⁶³ LAC, RG 146, Personal History File of Ignacy Witzcak, 88, 109-11; Myron Momryk, "Ignacy Witzcak's Passport" in *Polish American Studies* (Autumn, 2011) Vol. LXVIII (2), 72.

⁴⁶⁴ Momryk, 70.

⁴⁶⁵ LAC, RG 146, Personal History File of Ignacy Witzcak, 109-11; Momryk, 71.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Momryk, 71.

identity. The “new” Witzcak, whose real name was Zelman V. Litvin, arrived in New York on September 13, 1938, and settled in Los Angeles, California with his twenty-four year old wife, Bunia Genah Witzcak.⁴⁶⁸ Litvin, who was born in 1908, enrolled as a student in the political science department at the University of Southern California. Before coming to the United States, he completed his studies in the Chinese Faculty of the Far East University and worked in foreign trade. Between 1934 and 1936, he was in North China, gathering intelligence on the Japanese Army. In 1945, Litvin had to renew his Canadian passport.⁴⁶⁹ This became a problem, as the real Witzcak was still alive and could trigger a discovery of the fake Witzcak. In an effort to protect Litvin’s real identity, Sam Carr, a prominent Canadian Communist organizer was instructed to bribe a Canadian official with \$3,000 to obtain a false passport for Litvin. Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk who defected from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in September 1945, alerted Canadian authorities of the scheme which led to the arrest of several Communist agitators including Carr.⁴⁷⁰ Alarmed by Gouzenko’s actions, Litvin vanished in late 1945. He returned to the Soviet Union together with his wife and child, and worked in intelligence in Europe, and later, at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR until his death in 1993.⁴⁷¹

Relations with Komunistyczna Partia Polski (KPP)

The extent of the cooperation between the PTRF and the PTL with the Communist Party of Poland is difficult to assess because of a lack of available sources. Polish Communists in Canada certainly interacted with their counterparts in Poland. As we have already seen, the

⁴⁶⁸ LAC, RG 146, Personal History File of Ignacy Witzcak, 1115; Momryk, 72.

⁴⁶⁹ Myron Momryk, *Ignacy Witzcak’s Passport*, 83.

⁴⁷⁰ For more information on the Gouzenko affair see: Jack L. *Granatstein* and David *Stafford*, *Spy Wars: Espionage and Canada from Gouzenko to Glasnost* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1990). The Gouzenko case is also discussed in chapter 6.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.* For additional information about the Ignacy Witzcak case, see: Myron Momryk, *Ignacy Witzcak’s Passport*; Petrou, *Renegades*, 41; John Earle Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 183-184. For additional information about Litvin see, Mike Gruntman, *Enemy Among Trojans, A Soviet Spy at USC* (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2010), 11-12.

PTRF received help from Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel, a known KKP activist, who visited Canada on at least two occasions. We know that at least one KKP member, Albert Morski, was sent by the Polish Party to organize the Polish communist movement in Canada. There is evidence that the KKP had also sent other “organizers” and other forms of help (literature and money).

Some of the first Polish secular organizations in Canada, such as the Sons of Poland, the Sokol and the pro-PPS *Spójnia* considered themselves to be extensions of similar groups in Poland. Their very names were often exact equivalents of the organizations in the homeland. It is difficult to ascertain whether Polish Canadian Communists, (especially during their formative period), considered themselves to represent an extension of the KKP in Canada. It appears that as late as 1938, Polish Communists still debated the status of their position in relation to the Communist movement in Canada. At the PTL’s 8th convention held in 1938 for instance, Polish delegates declared that the PTL was a cultural-educational organization “entirely independent of any party or political group both in Poland and in Canada.”⁴⁷² A few lines later however, that same declaration also stated that “political activity among Polish emigrants should be led by Polish Communists and the Polish National Branch of the Communist Party of Canada.”⁴⁷³ Overall, Polish Communists accentuated their “Canadian” character and they never made any official declarations about having formal ties with the KKP. Tim Buck considered the Polish Communists to constitute a part of the Canadian communist movement. By the late 1930s, the Polish Communists also affirmed that they were a “Polish Bureau” of the CPC.

It is difficult to determine how Polish Canadian Communists reacted to the KKP’s specific policies and to some of its blunders, such as the “May Error” in 1926, when the KKP aided Pilsudski in his power grab. It is not known whether Polish Communists in Canada felt

⁴⁷² *Głos Pracy*, October 22, 1938, 6.

⁴⁷³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series, 1939-1940: (No. 13): 15 January, 1940, 117; Reczyńska, 100.

some sort of sympathy for their comrades in Poland, or whether they denounced their actions, together with Stalin, as treasonous. The ‘May Error’ was not the only grave blunder committed by the KPP. Earlier, Communists had criticized the Polish Party on its handling of the events during the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1920. Charles Edward Scott, a Third International representative from the United States, who spoke at a communist meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1922, accused the KPP of providing misleading information about the situation during the War. Ironically, he said that it was the Polish Communists, and not the Polish Army, who prevented Communism from spreading westwards:

Poland would have been Bolshevistic, and consequently also Germany, a long time ago were it not for the blunder the Communist Party of Poland made in ill advising the Communist International which consequently resulted in the blunder the Red Army made in attacking Warsaw. Preparations were under way at that time to overthrow the Polish and the German Government.⁴⁷⁴

Scott gave exact details about the KPP’s hiccup. Apparently the Party had notified the Soviet government that it had established a “Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Warsaw” and requested “as per previous arrangements” for the Soviet government to come to its assistance. Eager to help their comrades, the Soviets sent the Red Army into Poland. It was hoped that Semyon Budyonny’s cavalry would reach Warsaw and hold the city until the rest of the Soviet troops would arrive. But Budyonny advanced too quickly, and as a consequence, his cavalry was almost entirely exhausted before Warsaw. When the Red Army arrived, it could do little on account of the lack of Budyonny’s cavalry which had been almost entirely decimated by the combined forces of the Polish Army and the White Army. Scott noted that “the operation towards Warsaw is regarded as the worst blunder the Red Army has ever made and which resulted that the idea of overthrowing the Polish Government had to be abandoned and

⁴⁷⁴ Gregory S. Kealey, “The RCMP, the Special Branch, and the Early Days of the Communist Party of Canada: A Documentary Article,” in *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall 1992), 193-194.

consequently, also the planned operation against Germany.” Disappointed and frustrated, Scott exclaimed: “This is what you get for being too sentimental: we wanted to save the lives of our brothers in Warsaw by rushing the Red cavalry ahead.”⁴⁷⁵

Like all other parties of the Comintern, the KPP suffered from factional struggles, purges, recantations, expulsions, and it followed all the abrupt twists and turns of Comintern policy. It was devoted to the interests of the Polish working class and of the international communist movement. Despite its commitments and sacrifices, however, the Party earned the Cominterns’ distrust early in its history. Comintern leaders expressed doubts about the theoretical knowledge and party experience of its leaders.⁴⁷⁶ In 1924, Stalin said that the Polish Communist Party is in an abnormal state and he questioned its loyalty to the Soviet Union. The “May Error” two years later undoubtedly reinforced his doubts about the Party. Despite the KPP’s trials and tribulations, it was eventually dissolved in 1938, allegedly because it was hotbed for Trotskyism. About 5,000 of its members were arrested, sent to camps or executed. The fortunate ones, ironically, were those members who were in prisons in Poland during the purges.

Conclusion

Whatever the vagaries of the party line, Polish Canadian Communists ultimately followed the Comintern’s directives and accepted the transcendence of ethnic boundaries. Whether their tactics were spontaneously developed or closely guided by outside forces remains difficult to assess, although it is clear that Polish Communists tailored their overarching strategies in accordance with Comintern theory. Their struggle to maintain themselves was greatly facilitated by their flexibility and adaptability. As we have seen, Polish pro-communists supported calls for a revolution in Canada, and encouraged violence in factories and on street corners. But when it

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 193-194.

⁴⁷⁶ See: M. K. *Dziewanowski, The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

suited their purpose, they became committed partisans of democracy, and fought to unify the Polish immigrant population.

Faced with a determined opposition, the Communist Party of Canada could not rely solely on the power of ideas to make inroads within ethnic communities. The Party's success among Polish immigrants depended at least as much on the abilities of its ethnic leaders to translate the communist doctrine as it did on favourable economic and social conditions. While domestic affairs were arduously criticized and subjected to Marxist interpretations, Polish Communists, like most of their ethnic comrades, often concerned themselves more with the political, economic and social struggles of their ancestral homeland. By providing specific targets such as businessmen, clergy and shipping agents, the Communists absolved immigrants from feeling responsible for their predicament. Unlike the Ukrainian Communists, who occasionally collided with the CPC over issues concerning Soviet policies towards the Ukraine, Polish Communists generally remained in the clear. The greatest challenge for Polish Communists came from within their own ethnic community. Polish patriotic organizations, backed by the government in Warsaw, waged a vicious campaign to stem their influence.

In order to rally immigrants to the communist movement, Polish Communists employed agitational and propaganda techniques developed within the international communist movement. To communicate these ideals to the immigrants, however, they had to rely on the Polish language, and on aspects of shared culture. In fact, culture was so important to ethnic Communists, that one American party paper complained that Slavic comrades spent more time rehearsing a play than doing important party work.⁴⁷⁷ As we will see in the subsequent chapter, despite their internationalist views, the Communist program for radicalization had an important ethnic component, which relied largely on cultural activities to spread its ideas.

⁴⁷⁷ Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961), 98.

Chapter 6

Red Culture

Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed.

-Joseph Stalin

Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.

-Vladimir Lenin

The annual festival held by the Polish Farmer Temple Association (PTRF) at the Workers' Benevolent Association farm in East Kildonan, Manitoba in 1936, was, according to RCMP agents "a well attended affair."⁴⁷⁸ A lively atmosphere prevailed during a day of eating, drinking, and music. The programme even included stunt flying by two aeroplanes that were chartered for the occasion.⁴⁷⁹ Men sat separately and discussed politics, the deplorable economic situation, especially in the factories, where many of them worked. Intermissions between the fun and games were filled with speeches about the class struggle. The guest of honour, ex-judge Lewis St. George Stubbs, who had just been elected to the Manitoba Legislature, spoke for an hour, prophesying that capitalism would collapse and that his audience should endure the struggle for working-class unity.⁴⁸⁰

Such events constitute examples of how the promotion of the communist ideology by Polish Communists was closely linked with their cultural work. The formal organizations – unions, associations and other clubs – of the PTRF and later, of the Polish Peoples' Association (PTL) bore much resemblance to its system of concepts. So too did the less conspicuous, albeit

⁴⁷⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part III: (No. 822): 2nd September, 1936, 376.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

equally important, cultural organizations – newspaper agencies, sports clubs, Polish-language schools – through which the Communists distilled their ideology.

Proletarian ideology, observed Carmela Patrias, “required a revolution in the thinking of the proletarian rank and file. It called for abandonment of familiar customs and symbols and for rejection of traditional figures of authority both in the domestic and in the public realms.”⁴⁸¹

Such a dramatic about-face was not easily achieved. Communists needed to be persistent and, at times, they had to compromise.

As we will see below, left-wing culture of the Polish Canadian communist movement bears little resemblance to the rigid and mechanical Stalin-approved realism that some communist organizations have often been accused of favouring. Reductionist dichotomizations of bourgeois/working-class or capitalist/Stalinist fail to capture the totality of communist culture. Ethnic folk culture and nationalist traditions were a part of the cultural baggage of the ethnic communist experience. While the singing of the “Międzynarodówka” (“Internationale”) was a staple in communist circles, the cultural repertoire was not entirely “red” oriented. Polish Communists encouraged their children to listen to Frederick Chopin and to read Adam Mickiewicz. Consequently, class interests did not supersede national and ethnic cultural interests; rather, these interests were dispensed simultaneously. As children learned about the great men and women who helped shape history, they were also served a potent brew of Marxism-Leninism. The class struggle for instance, was exemplified through the nationalist leader Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who was portrayed as a peasant prince.

The communist leaders understood that Polish immigrants, disconnected from their homeland and marginalized by mainstream Canadian society, yearned for their traditional culture

⁴⁸¹ Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 210.

and were desperate to fill the vacuum created by isolation and nostalgia. A variety of socio-cultural activities, which included picnics; concerts; dramas and plays; poetry readings and embroidery exhibits staged by the women's circles; funerals and a myriad of youth and children's activities, provided immigrants with their "Polish connection" and ensured that the proletarian ideology was disseminated in a fraternal atmosphere. They also established a number of socio-cultural organizations, such as the Juliusz Słowacki Society in Winnipeg, which the Polish consul argued, were "crypto-Communist" organizations created to "lure" naive Polish immigrants with literature into the Communist camp.⁴⁸² Since the Polish communist movement was numerically small, it relied primarily on cultural and educational activities to increase its following and to bolster an influential outward appearance. Reports about their meetings indicate that Polish Communists consistently thought of novel ideas to improve their efforts on the cultural front. Their labours were met with much success. In 1938, for instance, they maintained eight youth orchestras and six Polish-language schools, and they had organized 64 amateur performances, 49 picnics 164 social events, 69 banquets, 21 bazaars and 42 meetings.⁴⁸³

Work in the cultural sphere increased significantly after Albert Morski took the reins of the Party in 1935. At a PTL meeting in 1938, it was decided that cultural activities constituted an integral part of the political agitation and that the Party should "concentrate mainly on cultural activities among the Poles."⁴⁸⁴ Consequently, the PTL began to disclose less information about its political orientation, and to style itself as a "socio-educational association of Poles in Canada." *Głos Pracy* toned down its revolutionary jargon and orthodox communist propaganda.

⁴⁸² AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on "Communist organizations in Canada," Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 6-7. Other Polish communist sponsored "cultural-educational" organizations included the Marie Curie-Skłodowska Society in Fort William and the Maria Konopnicka Society in Spruce Valley. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled "Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada," January 13, 1938.

⁴⁸³ Archives of Ontario, Malatyński Papers, 9695.5.

⁴⁸⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 904): 1st November, 1938, 323.

It added a children's section and a women's section to reach a broader audience. It included illustrations of illustrious Polish forbearers like Tadesz Koszciuszko and Adam Mickiewicz, though they were still treated in Marxist terms.

Education

Educators played a particularly important role in raising a generation of young followers. According to Ian McKay, "Each left formation has historically identified the upbringing and education of its children as a particularly important sphere of struggle for the left, and it appears to be a symptom of the confidence of a left formation if it actively creates institutions and programs designed to mould the next generation."⁴⁸⁵ In their attempts to mould the next generation, teachers were charged with an important dual role. While recognizing the importance of disseminating the proletarian ideology, ethnic Communists also recognized the need to maintain some degree of the national culture. Ukrainian Communists, meeting in Alberta in 1920, for instance, spoke about properly educating and training their children to ensure that the "Ukrainian language and songs should be dear to all Ukrainians."⁴⁸⁶ RCMP reports warned about the dangers of such sentiments:

The principal subjects to be taught are the Ukrainian language, folk-songs, and revolutionary songs and music. [...] Great use is made of concerts; the elders are encouraged to attend entertainments at which the children furnish the programme, most of the recitations, songs, etc. having revolutionary tendencies. Sometimes the children act revolutionary plays. The evidence is that these are attractive to the parents. Great hostility is shown to the public schools, which are incessantly denounced as designed to darken the understandings of the children, to teach militarism and religions, and to bolster up capitalism. Bitterness is shown towards those Ukrainians who imbibe Canadian ideals.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 117.

⁴⁸⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 42): 23rd September, 1920.

⁴⁸⁷ Public Archives of Alberta, (PPA), Accession no. 75.126, vol. 218, file 4618. Memo prepared by Starnes for Gouin on "Revolutionary Schools," 30 December 1922.

Usually, the same cadre of dedicated teachers who ran adult education classes also managed children's schools and directed local choirs. Students and teachers alike were rewarded for assent to the 'correct view', a general didactic orientation that was reinforced by a traditional teacher-centred approach in the classroom. Aside from courses in history, economics, language and a variety of other topics, special classes were also organized to educate pupils about the structure of the PTL and public speaking.⁴⁸⁸ They learned about Soviet and communist anniversaries and 'Pioneer' organisations. And militant proletarian poems and songs, such as *Czerwony Sztandar* (The Red Banner), composed by the poet and social activist Bolesław Czerwieński, instilled fraternity, comradeship and a sense of purpose:

My nowe życie stworzym sami

*Krew naszą długo leją katy,
wciąż płyną ludu gorzkie łzy,
nadejdzie jednak dzień zapłaty,
sędziami wówczas będziem my!*

*Dalej więc dalej, dalej więc, wnieśmy śpiew.
Nasz sztandar płynie ponad trony,
niesie on zemsty grom, ludu gniew,
wolności zwiastując siew.
A kolor jego jest czerwony,
bo na nim robotnicza krew!*

*Choć stare lotry, nocy dzieci,
nawiązać chcą starganą nić,
co złe to w gruzy się rozleci,
co dobre, wiecznie będzie żyć!*

Dalej więc...

*Porządek stary już się wali,
żywotem naszym jego zgon.*

⁴⁸⁸ In 1938, Consul Juliusz Szygowski reported that a special training course, which was coordinated by the Comintern, was organized to prepare a new cadre of PTL agitators. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to MSZ, report entitled "Communist pressures on Polish immigrants in Western Canada," January 13, 1938.

*Będziemy wspólnie pracowali
i wspólny będzie pracy plon!*

Dalej więc...

*Hej razem bracia do szeregu!
Z jedną myślą, z dłonią w dłoń!
Któż zdoła wstrzymać strumień w biegu,
Czyż jest na świecie taka broń?*

Dalej więc...

*Precz z tyranami, precz z zdziercami!
Niech ginie stary, podły świat!
My nowe życie stworzymy sami
i nowy zaprowadzimy ład.*

Dalej więc..

Czerwieński's song is a lament about a deceitful and old, wicked world (*stary, podły świat*) waiting for the day of reckoning (*dzień zapłaty*). Together, hand in hand (*z dłonią w dłoń*), with "our banner floating above the thrones" (*nasz sztandar płynie ponad trony*), we will form a new life (*My nowe życie stworzymy sami*).

Teachers were usually the best qualified to interpret and to disseminate communist ideology. Smaller branches, which were unable to hire teachers and did not have a permanent educational program, relied on visiting teachers and guest speakers from larger centers, who usually offered short discourses on current events and history. The guest speakers were usually leaders of the PTL and Communists from other organizations, as well as prominent left-wingers like Tim Buck, ex-judge Lewis St. George *Stubbs and Matthew Popovich*. Polish Youth Sections also provided children with a proletarian education and they instilled comradeship, fraternity and solidarity. The first Polish Youth Section was formed in Winnipeg in early 1935

with some 26 members. Zygmund Majtczak, who had most likely one of the communist organizers sent from Poland, was its founder.⁴⁸⁹

Most of the recruiting for the Polish language schools was done through *Głos Pracy*.⁴⁹⁰ In the larger urban centers, like Winnipeg and Toronto, the Polish communist-sponsored schools enrolled around 40-50 pupils. Classes were usually held in the evenings, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, so as not to interfere with the public schools and the parents' work schedules.⁴⁹¹ Polish consuls encouraged Canadian authorities to close the communist schools. In June 1934, the consul in Winnipeg, Jan Pawlica, notified the Chief of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that the rise of such schools was dangerous as it attracted "weak and vacillating elements to send their children to [such] school[s]."⁴⁹² Pawlica also sent a letter to the Attorney General of the Province of Manitoba, W.J. Major, "asking him to investigate the management and if possible to make the appropriate steps to prevent the spreading of communist slogans among Polish children in Winnipeg."⁴⁹³

But while Canadian authorities feared that such schools, including the non-communist schools, slowed the process of "Canadianization," they allowed them to function as long as they operated outside public school hours. The RCMP did, however, feel uneasy about young pupils being taught to write compositions on such topics as: "Did God Create Mankind, or Did Mankind Create God?"; "Can there be Peace between the Workman and the Boss?" and "Why do the large industries swallow the Middle Class[?]."⁴⁹⁴ As a result, they recommended that any

⁴⁸⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part II: (No. 748): 13th March, 1935, 167.

⁴⁹⁰ *Głos Pracy* May 31, 1934.

⁴⁹¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part III: (No. 832): 12th November, 1936, 491. There were two Polish communist-led schools in Winnipeg which were located on 1039 Pritchard Avenue and on 215 Selkirk Avenue. The two schools had a combined enrolment of over 60 pupils.

⁴⁹² AAN, Warsaw, Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Winnipeg, 599, (13), 298/46 J. Pawlica to MSZ Section, June 23, 1934.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 334): 9th September, 1926, 356.

individuals who refused to assimilate, or who impeded others from doing so in the schools by forcing revolutionary jargon, be deported.⁴⁹⁵

Like Polish patriotic organizations, Polish Communists printed and imported their own children's handbooks and reading manuals. A number of branches established small libraries and amassed a stock of books consisting mostly of Polish and Soviet novels and propaganda literature. The headquarters of *Głos Pracy* in Winnipeg boasted a collection of Lenin, Marx, and several works written by the Marxist activist and theorist Henryk Grossman, as well as a number of almanacs and worker's calendars, which were secretly imported from Poland and the USSR.

The catalogue numbers on some of the surviving texts from the *Głos Pracy* library indicate that there were over 250 copies in its possession. Many of the pages of the surviving books were marked up and underlined, suggesting that they were meticulously read and studied. In a copy of Marx's letters to his confidant Dr. Louis Kugelmann, some engulfed reader underlined the word *walczyć* (to fight) in thick pencil on every page where the word appeared in the text. The individual also scribbled revolutionary slogans on the side pages such as: "the enemy of the revolution cannot destroy the masses!" (*wróg rewolucji nie zniszczy masy!*).⁴⁹⁶

An important educational aspect which preoccupied the PTL and its branches was the endorsement of the study of the Polish language. Like the nationalists, who also placed much emphasis on maintaining the native culture, Polish Communists recognized that the preservation of the Polish language was important to most immigrants. When a Polish priest started speaking in English to his Polish parishioners in Saskatchewan, they protested and, according to consul Jan Pawlica, they "demanded that the priest speak to them in Polish and teach them their native

⁴⁹⁵ Public Archives of Alberta, (PPA), Accession no. 75.126, vol. 218, file 4618. Memo prepared by Starnes for Gouin on "Revolutionary Schools", 30 December 1922.

⁴⁹⁶ Author's collection: *Głos Pracy* ex-libris: Marx's letters to his confidant Dr. Louis Kugelmann.

language.”⁴⁹⁷ Communists encouraged Polish-language instruction to satisfy the cultural needs of immigrants and to prevent them from sending their children to the Polish-language schools of the patriotic organizations. Polish-language instruction also ensured that the PTL could groom a generation of supporters and avoid cross-generational conflict, since parents generally preferred to use the Polish language. So vital was the language issue, that in later years, Ukrainian and Polish Communists sent a report to the Manitoba Royal Commission on Education, “urging that Ukrainian and Polish be introduced into the elementary and secondary schools of Manitoba.”⁴⁹⁸

In an effort to discourage Polish parents from sending their children to the communist-sponsored schools, Jan Pawlica helped establish free Polish-language summer courses which were organized by the *Kolo Akademikow Polskich w Winnipegu* (Circle of Polish Academics in Winnipeg). The consul supported this undertaking by donating books and other educational materials. Fathers Baderski and Zielonka from the Holy Ghost and the St. John Cantius parishes reacted adversely to the summer courses, and they accused Pawlica of meddling in the religious education of the Polish youth.⁴⁹⁹ They claimed that there was no need for free language instruction, as the priests charged only a minimal registration fee (ranging from twenty-five cents to one dollar). And they argued that the free courses threatened the existence of the parish schools, and that there was no need to establish competing summer programs since the two parishes already ran “successful courses in the summer.”⁵⁰⁰

Despite the priests’ bitter reaction, Pawlica encouraged the free courses because he saw them as a means of steering non-religious immigrants and those who were unable to afford to

⁴⁹⁷ AAN, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 897, 141. Letter to the Polish Embassy in London from Jan Pawlica, August 18, 1933.

⁴⁹⁸ John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979), 132.

⁴⁹⁹ AAN, Warsaw, Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Winnipeg, 599, 298/47, Pawlica to MSZ, “Polish Courses in Winnipeg.”

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

register their children in the parish schools away from the communist-led schools. He also questioned why the priests had not protested as vigorously when the Communists had opened their schools in Winnipeg.⁵⁰¹

Youth activities which entailed learning about workers' sports and left-wing culture; about the comradeship and fellowship of social activism; and about the ideals shared by many other youths which superseded divisions along ethnic, religious and class lines, were perhaps the most iconic expression of internationalism. But for most Polish Communist sympathizers, such expressions did not always have deeper meanings. Many sympathizers and passive sympathizers undoubtedly sent their children to the communist-sponsored language schools and youth organizations because of their Polish or non-religious character, and not out of some deep rooted revolutionary urges. Still, for some activists like Franciszek Baryła and Fred Rose, who joined the Young Communist League before entering the CPC, youth organizations served as a springboard for entering the intellectual life of the leftist movement.

“Red” Theatres, Orchestras and Films

At a time when radio was still in its infancy, theatrical performances, concerts and plays were among the best channels of propagating the proletarian ideology. In 1935, the RCMP *Quarterly* ran an article, *Training Young Communists*, which commented on the “considerable time and attention [...] given to music and drama which constitute a principal feature of the [communist] curriculum.”⁵⁰²

Drama circles of the PTL branches staged a myriad of performances designed specifically to implant desired political attitudes and concepts. Since most performances were followed by a collection drive, they were also an excellent source of revenue for the Party. Community leaders

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² “Training Young Communists” in R.C.M.P. *Quarterly* 3 (2), 1935, 185, 187.

used such occasions to attract followers, which helped boost organizational and ideological growth. Isolated by language and poverty from mainstream North American culture, some Polish immigrants appreciated such initiatives as good entertainment.

The communist repertoire came overwhelmingly from Poland and the USSR, but a handful of plays also portrayed the immigrants' Canadian experience. The content was carefully chosen. Many plays had a didactic purpose, exposing the problems of capitalism, material greed and economic exploitation. Other songs, being Soviet in origin, glorified the USSR and its proletarian leaders.

The Polish Labour temples provided a rich and varied program for their audiences. Performances were usually held on Sunday nights and on special anniversaries and commemorations. The organization's ensembles entertained prominent CPC members like Tim Buck and Lewis St. George Stubbs, as well ethnic leaders like John Boyd (Boychuck), Peter Prokop (Prokopchak), John Weir (Weviursky), Ivan Sembay and Mathew Popovich.⁵⁰³ In 1934, members of the Polish labour Hall in Winnipeg organized a special concert for Popovich to celebrate his release from prison. After the concert, Popovich spoke to the Poles about his trial and he urged them to demand the release of Tim Buck.⁵⁰⁴

Ensembles and performers also participated jointly with other communist groups in annual concerts and anniversary performances, and they occasionally toured smaller settlements which did not have musical groups. One RCMP agent was quite revolted by the nature of such performances. He described the atmosphere at a concert organized by Polish and Ukrainian Communists in his report:

The whole sentiment of the Concert was anti-Canadian and revolutionary in the extreme, dangerous to the peace of the country in as much as it was inciting the workers to

⁵⁰³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 734): 28th November, 1934, 412.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

revolution. One deplorable and striking feature of the whole affair was the number of small children that took part and entered wholeheartedly into the seditious programme, their enthusiasm only being excelled by that of the younger members of the audience, who cheered and applauded in the wildest manner, the Chairman having to ask them to modify their applause. Most of the children present are all Canadian born, and speak English with no trace of a foreign accent, but the appalling fact as demonstrated above, is that they are being trained as REVOLUTIONISTS. [...]

The Concert was brought to a conclusion by the Ukrainian Mixed Choir singing the 'RED FLAG,' the audience rising. The Theatre was filled to capacity, about eight hundred being present; over ninety percent of who were foreigners, mostly Ukrainians. The audience was orderly throughout, and paid the closest attention to all parts of the programme, but after certain red seditious songs, etc., applauded in the wildest manner, showing the spirit of the audience was revolutionary.⁵⁰⁵

One of the more popular dramas staged by Polish Communists was an anti-religious play entitled "*Damazy Macoch*". The play was based on the true story of Father Damazy (Damascus) Macoch of the Pauline monastery in Częstochowa who regularly robbed the altars. Macoch had also killed his cousin Waclaw Macoch out of fear that the latter would betray him to the authorities. He sewed his cousin's dead body into a sofa which was later found in a river. Macoch then married his cousin's widow, Helen Krzyżanowska. In 1910, the entire affair came to light, and Macoch was incarcerated and sentenced to twelve years of hard labor. The case shocked Polish public opinion. Some alleged that Macoch was an agent of the Tsarist secret police. Newspapers all around the world wrote about the incident, which tarnished the Polish Church.⁵⁰⁶

The Communists used such dramas to underscore the corrupt and immoral nature of the Catholic clergy. *Głos Pracy* hailed the play as "very instructive" and noted that it unmasks the crimes of the "hypocritical" clergy.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist party of Canada in Edmonton, vol 22, file 88-A-61, Document 22, pt. 7, Report of [deleted], April 3, 1923.

⁵⁰⁶ "Arrest Monk for Murder: Confessed Killing Cousin After Despoiling Image of the Virgin" in *New York Times* October, 9, 1910 and "Z Przyjazdu Amatorów T-wa Robotniczego w Brandon" in *Głos Pracy*, 26 October 1933.

⁵⁰⁷ "Z Przyjazdu Amatorów T-wa Robotniczego w Brandon" *Głos Pracy*, 26 October 1933.

Following the performances, appeals were usually made for donations. During the PTRF's and the PTL's peaks in popularity, their events could easily attract several hundred spectators.⁵⁰⁸ In 1938, the PTL had organized more than 60 amateur performances and almost 200 social events.⁵⁰⁹ Such undertakings provided a considerable source of revenue for Party activities. The RCMP reported that Władysław Dutkiewicz generally always managed to surpass his goal for *Głos Pracy's* collection drive. It was thanks to such initiatives, as we will see later, that the newspaper managed to survive. The PTL also claimed that it managed to amass enough capital from generous donations to purchase a large Labour Hall in Toronto for \$14,000.00 and to pay-off the mortgage on its Winnipeg Hall in only a few years.⁵¹⁰

Another popular means of entertaining the masses, and indirectly propagating the proletarian ideology, was the screening of "red" films. In fact, Vladimir Lenin declared that films were the most important medium for educating the masses about Communism, a position which was later maintained by Joseph Stalin.⁵¹¹ Although there is little information available about how film was used by Polish Communists in Canada, it was certainly a component of their cultural work.

Polish Canadian Communists obtained their films through the United States. In 1938, the Embassy in Washington noted that a Polish-American businessman, J. Starczewski, had exported the Polish film "*Trędowata*" (The Leper) to Canada for ten days in order to test the market. The film was a critique of aristocratic values and marriage codes which barred aristocrats from

⁵⁰⁸ At the opening ceremony of the PTL's new Toronto office, thirty-two delegates from Polish branches in Montreal, Oshawa, Kitchener, St. Catherine's and Hamilton along with other ethnic Communists and over 500 Polish immigrants marked the occasion. See: "Managements are Criticized by Mr. Heenan" in *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1943, 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Archives of Ontario, Malatyński Papers, 9695.5.

⁵¹⁰ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 58; *Kronika Tygodniowa*, December 12, 1942, 4.

⁵¹¹ Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2-54.

marrying outside their social circle. It was one the most famous Polish melodramas based on the best-selling novel by the Polish writer, Helena Mniszkowa in 1909.⁵¹² The Polish consul in Montreal received complaints that Starczewski was lending this film to Polish Communists and that he was “consciously helping spread Bolshevism in Polish settlements.”⁵¹³

Dutkiewicz and his brother-in-law Marciak had established a film company in Toronto in 1935 with the help of Ukrainian Communists. The company was officially owned by Marciak and Radymski, a Communist from Winnipeg who was sent to Toronto for this purpose. One of the first films that they screened was “*Trędowata*,” which they had apparently purchased from Starczewski in New York.

Some patriotic Poles complained to the consul that the Polish Communists were defaming a classic Polish film for propaganda purposes. One Polish immigrant wrote to the Polish consul in Montreal, asking the latter to intervene: “[...] Consul, is it really not possible to prevent this, they already spat enough on everything that is Polish, now they are going to connect images of Polish Bolshevism [to the film] to acquire the Polonia [...] [T]hat will already be too much.”⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² Polish consular authorities in the United States also feared that a highly anti-Polish film entitled “The Polish Terror” was circulating in Canada. The film was produced by *Wufku*, a Ukrainian-Soviet company in Odessa. The film was based on “an alleged episode of a revolt of the Ukrainian peasants against their Polish rulers in 1627.” It starred Amvrossi Buchma, as Taras Triassilo, a dashing peasant leader who helped free Ukrainians peasants from their native and Polish oppressors. The New York-based Polish-language newspaper *Nowy Świat* (New World), noted that the “audience is left with a dark stark image of every Pole as a barbarian”. *The New York Times* observed that the film “exalts the valor of the rebels and paints their oppressors [...] in the darkest colors” and delivers the message “that Lenin’s dream is coming true”. See *Nowy Świat*, March 15, 1933; “Movie Review: A Russian Historical Film, The Polish Terror” in *The New York Times*, March 13, 1933.

⁵¹³ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, 490, 874 (69-71). Dr. Sylwester Gruszka and the Consul General to MSZ, May 17, 1938.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Proletarian Sports

The origins of workers' sports organizations, as overt components of the class-conscious movement, must be traced to Europe. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, European trade unions and progressive groups formed gymnastic and sporting associations, as an alternative to the upper class organizations from which they were excluded, or as a cover for illegal political activity. The largest and best known international sporting organization was the Socialist Workers' Sport International (SWSI) founded in 1920.⁵¹⁵ Its crowning achievement was the Worker's Olympics, which in the 1920s and 1930s, matched the popularity of the "bourgeois" or "official" Olympic Games organized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).⁵¹⁶ The most successful Worker's Olympics, held in Vienna in 1931, brought together 76,245 athletes from 23 countries. The largest Polish worker-friendly sports organization, the *Związek Robotniczych Stowarzyszeń Sportowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Polish Workers' Sport Federation - PWSF) supported athletes in 27 disciplines. By 1934, it had a membership of 20,000 and it reached countless more supporters through its newspaper *Sztafeta Robotnicza*. The *Morgnshtern* (Morning Star), founded in 1926 as the Polish-Jewish section of the SWSI was also quite successful, boasting 5,000 members and more than 170 branches throughout Poland. Aside from encouraging physical education, these organizations promoted the principles of socialism, working-class consciousness, internationalism, and the rejection of militarism.

In Canada, more cohesive communist sports clubs were introduced in the early 1920s on instructions from the Comintern and the Young Communist International, which instructed the

⁵¹⁵ The SWSI was also informally known as the Lucerne Sport International, after the location where it was originally formed.

⁵¹⁶ See: William John Morgan, *Leftist Theories of Sport: A Critique and Reconstruction* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994); George Eisen and David Kenneth Wiggins eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994).

CPC to form clubs based on the Red Sport International. The Young Communist League (YCL) declared that sport is:

An essential part of League work. Baseball should be the most popular, but hikes and runs and boxing and swimming can be all added. But these sports must be turned from commercial antagonistic games into “Red Sports”. [...] They are recruiting agencies because they are beneficial to League membership at large and develop a feeling of comradeship and vitality.⁵¹⁷

Across Canada sports clubs mushroomed with names like the “Hammer and Sickle Club” and the “Red Hope Club.” Together with its ethnic branches, the CPC encouraged a diversity of activity, including drills, acrobatics, baseball, soccer and gymnastics. The workers’ soccer clubs in Montreal and Toronto competed on an annual basis and easily attracted crowds of over 5,000. Every aspect of the sporting events was overshadowed by some greater symbolic meaning which subliminally moulded the youth. The YCL for instance, encouraged multi-person pyramids, because this exercise allegedly illustrated working-class solidarity during the class struggle.⁵¹⁸

By 1934, the Winnipeg branch of Workers’ Sports Association became very active, with nearly 300 members. The majority of its members were Jews, but it also had nineteen Scandinavians, nine Germans and eight Poles, among others.⁵¹⁹ RCMP agents noted that the Association “developed remarkably during its short period of existence,” and that it had “the most up-to-date gymnastic appliances and a very able gym instructor.”⁵²⁰

Like all other social-cultural endeavours, sporting activities were not organized solely for “sport’s sake.” Communist leaders, on instruction from the Communist International, tried to use sporting activities to advance the possibilities for revolutionary change. Editors in the mainstream party press argued that workers still think of sports as “neutral” activities that have

⁵¹⁷ George Eisen and David Kenneth Wiggins eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 207.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵¹⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part II: (No. 745): 20th February, 1935, 120.

⁵²⁰ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 718): 1st August, 1934, 193.

more to do with improving one's health than with the class struggle. Until the Popular Front policy period began, Communists spoke of sports as a bourgeois stronghold and tried to break what they believed to be bourgeois ideological hegemony over sports. At its convention in 1925, the YCL announced that "Our sport must have no other objective than the attacking of that stronghold and the capture of it if possible."⁵²¹

The Polish Sokol (Falcon) organization, founded in Winnipeg in 1906, represented that stronghold for Polish Communists. It was a para-military organization, which promoted physical training, gymnastics, semi-military drill and athletics. Above all, it promoted radical patriotism. During the First World War, it was the largest recruiting center for the Polish Army in France. Sokol, noted Turek, "did not spare time, money or energy in espousing many patriotic and charitable causes."⁵²² The PTL organized sports clubs and amateur competitions in both urban and remote centers to counter the influence of the Sokol. Its leaders denounced the organization as a militaristic group influenced by the "fascist Polish government." Polish Communist-sponsored sports organizations remained small. In fact, most Polish Communist youth joined sporting organizations that were organized by other ethnic Communists. Zygmunt Majtczak tried to expand the Polish Youth Section in Winnipeg to encompass more sporting activities, but the Section's program remained focussed on cultural and educational endeavours.⁵²³

⁵²¹ George Eisen and David Kenneth Wiggins eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture*, 211.

⁵²² Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 207.

⁵²³ The PTL occasionally invited Polish sports teams from the United States to compete against their "Canadian" teams. In February of 1939 for example, the PTL invited a Polish women's soccer team from Cleveland, Ohio. The consuls were furious when such events were staged because many of the Polish-American teams had no idea that they were invited by a Communist organization. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Jan Pawlica to the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, February 4, 1939.

The Polish-language Communist Press

In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin wrote that the working class will not spontaneously become political simply by fighting economic battles with employers over wages and working hours. He argued that a political party with a centralized newspaper is a necessary prerequisite to convert the working masses to Marxism:

A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator; it is also a collective organiser. In this respect *it may be compared to the scaffolding* erected round a building under construction; it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.⁵²⁴

Ethnic newspapers represent an enormous area of potential for researchers. The ethnic press creates a written record that is reflective of the functional needs and perceptions of a community and the organization(s) that it represents in a specific temporal setting. One of the founders of the Chicago School of Sociology, Robert Ezra Park, wrote that “News is a kind of urgent information that men use in making adjustments to a new environment, in changing old habits, and in forming new ones.”⁵²⁵ In a nation of immigrants, where the expectations of assimilation are strong, the ethnic news has served the dual purpose of assisting new arrivals to acculturate while allowing them to maintain cultural ties to their native country. Because they have strong connections to their ethnic organizations, newspapers often become symbols of the ethnic community itself. According to Susan Olzak and Elizabeth West, because of the symbolic and information roles played by ethnic newspapers, a group’s survival often hinges on the success of its ethnic press.⁵²⁶ Olzak and West argued that ethnic newspapers take on the role of organizers of social movements: “Because they have broad connections to their constituent

⁵²⁴ Vladimir I. Lenin, “What is to be done?” in Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works* vol. 5 (Moscow: 1961), 22-23.

⁵²⁵ Robert Ezra Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922; rpt., Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1971), 9.

⁵²⁶ Susan Olzak and Elizabeth West, “Ethnic Conflict and the Rise of and Fall of Ethnic Newspapers” in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Aug., 1991), 458-474.

ethnic communities, such organizations take on some of the features of social movement organizations in addition to their conventional business characteristics.”⁵²⁷ Most ethnic newspapers are founded with a combination of intent: profit, community service, and to advocate a particular viewpoint. All three of these motives contributed to the founding of the Polish-Canadian communist press.

Between January and April 1932, the PTRF campaigned to raise money for the movement’s new newspaper, *Głos Pracy*.⁵²⁸ According to Turek, with the help of Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian and Yugoslav Communists, Polish Communists secured an initial fund of \$600.00 and 500 subscribers to start the paper.⁵²⁹ The newspaper was published out of the PTRF’s club house in Winnipeg’s Burrows Central neighbourhood, which was home to a conglomerate of Ukrainian, Polish, German, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Spanish and Dutch immigrants. Polish Communists had owned the club house in Winnipeg since 1929. The publisher’s address was never fully disclosed, although a number of books recovered from the *Głos Pracy* library were ink stamped with an approximate location of its headquarters: “Corner of Pritchard Ave. & Prince St.”⁵³⁰

Głos Pracy first appeared on April 30, 1932 under the editorship of Władysław Dutkiewicz.⁵³¹ Despite his disdain for the Communists, Turek lauded Dutkiewicz as a “first class journalist” who had a “profound knowledge of the immigrant group [...] and a good general knowledge of Canadian conditions.”⁵³² The paper was first published as a bi-weekly and later (in 1933) as a weekly newspaper. As the Polish communist movement grew, so did its

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, 458.

⁵²⁸ Earlier Polish-Canadian communist newspapers such as *Budzik* (Alarm Clock) and *Czerwona Jaskółka* (Red Swallow) have been discussed in chapter 2.

⁵²⁹ Turek, 120.

⁵³⁰ Author’s collection. *Głos Pracy* ex-libris.

⁵³¹ Turek, 121.

⁵³² *Ibid*, 75.

newspaper. The PTRF and the PTL were able to increase the size of the newspaper from four pages when it first appeared in 1932, to six pages in 1933, to eight pages in 1935, while its special editions had up to twelve pages in 1936.⁵³³ In terms of page size, the newspaper was, at one point, the largest of all Polish Canadian newspapers.⁵³⁴

Throughout the 1930s, *Głos Pracy* was the voice of class struggle. It fought for the miners of Nova Scotia, and the lumber workers of British Columbia. It fought for a united front of all workers organizations. It defended women's rights. But above all, *Głos Pracy* helped build the Polish Party. Like the Polish communist organizations, the newspaper strictly adhered to communist doctrine and closely followed Comintern directives. When it was necessary, the paper contained the usual ideological jargon about international radicalism, atheism and class struggle. In conjunction with the Popular Front policy, however, the newspaper restrained its rampagous promotion of Communism. Between 1936 and 1939 *Głos Pracy*, "posed as defender of democracy and peace," it promoted tolerance and unity and adopted a policy of forming broad alliances with almost any political party willing to oppose fascism.⁵³⁵

Głos Pracy was published in a simple and appealing language with illustrations. Initially, it contained little original material, as most World and Canadian news were translated from English-language communist newspapers. By the late 1930s, however, the paper's editorials were more original, argumentative and didactic. *Głos Pracy* included a children's section and a youth column. After Albert Morski's arrival, the newspaper added new sections as part of the PTL's strategy to reach broader segments of the Polish Canadian community. Between 1935 and 1936 it included a farmer's section, and in 1937, a women's section and a union section. A

⁵³³ Ibid, 120-124.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, 121.

⁵³⁵ Ibid, 123.

Toronto based lawyer M.S. Milstone also edited a legal column between 1937 and 1938.⁵³⁶

Consul Tadeusz Brzeziński described *Głos Pracy* as a:

generally well edited paper in Polish. Regarding its content, it is clearly a Soviet oriented paper, [...] it tries to mask its character with general slogans that are opposed to the current government in Poland. A substantial portion of each issue is dedicated to the Soviet Union, of which they write like it is their own country [...]. Additionally, Soviet leaders are presented as if they were [...] highly important people [...] [Whereas Poland is presented] in the worst possible light.⁵³⁷

The editors were never disclosed in the newspaper, although most of the high ranking Polish Communists contributed to the newspaper in some capacity. Dutkiewicz was its first editor. He was joined by Albert Morski in 1938 and Tadeusz Lewandowski, who worked for the paper until the summer of 1936. J. Kazmierczyk joined the paper in 1937 as editorial assistant. In the spring of 1938, as a result of some animosity between Morski and Dutkiewicz, the latter was displaced as first editor, although he stayed on as a member of the editorial committee until 1939. Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel also contributed to the newspaper under her *nom de plume* E.M. Ogrodnik. Other contributors included Joseph Polka, Stefan Kozłowski (who was killed in Spain in 1937), Zygmunt Majtczak, Maria Bobak, and Irena Morska, who served as a correspondent in the United States between 1938 and 1940.⁵³⁸

Like most newspapers, *Głos Pracy* depended largely on fund drives and donations to continue operating. At the 8th Convention of the PTL in October of 1938, Dutkiewicz said that the Polish communist press lived on alms.⁵³⁹ Between 1932 and 1933, *Głos Pracy* was able to cover 60% of its publishing costs through donations.⁵⁴⁰ Between 1937 and 1939, *Głos Pracy* received \$6,402.00 in donations.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁶ Turek, 122.

⁵³⁷ Archives of Ontario, 9695, 4. Tadeusz Brzeziński to the MSZ, July 17, 1939.

⁵³⁸ Turek, 121-122.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 152.

Consular reports undermined these numbers. Jan Pawlica referred to the published donation lists in *Głos Pracy* as “false and fictional, [their purpose] is on the one hand, to mask [...] the fact that they are receiving subsidies from the Comintern and [from] central Communist organizations in Canada. On the other hand, the publishing of lists and fictional surnames of donors is supposed to encourage naïve people to hurry with donations.”⁵⁴²

Although it is highly likely that the paper received subsidies from Moscow, especially after 1945, the Polish Communists should be credited for their energetic fund drives which almost always secured the sums required.⁵⁴³ RCMP security bulletins frequently mentioned elaborate banquets organized by Dutkiewicz for the purpose of collecting money for *Głos Pracy*. Children’s choir performances, sporting events, anniversary celebrations and even weddings were almost always doubled as fundraisers for the paper.

Red Funerals

The Polish emigration was characterized by an exceedingly high level of religiosity. The traditional rites that signified the most important occasions in their lives – births, marriages and deaths – tied most Polish immigrants to the church. If the Communists wanted to detach Polish immigrants from their religious institutions, they would have to displace traditional rites with ones more in keeping with communist ideology. This was a task that was exceptionally difficult to accomplish in a group of which 80% declared themselves to be Roman Catholic.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, 152. Between 1937 and 1938, that amount decreased substantially to only 37%.

⁵⁴¹ Polish consuls estimated that the newspaper received around \$8,000 in donations in 1937. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, note on “Communist organizations in Canada,” Jan Pawlica to MSZ, March 15, 1937, 6.

⁵⁴² AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1372, Consul General Jan Pawlica to the MSZ, March 7, 1939, 6.

⁵⁴³ Turek, 118.

⁵⁴⁴ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London 1372, Consul General to the MSZ, March 3, 1939.

We may consider briefly the failed efforts to supplant the Roman Catholic Church in post-war Communist Poland as an indicator of how resistant Polish Catholics were to communist indoctrination. Religious practices were restricted, and a number of priests were imprisoned under the Polish Communist government, but Polish Catholics resisted such a course of action and already by the late 1950s, the government discontinued most of its church-related policies. Even in Soviet Russia, anti-religious policies were not entirely successful, as more than sixty percent of the population demanded some kind of religious ritual.⁵⁴⁵

Communist funerals present the most striking example of the Communists' determination to politicize virtually all the cultural activities within their camp, and they offer unique glimpses into left-wing culture. Communists understood that it would be difficult for sympathizers to break-away from their traditional rituals. As a result, the communist funeral rite was similar in certain formal respects to the traditional Church procession - only there was no priest and there were no religious symbols. The hearse led the way, followed by family members, comrades and delegates, carrying red flags and flowers. Sombre ceremonies were held in a designated Labour Hall, with a local ensemble playing death marches and the "International."⁵⁴⁶ Since communist doctrine condemned the ideas of afterlife as fables, claiming that death meant the end of human existence, Communists focussed on celebrating the lifetime achievements of the deceased. Speeches described the deceased's life, his/her work and social contributions, and they emphasized their activities in the Communist Party. More importantly, communist funerals were dramatic shows of solidarity and strength. One RCMP reporter could not help but marvel at a

⁵⁴⁵ Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000), 336.

⁵⁴⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part II: (No. 780): 6th November, 1935, 573.

red funeral, describing it as impressive, and “from a propaganda point of view a masterpiece.”⁵⁴⁷

The funeral of Joseph Polka, the General Secretary of the Polish Labour Farmer Temple Association, is a dramatic example of communist funerals, and evidence of how such occasions were politicized. Polka was accidentally killed by a Canadian Pacific Railway freight train on May 27, 1934, near Indian Head, Saskatchewan, while he was on an organizing trip. He was buried by the Department of Health, but his body was later exhumed by the National Executive Committee of the PTRF, and he was given a red funeral in Winnipeg on June 9th. An RCMP commentator gave a detailed description of the entire affair:

A crowd of at least 2,000 filling the inter-section of Pritchard Avenue and Prince Street attended the funeral. The entire funeral ceremony was performed outside in front of the Polish Labour Temple. The casket was not opened and only a portrait of the dead man was displayed on top. Sixty-three automobiles took part in the procession on Brookside cemetery making it a very impressive occasion which was utilized to the fullest extent for propaganda purposes. Thirty Young Pioneers boys and girls dressed in white blouses and red scarves with two red banners bearing the hammer and sickle and numerous wreaths of roses formed the most conspicuous part of the funeral.

The ceremonial program consisted of funeral marches played by the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association band, reading of telegrams and letters expressing deep condolences and regrets from distant organizations, and addresses delivered by delegates representing local organizations. These included Alderman Jacob Penner, from the Communist Party of Canada; Davie, from Transcona; Markowsky, from the Russian Worker’s Club; T. Kobzey, representing all Ukrainian organizations; Oscar Morgan, from the Young Communist League; C. Hitchins, representing the Anti-Fascist League; Mabel Marlowe, from the Canadian Labour Defence League; and W. Dutkiewicz, from the Polish Labour Temple. The addresses were of propaganda text expressing deep sorrow, and urging the workers to join and fill in a thousand fold the vacancy left by the comrade whom cruel fate had torn out of the ranks of the revolutionary movement. Comrade Polka, they said, died a true soldier at his post. Dutkiewicz, the last speaker, traced the biography of the dead man, and generally eulogized the deceased’s accomplishments in the revolutionary movement.⁵⁴⁸

Since belief in the afterlife was not accepted, Communists, through their speeches and eulogies, attempted to demonstrate that the deceased continued living through the work and

⁵⁴⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 711), 20th June, 1934, 79.

⁵⁴⁸ *Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 711), 20th June, 1934, 79-80.

contributions which he had made in society. Such thinking not only fulfilled people's inner needs, but it also proved to be an excellent propagandizing method for the movement. At a Hungarian red funeral, Ferenc Stolc, a worker who died of tuberculosis was eulogized in a similar way: "He did not live to see the great day of liberation for which he struggled," charged one of his comrades. "He left it to us, the living, to accomplish what he could not, having been broken by the murderous onslaught that Capitalism directs against us all. But we will carry on the flag that he dropped, onto the final liberation."⁵⁴⁹ Almost identical funerals and eulogies were given by Ukrainian Communists. The funeral of M. Lenartowich, editor of the Working Woman and an organizer of the Communist Party in Winnipeg, was "a pompous affair" noted an RCMP commentator, "attended by a crowd of over 2,000. It was a typical Communist funeral utilized for propaganda purposes."⁵⁵⁰ Speakers mourned "the terrible loss to the Party of this man," and urged that the workers should, by hundreds and thousands, strive to fill the vacancy created by his death."⁵⁵¹

Conclusion

The Polish Communists success was greatest in the cultural-educational sphere. In fact, after 1935, the PTL focussed almost exclusively on broadening its cultural front. It established Youth Sections, Women's Departments and at least a dozen Polish-language schools and regularly organized picnics, bazaars and outdoor festivals. The PTL's success on the cultural front speaks volumes about its financial capabilities. The chartering of airplanes, stunt fliers,

⁵⁴⁹ Patrias, 210.

⁵⁵⁰ *Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 732): 20th June, 1934, 389.

⁵⁵¹ *Security Bulletins*, Depression Years, Part I: (No. 732): 20th June, 1934, 390. "Red" weddings were also bereft of any religious symbolism and turned into proletarian events. RCMP agents, who attended a wedding in a Polish pro-Bolshevik organization in 1920 as part of an undercover operation, found the event to be "entirely Communist, with no religious ceremony." One guest at the wedding "deplored the attention given by local Russians, Ukrainians and Poles to Church, drunkenness and card-games." Red weddings were also used for fundraising. Money collected by the couple was donated to the Party and its newspaper. *Security Bulletins*, Early Years: (No. 39): 2nd September, 1920, 92-93.

film screenings, special magazines and the maintenance of youth camps, orchestras, choirs, schools and theatres all required large sums of money, not to mention the purchase of several Labour Halls and cultural centers.

The pay-off was good, as more than 35 PTL branches were opened across Canada by 1939. It was hoped that immigrants would join the cultural organizations and be converted from within. Like the patriotic organizations, which relied on familiar images and symbols to spread their conservative, nationalist and Christian ideology, so did the Communists, though their tactics were often more deliberate. In fact, cultural elements such as language, drama, youth clubs, funerals, sporting events and newspapers proved to be the best vehicles for distilling their ideas and ideology. The content of the cultural programs was carefully selected. The decision to screen the popular film *Trędowata* (The Lepper), which was considered to be a classic film by proletarians and patriots alike, accomplished two important goals: immigrants were drawn to the communist halls to be entertained; and they were subliminally made aware of the ills of bourgeois society. Other elements, such as the teaching of the Polish language, and song and dance groups, quenched the immigrants' desire for a little "Polishness" in their newly adopted homeland.

Chapter 7

The Changing Tide: Polish Communists in the Wake of the Second World War

As of June 1936, when William Lyon Mackenzie King replaced the discredited Bennett government and repealed Section 98 of the Criminal Code, the Communist Party of Canada was once again able to operate aboveground.⁵⁵² From its restoration until August of 1939, the Party's activities met with considerable success. Communist candidates for public office began to enjoy more support, the Party's influence grew within trade unions and it experienced a steady increase in membership.⁵⁵³ These promising advances however, came to an abrupt end in late August 1939 with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty. For years the Communists had condemned fascism, and clamoured for a united front against Nazism. Now, their patron and leader, the Soviet Union, had concluded a treaty of friendship with the fascists. How could this scandalous rapprochement be justified, not only to the public, but to the Party's own members?

Stalin's flirtations with the Nazis cost the Communists considerable support. Historians have estimated that in Britain, more than a third of Party members severed their ties with the Communists as a result of the pact. In the United States, the Party experienced a 15% drop between 1939 and 1940.⁵⁵⁴ In Canada, the Soviet-Nazi pact had a similar demoralizing effect. Manitoba Communist MLA James Litterick admitted that the pact had shaken the Party to its "very foundations." RCMP Intelligence Officer Charles Rivett-Carnac reported that members of

⁵⁵² Although the CPC had been outlawed until 1936, persecution against Communists had effectively ended by 1934. Tim Buck was released from Kingston penitentiary, and Communists began to enjoy considerable popularity. After Buck's release from prison in 1934, he was welcomed at a rally at Maple Leaf Gardens that drew 17,000 people. About 8,000 more were turned away.

⁵⁵³ Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975).

⁵⁵⁴ Lewis Coner and Irving Howe, *The American Communist Party* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 404.

the CPC experienced “profound confusion,” “despair” and “disbelief.”⁵⁵⁵ He noted that the ethnic sections, “most of all the Jewish and Polish comrades” had been devastated. According to Rivett-Carnac, Jewish Communists took to the streets and openly questioned their loyalty to Moscow:

On the day the news reached Canada, groups of Jewish Communists could be seen on the streets everywhere talking, unable to determine the magnitude of the stunning blow. To a great extent in desperation and at a complete loss to understand the significance of the situation, they added to the confusion by indulging in disruptive arguments. Jewish supporters of the Communist Party rose into loud denunciation and withdrew their support for the time being. They were not able to understand the reason for this betrayal or for Stalin’s joining hands with their most hated foe, Hitler. The foundation for their support of the communist policies had suddenly caved in.

Polish Communists, on the other hand, kept their confusion and disbelief more hidden. On August 18, less than a week before the pact was announced, Polish Communists had organized a large rally in Toronto in support of Poland. The rally was meant to increase the PTL’s popularity. Allegedly, around 2,000 people came to the manifestation, and they accepted a resolution calling for solidarity with Poland and unity among Polish Canadians. The resolution also urged the Polish government to abandon any obstacles that prevented national unity and an equal integration of its minorities.⁵⁵⁶ When news came of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the solidarity expressed at the rally was suddenly devastated. Among the PTL ranks, “patriotically minded” Polish Communists separated, albeit quietly, from their orthodox comrades. Rivett-Carnac described the situation as follows:

The patriotic minded Polish section of the Communist Party of Canada received the news with unbelief and despair. If bitterness was felt towards the Communist Party, it was however, reserved and muffled by a significant silence, as no evidence of open

⁵⁵⁵ John Manley, “The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?” in *RCMP Security Bulletins, The Depression Years*, Part V, 1-2.

⁵⁵⁶ *Glos Pracy*, August 23, 1939, 1. A similar rally, attended by 250 supporters, was held in the Polish Labour Hall in Winnipeg on April 10, 1939. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, a copy of the Communists’ resolution sent to the Polish Consulate in Winnipeg. April 10, 1939.

denunciation has been noted in the Polish organ of the Party – “Głos Pracy”. Like other language sections of the Communist Party, Polish supporters waited for some rational explanation of the underlying reasons for the Hitler-Stalin rapprochement.⁵⁵⁷

According to Rivett-Carnac, other Slavic language sections (Ukrainian and Russian), had also received the news of the pact “in silent consideration.”⁵⁵⁸ Opponents in the Polonia used the situation to undermine the PTL’s patriotic overtures. The *Alliancer* launched a series of articles questioning the PTL’s loyalty: “Will it [the PTL] agree to organize a protest rally against Stalin and the Soviets [similar to the one it organized] on the 18th of August [...] will it agree to stigmatize the Soviet government for its secretive collusion orchestrated by [...] Ribbentrop and Molotov?”⁵⁵⁹

In the weeks that followed the Nazi-Soviet agreement, those who remained loyal to the Party declared that the pact was necessary to preserve peace in Europe. “The pact does not mark the slightest change in Soviet foreign policy” declared the CPC’s newspaper the *Daily Clarion*, “the people of Germany will see [...] that the Soviet Union is powerful enough to halt the fascist warmongers.”⁵⁶⁰ Tim Buck explained that the Soviet Union had no choice but to sign the pact, since the British government “rejected the Soviet proposal for a military alliance.” Chamberlain was denounced by the Communists as the “malevolent instigator of war” and he was held accountable for the rupture of the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations for a non-aggression pact.⁵⁶¹

Tim Buck later recalled:

Lacking Soviet-British agreement, the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact was the sole alternative by which the Soviet government could maintain the conditions for the defeat of Hitler’s plan. The Soviet-German pact guaranteed the defeat of the fascists; the Chamberlain government paid the political price of its own reckless adventurism.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 3): June-September, 1939, 413.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ *Zwiqzkowiec*, August 27, 1939, 1.

⁵⁶⁰ *Daily Clarion*, August 26, 1939, 1.

⁵⁶¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 3): June-September, 1939, 413.

⁵⁶² Tim Buck, *Thirty Years 1922-1952* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952), 159.

Some Communists refused to admit that there was any sort of confusion at all, and they maintained that the new policy was part of the plan all along. Communist Alderman Jacob Penner said at a Winnipeg meeting that the “Communist Party of Canada did not become confused over the Pact, for the Party thoroughly knows from long experience the peace policy of the Soviets and, therefore, remains faithful to all its actions [...]”⁵⁶³ According to the orthodox Communists, the official line was that the “pact was not a surprise [...] that it proves Soviet consistency [...], that it defeated Chamberlain’s plot against the Soviets [and ...] that it was the means of splitting the Fascist Axis.”⁵⁶⁴

RCMP Officer Rivett-Carnac marvelled at the Communists’ speed of recovery and their “rigid faith in the Soviet Union.” In some areas the Party “practically emerged intact, and in some respects, stronger than ever.”⁵⁶⁵ It should be noted that Rivett-Carnac may have been exaggerating the CPC’s speed of recovery to remind political elites that they should remain vigilant about the communist threat.⁵⁶⁶ Polish Communists emerged from the situation relatively unfazed. Apparently, a number of PTL members “severed their ties”, but according to an RCMP report most of them had “returned and the incident [...] had no serious effect upon the organization.”⁵⁶⁷ Albert Morski was still the leader of the PTL, Władysław Dutkiewicz continued to edit *Głos Pracy*, and Lewandowski and Majtczak appear to have received more important roles in the organization.

Tim Buck, Malcolm Bruce and other leading Communists held a meeting shortly after the pact had been signed and admitted that the Nazi-Soviet agreement would “jeopardize Poland’s fate.” They declared however, that the Soviet Union would come to Poland’s aid in the event of

⁵⁶³ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 3): June-September, 1939, 414.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁵⁶⁶ See: Reg Whittaker, “Introduction” in *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The War Series.

⁵⁶⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series, (No.13): 15th January, 1940, 117.

German aggression.⁵⁶⁸ But before the Communists had a chance to wave their new slogans and to digest the new course of action, Germany invaded Poland.

The Deluge: 1 September 1939

The German and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Poland resulted in a new orientation in the Red camp. Immediately after the German armed forces attacked Poland on 1 September 1939, Communists declared that the war with fascism had begun. Tim Buck sent a wire to King, pledging his Party's support: "In the name of the party I urge full support to the Polish people in their resistance to Nazi aggression. The Communist Party of Canada has stood consistently for adequate measures to prevent such aggression and to destroy fascism."⁵⁶⁹

This position was embarrassingly short-lived. A few days later, on 17 September, the Red Army invaded Poland. In the view of the Soviet government, the war was supposed to be a conflict between imperialists. The official line was that the Soviet Union mobilised its army to protect its borderlands against the imperialist ambitions of Britain and France, who had used Hitler's invasion of Poland as a pretext to start an imperialist war. Many years after the war, Tadeusz Lewandowski still firmly believed that Russia was acting in good faith. He explained that "the Soviet Union had no choice but to commit this act of aggression in self-defence. The whole situation was the result of imperialistic plots to set the Germans against the Soviets, so they would bleed each other and the imperialists would pick up the spoils."⁵⁷⁰

After the Soviet invasion of Poland, the Communists entered into another brief period of confusion, ideological summersaults and policy escapades, but they quickly recovered and unquestionably accepted the Soviet's new line. Stalin's efforts to preserve peace for the Soviet

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 117-118.

⁵⁶⁹ *Daily Clarion*, September 9, 1939, 1.

⁵⁷⁰ William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada* (Montreal, Tundra Books, 1987), 226.

Union through neutrality required the abandonment of the anti-fascist arguments and the adoption of the line that the war was exclusively an imperialistic one. Since Canada had declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939, it also belonged, according to the new Soviet line, to the enemy camp. “To defeat Hitler” charged the Communists “they must defeat his Tory friends in Canada, Britain and France who have been mainly responsible for the building up of fascist power in Europe.”⁵⁷¹ The CPC agreed that its earlier anti-fascist position had been incorrect, because the capitalist countries were not genuinely anti-fascist. “The principal danger of fascism comes not from Nazi Germany” noted the *Daily Clarion*, “but from the war policies of the King government.”⁵⁷²

The Soviet invasion of Poland marked the end of communist flirtations with the Canadian Polonia. Prior to the Soviet attack, *Głos Pracy* condemned Hitler’s aggression and denied rumours that the Soviet’s allegedly demanded Lwow and Wilno in exchange for help.⁵⁷³ The paper even published photos of Poland’s President Ignacy Mościcki and the Marshal of Poland, Edward Rydz-Śmigły on its front page. On September 4, 1939, PTL members had also sent a letter to Mościcki, pledging that they were “entirely at the Government’s disposition” in its struggle against German aggression.⁵⁷⁴ But the developments on the Polish fronts made it impossible to hide Soviet-Nazi collusion, which became even more apparent on September 28, when Molotov and Ribbentrop signed a German-Soviet friendship and demarcation treaty which divided Poland in two:

After the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the U.S.S.R. have, by means of the treaty signed today, definitively settled the problems arising from the collapse of the Polish state and have thereby created a sure foundation for a lasting peace in Eastern Europe, they mutually express their conviction that

⁵⁷¹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 3): June-September, 1939, 414.

⁵⁷² *Daily Clarion*, May 10, 1940.

⁵⁷³ *Głos Pracy*, August 30, 1939, 1.

⁵⁷⁴ Archives of Ontario, Malatyński Papers, MU 9695.4. PTL letter to Mościcki.

it would serve the true interest of all peoples to put an end to the state of war existing at present between Germany on the one side and England and France on the other. Both Governments will therefore direct their common efforts, jointly with other friendly powers if the occasion arises, toward attaining this goal as soon as possible.

Should, however, the efforts of the two Governments remain fruitless, this would demonstrate the fact that England and France are responsible for the continuation of the war, whereupon, in case of the continuation of the war, the Governments of Germany and of the U.S.S.R. shall engage in mutual consultations with regard to necessary measures.⁵⁷⁵

At first, not all Communists reacted to the Nazi-Soviet treaty with enthusiasm. The CPC leaders and the Ukrainian communists rejoiced “at the political death of Poland’s ‘Semi-fascist state.’”⁵⁷⁶ Finnish Communists, on the other hand, were hesitant and uneasy about the whole situation. The RCMP noted that:

A careful perusal of the reports, based on the summaries of the editorials and news accounts appearing in ‘Vapus’ [the Finish Canadian Communist newspaper], fails to reveal anything but a policy of cautious reservation and endeavours to camouflage Finnish links with the Communist Party of Canada by a heavy veil of pseudo-Canadian patriotism.⁵⁷⁷

Polish Communists appeared to be equally cautious (at least initially), and uncertain of what to make of the situation.⁵⁷⁸ Tadeusz Lewandowski noted that he was “at first opposed to the Soviet Union’s collaboration with Hitler.”⁵⁷⁹ The PTL had made significant inroads into the Polish community. They founded new branches and replenished them with fresh recruits, *Głos Pracy* had expanded, and the organization’s “cultural-educational” work had attracted a much larger following. It appeared too risky to sever such inroads by making hasty decisions.

⁵⁷⁵ Saulius Suziedelis, “The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Baltic States: An Introduction and Interpretation,” in *Lituanus Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* 35, No.1 (Spring 1989).

⁵⁷⁶ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.2) 30th October, 1939, 35.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The Depression Years, Part V: (No. 3): June-September, 1939, 414-418.

⁵⁷⁹ Makowski, 225.

On September 27, *Głos Pracy* published a map with a designated German-Soviet border along the Vistula and the Narew rivers, but the newspaper did not comment on the status of these territories. It also refrained from disclosing information about the nature of the Soviet invasion. Anna Reczyńska observed that *Głos Pracy* tried to “gradually and carefully [...] explain and justify the Soviet government’s strengthening position on occupied Polish territory.”⁵⁸⁰ The paper reported only raw facts without any interpretations. It did, however, hint that the new changes in Poland under the aegis of the Soviet government were for the good of the Polish working class. *Głos Pracy* tried to demonstrate that Stalin would help build a true people’s society in Poland, with new libraries, clinics and people’s schools.⁵⁸¹ In one article, Polish Communists declared that the Red Army had liberated thirteen million poor people in Poland.⁵⁸² To bolster such statements, *Głos Pracy* printed several letters allegedly written by Poles from Western Ukraine who wrote that they were earning good money; that they were healthy and that they would even get to go to a sanatorium.⁵⁸³ The editors tried to comfort their readers by saying that the Soviet presence in Poland was only temporary. “As soon as a regime is established in Poland” declared *Głos Pracy* “the Soviet Union would withdraw its army from the occupied territory.”⁵⁸⁴

The initial cautious and factual reporting was undoubtedly a result of the fact that the Communists had not yet fully digested the Comintern’s new line and needed some time to adjust. But by the end of September, *Głos Pracy* had changed its policy - “from a champion of Poland it became her opponent, criticizing not only the Warsaw government, but the countries which came

⁵⁸⁰ Anna Reczyńska, *Piętno Wojny* (Kraków, Poland: Nomos, 1997), 58.

⁵⁸¹ Reczyńska, 58.

⁵⁸² *Głos Pracy*, February 23, 1940.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. See also: *Głos Pracy*, “Listy w Wiadomości z Bylej Wschodniej Polski” April 6, 1940; *Głos Pracy*, “Listy ze Stron Rodzinnych” April 7, 1940.

⁵⁸⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.1): 23rd October, 1939, 24.

to its aid by declaring war on Germany.”⁵⁸⁵ The paper took a blatant pro-Soviet position and attacked Polish nationalism and “the wretched class government in Poland.” The editors tried to give their arguments more credibility by quoting David Lloyd George, who was known for being unsympathetic towards Poland:

It is a notorious fact that the Polish peasantry are living in great poverty owing to the worst feudal system in Europe. That aristocracy has been practically in power for years. All the promises of concessions to the peasants have been thwarted by its influence on recent Polish Governments. That is why the advancing Russian troops are being hailed by the peasants as deliverers.⁵⁸⁶

The RCMP noticed the Polish Communists’ startling about-face. In a special security bulletin it noted that the Communists and the patriotic Poles had been “united in their efforts in rescuing their fatherland from the Nazis,” but “today [we see] an unusual spectacle of calumny, contempt and malevolent indictments heaped upon the heads and regime of the defeated Poland by the Polish radicals in Canada – an attack more vicious and damaging in nature than the propaganda ever aimed at Poland by her Nazi enemy.”⁵⁸⁷

War-Time Relations with the Canadian Polonia

The PTL’s barefaced pro-Soviet position significantly reduced its previous gains. By the end of September the Winnipeg branch, the former base of PTRF and PTL activity, had suffered a significant decline. Consul Juliusz Szygowski attributed the Communists’ decline to counter-communist measures, but it was the PTL’s pro-Soviet position during September which really caused the most damage. Contacts between the Toronto branch and the Winnipeg branch had also weakened. According to an RCMP security bulletin, after the war broke out, the “less

⁵⁸⁵ Turek, 123.

⁵⁸⁶ Author’s collection. Władysław Dutkiewicz, newspaper clippings. *Głos Pracy*, September 29, 1939.

⁵⁸⁷ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.1): 23rd October, 1939, 23.

important organizers [...] remained in Toronto” and the leaders moved to Winnipeg.⁵⁸⁸ *Głos Pracy* had also suffered.

In January of 1940, Dutkiewicz organized another fund-raising campaign which proved to be disastrous. Less money was collected in every city than in previous years, while Hamilton and Edmonton raised more money than Winnipeg (which had been the PTL’s traditional stronghold).⁵⁸⁹ A few months later, another collection was organized in Toronto. Over 500 Polish and Ukrainian supporters attended the spectacle, which included a brass band, a children’s choir and motivational speeches to encourage attendees to make generous donations. But, according to the RCMP, the “silver collection taken at the conclusion of the concert was not particularly successful.”⁵⁹⁰ In August-September a decision was made to convert *Głos Pracy* back into a weekly. Dutkiewicz blamed the war, although the actual reason was that the newspaper was in poor financial health due to dwindling contributions. As a result, the newspaper’s readership declined. Many “progressive” Poles withdrew their support and joined the left-of-center Alliance. One Hamilton resident wrote to the editor of the *Alliancer*: “I feel offended [...] that you called me a Communist [whom] I never was nor am. I was only an old reader of *Głos Pracy*, but today I want to be a reader of the *Alliancer*. Please rehabilitate me.”⁵⁹¹

Despite these unfavourable circumstances, the Communists remained loyal and dedicated to the Soviets’ new course. “Like other Communists in Canada” noted an RCMP security bulletin “Polish radicals cannot conceive of rebelling against their spiritual fatherland, the Soviet

⁵⁸⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.13): 15th January, 1940, 116-117.

⁵⁸⁹ Reczyńska, 61.

⁵⁹⁰ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.15): 29th January, 1940, 132.

⁵⁹¹ Świątnicki, “List do redakcji” (Letter to the Editor) in *Związkowiec*, October 15, 1939, 8; cited in Reczyńska, *Pięteno Wojny*, 61.

Union, or the mighty Stalin. As a result of this blind faith the criminal is represented as a ‘saviour’, and the invasion of Eastern Poland as a blessed act.”⁵⁹²

For the patriotic Poles, the PTL became a crucible into which they poured their bitterness and anger. At one point the RCMP feared that if “the Polish Communists get too aggressive in their promotion of Communism and a Marxist Poland among their resentful compatriots, serious friction may result.”⁵⁹³ For the most part, however, the battles were fought on paper. The ZZPwK’s *Czas* and the *Alliancer* generally levelled the sharpest criticisms and rarely spared harsh words. “To spit in your snouts is not enough” charged a ZZPwK Bulletin “[...] by soiling your own Polish nest you have soiled yourselves, all that has remained of you is a stench and a dung heap.”⁵⁹⁴ Other opinions were more cynical. An *Alliancer* contributor wrote: the “Communists from *Głos Pracy* sent a letter to premier King [...] they want to defend Canada from Hitler [...]. I am curious with what Stalin will reward them for misleading Canada.”⁵⁹⁵

The PTL’s propaganda only magnified the efforts of the patriotic camp to destroy the Communists and their newspaper. In 1940, Polish consuls initiated a campaign to encourage patriotic Poles to send petitions to the Canadian provincial and federal governments, protesting against *Głos Pracy*. The Consul General in Ottawa worried that anti-Polish propaganda “slanders the seriousness of the Polish government as an ally.”⁵⁹⁶ The Polish Alliance in Canada wrote a petition to Gordon D. Conant, the Attorney General of Ontario, outlining, in five points, *Głos Pracy*’s slanderous propaganda which they argued:

- 1) Spreads the doubt[sic] in the victory of Allied forces and undermines the confidence in the efficiency of all Allied governments, without exception;

⁵⁹² RCMP Security Bulletins, War Series: (No.1): 23rd October, 1939, 24.

⁵⁹³ RCMP Security Bulletins, War Series: (No.1): 23rd October, 1939, 25.

⁵⁹⁴ Biuletyn ZZPwK, Nr. 12, September 25, 1939, 2.

⁵⁹⁵ Zwiqzkowiec, September 24, 1939, 6, 8.

⁵⁹⁶ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1803, Polish Consul General in Ottawa to the Consulate in Winnipeg and Montreal, December 6, 1939; Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Ottawa to the Consulate in Montreal, April 23, 1940.

- 2) Attacks outrageously an ally of Canada, the Polish state and its government, thus shaking the faith of Polish people in them and weakening at the same time their enthusiasm and readiness to help the Canadian army and the Red Cross;
- 3) Shows and carries the secret tendency against taking an active part in the war on the side of the Allies and therefore trespasses against the Law of Defence of the Dominion, at present in force here;
- 4) Spreads the false propaganda in favour of the communistic regime and provokes by these means the fermentation which may prove dangerous for the actual order in this country;
- 5) By the fact that it is edited in Polish, brings prejudice in the public opinion to the Polish Canadians, which loyally and patriotically desire to serve the common cause.⁵⁹⁷

The slanderous propaganda was also noticed by the RCMP, which reported about its damaging effects:

The Polish ruling class is branded by this propaganda as “rotten, spineless and traitorous,” [which] betrayed and handed the country over to Hitler (no mention of the Soviet Union). The whole social system of Poland is indicted. The landed gentry, clergy and reactionary elements are blamed for contributing to the fall of Poland by setting up a semi-Fascist state and perpetuating the rule of the aristocracy which oppressed and exploited the workers and 8,000,000 of the landless peasants. [...]. The full force of class arguments has again been turned against the “reactionary element” among the Poles in Canada, with the obvious purpose of confusing, demoralizing and converting them to the Communist Party.⁵⁹⁸

The Communists charged that the patriotic leaders were trying to destroy the solidarity of the Polish community and to dissolve the PTL’s patriotic endeavours through their “secret denunciations to the authorities in Ottawa.”⁵⁹⁹ The Communists withdrew their support from the Polish Defence Committees which had been set up throughout Canada at the start of the war, and they initiated an independent campaign to raise funds for the Red Cross. Their new program was no longer compatible with the patriots, prompting them to build a new “democratic front” heralding a “new Poland” under a socialist regime.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ AAN, Warsaw, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1803 (3). Związek Polaków w Kanadzie (Alliance of Poles in Canada) petition letter To the Honourable Godron D. Conant, K.C. Attorney General for the province of Ontario.

⁵⁹⁸ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series: (No.1): 23rd October, 1939, 24.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

In June of 1940 however, the Communists paid for their obedience to Moscow and for their criticism of the Canadian government. That month, the federal government ruled that the CPC was an illegal organization under the War Measures Act and it outlawed the CPC and several other organizations, including the PTL. The CPC was forced underground. Its newspapers were banned, most of its Central Committee was arrested, and over 100 members were interned. Tim Buck, Sam Carr and a few other CPC leaders managed to avoid arrest by fleeing to the United States. The government also “cracked down” on the ethnic sections, especially on the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple Association (ULFTA).⁶⁰¹ Thirty-six of its members were interned, its library of over 60,000 books was destroyed and its property was sold. Although *Głos Pracy* and the PTL were dissolved, Polish Communists were practically left unscathed. None of the members were arrested or prosecuted. They also managed to hide their printing machines and editorial materials, and they assigned most of their assets to private individuals or fictitious organizations. Thanks to these pre-emptive measures, the Polish Communists were able stage a comeback.

The surprise German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, produced a dramatic change in Canadian public attitude towards the USSR. From a vile German collaborator, the Soviet Union suddenly became a western ally. These new circumstances prompted another major policy turn among the Communists. From that moment until the end of the war, the Communists focussed almost exclusively on supporting a united war effort against Hitler. Even the struggle for socialism was put on the back burner as it was considered to be divisive and harmful. According to the Party:

⁶⁰¹ Other organizations that were outlawed included: the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association; The Finnish Organization of Canada, the Hungarian Workers’ Club; The Russian Workers’ and Farmers’ Club; the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Federation; the Croatian Cultural Association; the Canadian Labour Defence League and the League for Peace and Democracy.

The character of the Second World War has been changed fundamentally by Hitler's attack upon the U.S.S.R. [...]. In place of the previous perspectives of peace through joint action of the anti-war forces in the neutral and belligerent countries, or war fought to an imperialistic conclusion, the people [...] now face the alternative perspectives of: unity of all who are against Hitler's plan of world conquest [...] or a complete Nazi victory and a return of the Dark Ages.⁶⁰²

Despite the Communists' calls for solidarity and patriotism, the Canadian government refused to legalize the Party. Undaunted, the CPC continued to operate underground. A few months after the Party had been banned it set up a new newspaper in January of 1940, the *Canadian Tribune*. The paper was outlawed again in February of 1941, but it continued to be a voice of the Party through underground channels. In February of 1942, "Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees" were formed to encourage Canadians to vote "yes" on the federal government's conscription plebiscite. The Committees were later renamed to form the Dominion Communist-Labor Total War Committee which advocated full support for the war effort, a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war, and increased industrial production.⁶⁰³

On April 20, 1942, Albert Morski chaired a large convention in Toronto, in which more than 1,000 Torontonians of Slavic origin came to register an affirmative vote for conscription.⁶⁰⁴ Party members and supporters were urged to enlist and to work in war production in all domains. The *Toronto Star* described the Communists as "the most zealous supporters of an all-out war effort."⁶⁰⁵ Public supporters, including Ontario premier Mitchell Hepburn and his Attorney-General Gordon Conant, appealed for the release of Tim Buck and other interned Communists.

⁶⁰² Tim Buck, *A National Front for Victory* (Communist Party of Canada, 1941), 2-3. Buck's report was adopted by the Political Bureau of the CPC, August 28, 1941.

⁶⁰³ The National Council for Democratic Rights was also established in part to rally for the release of Communists and anti-fascists from internment.

⁶⁰⁴ "Toronto Slavs Seek 'Yes' Vote" in *Globe and Mail*, April 20, 1942.

⁶⁰⁵ *Toronto Star*, July 16, 1942.

In 1942, after signing statements that they would not interfere with the war effort, the Communists were released. The CPC, however, remained outlawed.⁶⁰⁶

These events had an enormous impact on the Polish Communists and their activities. Already a few months after they had been dissolved by the government, PTL members established a new newspaper, *Kronika Tygodniowa* (Weekly Chronicle).⁶⁰⁷ The first issue of the paper appeared in Toronto on February 22, 1941. The center of Polish communist activity had once again shifted back to Toronto. Morski was the newspaper's first editor, while Dutkiewicz helped as a correspondent. They were also joined by other collaborators, including a K. Kierpaul, Zygmunt Majtczak and Tadeusz Lewandowski. The publishers advertised *Kronika Tygodniowa* as "the impartial, honest and democratic source of information for working Poles."⁶⁰⁸ They tried to present information from a "neutral" position and furtively avoided any open criticism of the Polish and Canadian governments. Following the German attack on the Soviet Union, the Communists reverted to their patriotic crusade against fascism and they called for "great production of war materials and general support of Canada's war effort."⁶⁰⁹ Morski, and another *Kronika Tygodniowa* contributor, K. Kierpaul, even enlisted in the Canadian Army Reserve and underwent military training.⁶¹⁰ The new circumstances, which had placed Soviet Russia into the allied camp, made it all the easier for Communists to operate as it seemed that their interests were synonymous with those of the allies.

Kronika Tygodniowa became the mouthpiece of the Communists' new organization, the *Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Polsce i Aliantom* – SPPiA (the Association to Aid Poland and the

⁶⁰⁶ Since the CPC was outlawed, the Canadian Communists founded the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP) in 1943 as a legal front and they ran candidates under that name until 1959. In the mid-1940s, the LPP had fourteen elected representatives at the federal, provincial and municipal level.

⁶⁰⁷ AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Leon Malanczek to Wiktor Podoski, February 24, 1940.

⁶⁰⁸ Turek, 125.

⁶⁰⁹ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 57.

⁶¹⁰ *Reczyńska*, 113.

Allies), which was founded in December of 1941. Lewandowski became the SPPiA's new president, although Albert Morski still remained the dominant leader and editor-in-chief of *Kronika Tygodniowa*.⁶¹¹ That year, the Communists purchased a new building in Toronto (located at 235 Ossington Avenue), which served as the SPPiA's official headquarters. It was ceremoniously opened on December 19, 1942.⁶¹² Thirty-two delegates from Polish branches in Montreal, Oshawa, Kitchener, St. Catherine's and Hamilton, along with other ethnic Communists, were invited to the opening. More than 500 Polish immigrants also attended the ceremony, with Ontario Labour Minister Peter Heenan presiding.⁶¹³ Undercover RCMP officers were also there to mark the occasion:

... a banquet [...], attended by a considerable number of Polish with Adam MORSHI [Morski], a member of the National Executive of the Organization, as the principal speaker. His appeal for funds to assist in paying for the property netted the sum of \$1,300.00.

On Saturday afternoon, December 20th, at a meeting, another appeal was made for funds by the Secretary of the Local Branch and \$900.00 was contributed. On the evening of the same day a large social and concert was held and, in a response to an appeal made by William Dut[kiew]ich, an additional sum of \$471.00 was subscribed, including a donation of \$5.00 from the Lithuanian group; \$25.00 from the Ukrainian-Canadian Association; \$25.00 from the Federation of Russian Canadians; \$25.00 from the League of Canadian Croats and \$25.00 from the Carpatho-Russians.⁶¹⁴

The SPPiA styled itself as an anti-fascist organization representing the Polish people in Canada. Its members affirmed that "in its ranks one finds progressive Poles regardless of religious or political differences, because the aim of the organization is to support Canada's and the United Nation's war effort."⁶¹⁵ The organization emphasized that it "fights for the unity of Canadian Poles" and its members enthusiastically declared that "In regard to the general interest

⁶¹¹ Reczyńska, 177.

⁶¹² *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 58.

⁶¹³ "Managements are Criticized by Mr. Heenan" in *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1943, 4.

⁶¹⁴ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 58.

⁶¹⁵ *RCMP Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 56.

of the war, as well as that of Canadian Poles, further activities and the development of the S.P.P.i.A. are vital. [...] May an S.P.P.i.A. branch arise in every Polish colony.”⁶¹⁶

In its statute, the SPPiA adopted a “Canada-first” attitude, arguing that “the domestic problems of Europe and Poland in particular are remote and outside of Canadian interests.”⁶¹⁷ It encouraged Polish immigrants to enlist in the Canadian Army, arguing that it is the most democratic army after the “Russian People’s Army.”⁶¹⁸ And it claimed that it supported “further “Canadianization” and [...] the shaping of Polish-Canadian relations in accordance to the Canadian way of life.”⁶¹⁹

Buttressing a New Poland: Collecting Aid and Helping “True” Patriots

In 1944, the Canadian United Allied Relief Fund (CUARF) was formed in order to coordinate the efforts of ethnic relief committees in Canada. Ethnic committees gave the funds which they collected in their communities to the CUARF, which then added an additional government subsidy to the collected amount and dispensed the total to countries that had been affected by the war. In order for the Poles to take advantage of this network and the additional government funding, they had to have their own committee. As a result, the *Zjednoczony Polski Komitet Ratunkowy* (United Polish Relief Fund - UPRF) was established in February of 1944. In theory, only the UPRF was officially permitted to solicit funds publicly, while the organizations that did not belong to the UPRF were technically only allowed to collect donations from their own members. Polish immigrants enthusiastically supported the UPRF. One of the first UPRF

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, 20 September, 1941, 1; cited in Reczyńska, 112. While the Polish Communists encouraged Polish immigrants to join the Canadian army, their attitude towards the London Poles’ recruiting drive for a Polish army in Canada varied. Initially, the Communists opposed the creation of Polish training centers in Canada. Following the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, however, they encouraged such efforts. But in 1943, when Polish-Soviet relations soured, they once again opposed the initiative.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

collection drives in Toronto brought in \$25,000. \$17,000 had been collected by mostly young Polish-Canadians, and the rest was supplemented by the government. The money was given to the Canadian Red Cross, which sent it to aid Polish prisoners of war in Germany and Polish refugees in Russia and Iran.⁶²⁰ Since the SPPiA was not connected to the UPRF, it linked itself to the Russian Relief Fund, which naturally created some outrage among Polish immigrants. Critics charged that the SPPiA's work was detrimental to the state.

Polish radicals also joined the Pan-Slav Committee, whose main objective was to organize aid for the eastern front and the Soviet Union. Morski and the SPPiA tried to convince other Polonia organizations, namely the Polish Alliance, to join the Pan-Slav Committee by arguing that only Slavs should determine their own future. Their rhetoric however, was ignored by most patriotic-minded Poles.

In the spring of 1944, the leaders of the SSPiA toured Canada on a collection drive which, according to *Kronika Tygodniowa*, was highly successful. Compared to other Polonia organizations, the SPPiA was much more active in organizing bazaars, dances, concerts and film screenings for the purpose of collecting aid.⁶²¹ In order to entice broader segments of the public to come to their events, the Communists would announce that prominent guests (such as the Polish consul or the poet Julian Tuwim), would be present at their gatherings.⁶²²

After General Zygmunt Berling's Polish People's Army was formed under the aegis of the Soviet government in 1943, the SPPiA concentrated its efforts on organizing aid for

⁶²⁰ Reczyńska, 79-80. In 1945, the Canadian Red Cross, with help from the UPRF, distributed \$1,000,000 for Poland. It purchased food (for \$124,029), clothing (for \$174,720), medicine (for \$281,696), hospital equipment (for \$299,995) and ten ambulances and an X-Ray machine. The remaining funds were used to transport the goods and to aid Polish refugees in Western Europe. *Kronika Tygodniowa*, May 1946, 1. The UPRF continued to play a major role in the charitable work for Poland until it was dissolved in 1949.

⁶²¹ Author's collection: private news clipping from W. Dutkiewicz. *Winnipeg Free Press* "Priest Describes Movement for Real Democratic Poland," November, 19, 1943.

⁶²² AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, Juliusz Szygowski to the Consul General in Ottawa, July 8, 1939; See also: Reczyńska, 81.

Berling's soldiers. In Winnipeg, SPPiA members initiated a blood donor campaign, though it was apparently not very successful: only thirty-three individuals gave blood.⁶²³ Articles underscoring the patriotism of the Berling Army even appeared in Canadian mainstream newspapers. In November 1943, an article in the *Toronto Star* noted:

We heard the story of a true Polish patriot Lieutenant Czarkowski, who made his way from German-occupied Poland to take part in the struggle against the Nazis. He had hoped to join General Anders' army, but was bitterly disillusioned. He could not remain with those who engaged in empty talk and intrigues instead of actual fighting. When the League of Polish Patriots announced the formation of the Kosciuszko Division, Czarkowski was one of the first to enlist.⁶²⁴

One of the biggest proponents of sending aid to Soviet Russia was Father Stanisław Orlemanski. The American-born priest had founded the Kosciuszko League in Detroit, which aimed to unite American and Canadian Poles and encourage them to establish friendly relations with Russia.⁶²⁵ In 1943, the SPPiA invited Orlemanski on a speaking tour to bolster the communists' efforts.⁶²⁶

Orlemanski visited Polish centers in London, Kitchener, Toronto and Winnipeg. In the latter city, about 800 people came to listen to him in the St. John Cantius Hall, and they donated more than \$750.00 for the Polish People's Army.⁶²⁷ More than \$7, 000.00 was raised during Orlemanski's visit. His affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church was accentuated in order to underscore the Catholic Church's support for his initiatives. In actuality however, Orlemanski's

⁶²³ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, June 3, 1944, 5.

⁶²⁴ *Toronto Star*, Thursday, November 18, 1943, 6.

⁶²⁵ Private news clipping from W. Dutkiewicz. *Winnipeg Free Press* "Priest Describes Movement for Real Democratic Poland," November 19, 1943.

⁶²⁶ Orlemanski's role in the North American communist movement and his meeting with Stalin has been discussed in chapter 4.

⁶²⁷ *Kitchener Record*, November 9, 1943; *London Free Press*, November 8, 1943; *Toronto Daily Star*, November 15, 1943; *Toronto Star*, November 13, 1943.

connections with the Catholic Church were uneasy and he was suspended for his leftist agitation and for his mysterious trip to Moscow in April of 1944.⁶²⁸

Not all Polish immigrants were receptive to the SPPiA and its calls for democracy. Communist appeals to aid Berling's Army were not enthusiastically supported by non-radicals. Most of the patriotic Poles preferred to send funds to help General Władysław Anders' Army, which had been evacuated from Russia in 1942. Morski criticized the SPPiA's opponents, arguing that the "progressive Polonia is the most patriotic." He charged that "we donated for the defence [of Poland] since the first shots were fired in September. And we gave more than others, which the reactionary elements cannot digest nor make public [...] We gave more than anyone for Anders' Army [...] until he proved to be a deserter [...] We even gave to those refugees, of which so many now travel through Canada spreading Hitlerite propaganda against the USSR."⁶²⁹

The cooperation between the Communists and the patriotic Poles was marred by deep schisms and suspicion.⁶³⁰ *Kronika Tygodniowa* regularly undermined the contributions and enthusiasm of the SPPiA's opponents. In December of 1943, the paper indicated that most people preferred to send their donations to the SPPiA. According to the newspaper: the Oblate-sponsored *Głos Polski* (Polish Voice - formerly *Gazeta Katolicka*) received \$141.12; *Czas*, \$123.00; the Polish consuls \$183.00, whereas *Kronika Tygodniowa* collected a whopping \$8,023.63.⁶³¹ The SPPiA's critics, on the other hand, undermined these numbers and often

⁶²⁸ Orlemanski's visit to the Soviet Union has been discussed in chapter 4.

⁶²⁹ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, November 13, 1943, 7; cited in Reczyńska, 82.

⁶³⁰ It should be noted, that conflicts between religious and secular organizations continued to broil, especially in the Prairie Provinces over the direction of the aid effort. The clergy preferred that the money be distributed to churches in Europe or to prisoners in Germany, while most non-communist secular organizations preferred that the aid be channeled to the Anders Army. The Canadian government did not get involved in the conflicts. It supported the collection efforts of the entire Polish community, which were supposed to be coordinated by the apolitical UPRF.

⁶³¹ It is not possible to verify whether this information is accurate or just fictitious propaganda to exaggerate the Communists efforts.

accused the organization of working against Poland. Albert Morski denounced such arguments as sabotage.⁶³²

In the summer of 1944 the Communists created their own organization, the Democratic Committee to Aid Poland (*Demokratyczny Komitet Pomocy Polsce*), which functioned independently of the UPRF. The Committee was supported by Jewish organizations, which helped the SPPiA collect used clothing, medicine and cigarettes.⁶³³ Between 1944 and 1945, three transports containing fifty-four bales of clothing and ten crates with other materials were sent to the Soviet Union. It is unknown whether the goods ever reached their intended destinations in Poland, because apparently Canadian railway officials and the Soviets had created some difficulties. The entire affair was kept quiet in the Polish communist press.⁶³⁴

It is difficult to estimate the extent of the SPPiA's influence because of a lack of available evidence. The SSPiA did however, have at its disposal a substantial capital, which was apparently amassed from generous donations. Between 1941 and 1942 *Kronika Tygodniowa* was expanded from four pages to eight. In 1943, the Winnipeg branch managed to pay off the mortgage on its People's Hall relatively quickly. And, as we have already seen, the SSPiA had also purchased a large building in Toronto, which served as its central office. The building was quickly equipped with furniture and it housed a choir, a sports club, a Polish-language school, an amateur theatre group and a youth club. It was purchased for \$14,000.00 (a substantial sum for this period), of which half was paid for in cash and the rest was supposed to have been mortgaged over several years.⁶³⁵ In 1943, however, the SPPiA paid off the entire mortgage.

⁶³² Reczyńska, 84.

⁶³³ Reczyńska, 84.

⁶³⁴ In 1947, Polish Communists claimed that, together with their sympathizers, they had spent around \$200,000 during the war to help collect aid for Poland. See Reczyńska, 90. In total, \$6,647,500 was sent from Canada to help Polish refugees and Poland. In addition, parcels estimated at \$1,248,909 were sent to Polish prisoners.

⁶³⁵ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, December 12, 1942, 4.

Kronika Tygodniowa reported that the funds for the building had been collected by the Building Construction Committee (*Komitet Budowy Domu*) back in 1938. The rest of the money allegedly came from pious and munificent donors.

Reczyńska rightly undermined these facts, and questioned whether the SPPiA's influence could have truly been so significant during this period. That the Communist newspaper often stretched the truth is a known fact. For instance, *Kronika Tygodniowa* reported that the SPPiA had collected \$5,000.00 at the opening day of its new Toronto building. An RCMP report noted that the amount was actually closer to \$2,800.00. Moreover, *Kronika Tygodniowa* reported that it received \$4,300.00 in donations in 1943, and close to \$6,000.00 by 1944.⁶³⁶ It seems doubtful that poor workers, who were making an average of fifty-five cents per hour (or about eighty dollars a month), could make substantial contributions. Typical donations came in the form of twenty-five or fifty cents.⁶³⁷ Other ethnic communist branches made larger contributions, usually ranging from five to twenty-five dollars.

On the other hand, the SPPiA organized banquets, bazaars, concerts and other social events more frequently than other Polonia organizations. Most of these events were usually followed by collection drives. Larger banquets and special gatherings typically attracted 500-700 people, and they were held several times during the year. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, communist popularity increased, and individuals who had previously ignored the

⁶³⁶ Turek, 152.

⁶³⁷ According to some Polish immigrants, a salary of 40¢ per hour for men, and 28¢ per hour for women was considered to be good. See: W. Chuchła, "Na roli i w kopalni" [On farms and in mines] in *Pamiętniki imigrantów* [Memoirs of Immigrants], Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1975), 118; S. Konopka, *Wspomnienia działacza społecznego* [Memoirs of a Social Activist], in *Pamiętniki imigrantów* [Memoirs of Immigrants], vol. III, Benedykt Heydenkorn, ed., (Toronto: Polish Alliance Press, 1978), 184. Reczyńska observed that forty percent of Polish men had had a salary that was lower than 55¢ per hour in Sidney, Nova Scotia in 1943. Workers in automotive and paper factories had a slightly better salary, at about 61 to 71 cents per hour, while legislation demanded that women employed in urban centers receive a minimum of \$15.00 a week. See Reczyńska, 91. It is not possible to confirm whether the published donation lists in *Kronika Tygodniowa* were accurate. In some instances names are listed more than once, while larger sums are listed under anonymous donors.

Communists, started to support them. In 1945 for instance, the *Calgary Herald* reported that the SPPiA received \$250.00 from the Calgary city council. That same newspaper also noted that Polish Communists were selling tickets for a “two-storey Dutch colonial house valued at \$7,250.00 at Brantford, Ontario”⁶³⁸

While the majority of patriotic Poles remained skeptical of the SPPiA, its success in collecting funds, especially from members outside the Polish community, must be viewed within the context of the unprecedented popularity of the Communist Party of Canada (which in 1943 changed its name to the Labour Progressive Party -LPP), and that of the Soviet Union.

The bitter and hostile attitude towards the USSR was supplanted, almost overnight, by admiration and respect after the Red Army began to score victory after victory on the eastern front against the Germans in 1943.⁶³⁹ The prestige of the Soviet Union soared, and thousands of supporters across Canada cheered Stalin and the Red Army. In his report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish consul Wiktor Podolski sarcastically noted that Communism was experiencing a romantic revival amongst Canadians.⁶⁴⁰ An article in the *Toronto Star* entitled “Let Us Repay Our Debt to Russia” praised the Soviet regime and Stalin’s position in the Allied camp.⁶⁴¹ This euphoria culminated in June 1943 with the founding of the National Council for Canadian-Soviet Friendship. The Council was formed at a rally in Maple Leaf Gardens which was chaired by Mackenzie King and attended by 15,000 supporters.⁶⁴² Several other leading

⁶³⁸ *Calgary Herald*, January 1, 1945.

⁶³⁹ The German Army invaded the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. The Soviet victory over the Germans at Stalingrad significantly contributed to the popularity of the Soviet Union.

⁶⁴⁰ AAN, Warsaw, 52, Podolski to MSZ, July 21, 1944.

⁶⁴¹ “Let Us Repay Our Debt to Russia,” *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1943. For similar articles see also: *Canadian Tribune*, January 17, 1942; *Toronto Star* August 7, 1943; *Globe and Mail*, November 6, 1943; *Globe and Mail*, November 20, 1943.

⁶⁴² It should be noted that not all Canadians got caught up in the pro-Soviet euphoria. One newspaper labeled the meeting at Maple Leaf Gardens and a “Back-the-Attack” rally as “an out and out Communist meeting,” and it mocked Communists who wore military uniforms to show their support for the war. The RCMP also

figures also endorsed the Council, including the Chief Justice of Canada, Lyman Poore Duff; the Lieutenant Governor of every province; the Chief Justice of every province; the Premiers of six provinces; the senior representatives of the three armed forces; the leaders of the three main Canadian political parties and representatives of various organizations such as the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, the Canadian Legion and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Never had Canadian Communists received such elation and support.⁶⁴³

The struggle between Germany and the Soviet Union was presented as a battle between good and evil. And the Soviet Union's military victories were persuasive anti-fascist credentials for the Communists, who began to enjoy increasingly more support in the political sphere. On August 4, 1943, two Communists, A.A. MacLeod and J.B. Salsberg, were elected to the Ontario Legislature, and on August 9, Fred Rose, a Polish-Jew and a leading Communist, was elected to the House of Commons. This was the first time that a Communist had been elected to the federal parliament.⁶⁴⁴

Unlike many Canadians, patriotic Poles did not buy into the pro-Soviet jubilation. The ZZPWK, which was converted into the Canadian Polish Congress in September of 1944, tried to change Canadian public opinion. In 1945, it wrote to the *Toronto Daily Star*, emphasising the fact that Communists became pro-war and pro-British only after Germany attacked Russia. They also chastised Morski, declaring that he had "never, in his publishing or social activities,

remained vigilant, and continued to monitor communist activities. AAN, Warsaw, 761d, Polish Legation in Ottawa, newspaper clipping "Look Who Is "Backing the Attack!----or Supposed to Be" undated.

⁶⁴³ In the United States, the popularity of the Soviet Union had also increased. In April 1943 for example, *Life* magazine published an article that praised Stalin and the U.S.S.R. The editorial compared the NKVD to the FBI and explained: So far as our intentions are concerned, they are warm and friendly. We respect the mighty Russian people and admire them. [...] They live under a system of tight state-controlled information. But probably the attitude to take towards this is not to get too excited about it. When we take account of what [Russia] has accomplished in the 20 years of its existence we can make allowances for certain shortcomings, however deplorable. See: *Life*, vol. 14, no. 13 (March 29, 1943), 20-21.

⁶⁴⁴ See: Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream Canadian Communists, the Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983).

represented the Canadian view, much less the Polish. His activities, they charged “are merely a certified copy of orders received from outside.”⁶⁴⁵

When the war broke out, the non-communist Polonia federations had somewhat different views about which political orientation should represent the future Polish state. The Canadian Polish Congress’ predecessor, the ZZPwK, supported the politics of the Polish government-in-exile with its base in London, England. The Oblate fathers’ Society of Poles in Canada supported the views of groups which were connected to the church. The Polish Alliance occasionally flirted with the programs of the Polish Socialist Party. This position was mainly espoused by Alfons Jan Staniewski, the editor of the federation’s newspaper, the *Alliancer*, who argued that a post-war Poland should be more favourable to workers and peasants.

By the end of the war however, the Alliance and the Society of Poles in Canada began to throw their support behind the politics of the Polish government in London. While their views had occasionally differed as to the realization of a political program for post-war Poland, all the non-Communist groups remained highly anti-Soviet. The attack on Poland in September of 1939; the massacre of approximately 22,000 Polish officers at Katyn by the NKVD in 1940; the dreadful treatment of Polish refugees in the USSR; and the mysterious death of General Władysław Sikorski in July of 1943 (which many Poles suspected had been caused by Soviet machinations), had all amounted to a continued history of resentment and suspicion towards the Soviet Union. Although Poles were happy that the German Army was finally crumbling, the patriotic Poles had little reason to cheer the Red Army’s advances on the eastern front. With every step closer to the Polish frontiers, it became increasingly more apparent that the Soviets would be the “liberators” of Poland.

⁶⁴⁵ *Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 259.

The critical moment arrived in July of 1944, when the Red Army crossed the River Bug, and captured territory which Stalin was prepared to recognize as belonging to the future Polish state.⁶⁴⁶ On July 22, 1944, the Moscow government established a provisional government, the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego* - PKWN) in Lublin, and gave it the status of a temporary administration. The PKWN assisted Stalin in administering the lands liberated from German occupation, and in due course it formed the core of the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic (RTRP) from January to June 1945, and the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN) from June 1945 onwards.⁶⁴⁷

The RCMP remained critical of the Soviet Union in its security reports. In fact, the RCMP never changed its anti-communist position and remained vigilant despite the pro-Soviet euphoria that had enthralled many Canadians.⁶⁴⁸ In June of 1945, the RCMP produced a special report entitled “Poland a Major Victim of Soviet Imperialism,” which clearly indicated that the RCMP had no second-thoughts about the nature of Soviet plans for Poland:

In breach of several solemn treaties, the USSR has seized 40% of Poland’s territory, including a large Catholic, non-Communist population of Poles and Ukrainians larger than the whole population of Canada. Worse still is the imposition on what is left of Poland of a Moscow-sponsored puppet government and the systematic liquidation of Polish patriots by the NKVD.

The Lublin stooges consist largely of (1) Communists, often with NKVD training, imported from Moscow, such as A. Zawadzki, B. Drobner, E. Osobka-Morawski and J. Haneman (2) men with disgraceful records, such as General Zymierski (head of the new

⁶⁴⁶ During the Warsaw Uprising in Poland in 1944, the *Kronika Tygodniowa* was the last *Polonian* newspaper to admit that Polish insurgents had started an uprising in Warsaw. In several articles the editors even denied the fact that Polish underground soldiers were fighting against the German army. The purpose of this was to show that Warsaw was being “liberated” by the Soviets and not by Polish insurgents who were loyal to the Polish government in London. *Kronika Tygodniowa*, August 24, 1944. On 27 August 1944, *Związkowiec* attacked *Kronika Tygodniowa* and accused the Polish radicals of whitewashing and “deliberately falsifying war news.”

⁶⁴⁷ These provisional governments helped solidify Stalin’s influence over Poland, and paved the way for the Constitution of July 22, 1952, which marked the declaration of the ‘Polish People’s Republic.’ The 1952 Constitution was based on the 1936 Soviet Constitution, which introduced the Soviet practice of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

⁶⁴⁸ See: Reg Whittaker, “Introduction” in *RCMP Security Bulletins*, The War Series, 9-24.

Department of National Defense), who served a penitentiary term for embezzlement, General Berling (Deputy Head of the Department of National Defense), who was retired in 1939 because of scandals, and W. Rzymowski (head of the Department of Culture and Art), who was expelled from the Polish Academy of Literature because of plagiarism, and (3) pliable nonentities such as J. Czechowski and E. Sommerstein.

The real rule of the country, however, has been in the hands of the NKVD, which, as the British government has repeatedly complained, is filling concentration camps with the brave defenders of Poland.⁶⁴⁹

All the Polish newspapers, except the *Kronika Tygodniowa*, denounced the PKWN programme as a “manifesto of villainy and betrayal”, and they condemned its collaborators, mainly the members of the Polish Worker’s Party (which was formed in Warsaw in 1942), as usurpers.⁶⁵⁰ The majority of Polonia organizations began to coalesce around the Canadian Polish Congress, which had declared its unwavering support for the Polish government-in-exile.

The non-Communist newspapers showed concern over the Soviet “liberation” of Poland, the future of Poland’s eastern territories (from which many Polish immigrants came) and they made predictions about the status of Poland’s frontiers. Occasionally, articles also commented about the necessity to somehow strike a compromise with the Soviet Union. There were groups in the Polonia who were sympathetic to the politics of Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who tried to reach a compromise with Stalin. As political and military developments later showed, however, compromise was not possible.

Polish Communists naturally embraced the Soviet program for Poland. *Kronika Tygodniowa* increased its assaults on the Polish government in London and its supporters in Canada. Morski referred to the London Poles and the Canadian Polish Congress as “reactionaries,” who espoused a policy “that was in direct contradiction to the interests, aims and purposes of the Allies.”⁶⁵¹ In a press statement, he accused the Congress of trying to convince

⁶⁴⁹ *Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (June, 1945), 317.

⁶⁵⁰ *Związkowiec*, September, 10 1944, 4.

⁶⁵¹ *Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 259.

the Canadian public that the Churchill-supported solution regarding the Polish territorial question will “plunge the world into new disputes and conflicts and may culminate in a new and more terrible war.”⁶⁵² The entire Congress, noted Morski “is but an imitation of a similar body in the United States, organized by Col. Matuszewski and his Fascist colleagues. Nobody is serving better the cause of German Fascism than these Polish reactionaries who would again readily restore Colonel Beck’s Poland with all its faults.”⁶⁵³

In their newspapers, Polish non-Communists occasionally criticized Morski and his “democratic” organization and they undermined his “Polishness.” For the most part however, they reprinted Polish articles from England to inform their readers about the situation in Poland and the political developments in Europe. Their criticisms of the Soviet Union and its Polish supporters were mainly voiced on the pages of Canadian mainstream newspapers and in press statements to enlighten Canadians about communist transgressions. In 1945 for instance, they wrote to the *Daily Toronto Star*, condemning the “one-sided decisions of the Soviet Government” which, they argued “contradicted the Atlantic Charter.”⁶⁵⁴

The Canadian public did not seem to absorb the Congress’ efforts to “expose” Soviet wrongdoings. In 1945, an RCMP report sarcastically noted that “it is a commonplace with many Canadian newspapers that Russia, having fought bravely and suffered greatly, is entitled to territorial compensation at the expense of innocent neighbours and is entitled to impose on them puppet regimes acceptable to Stalin.”⁶⁵⁵ The RCMP, however, ridiculed such logic:

The sheer immorality of all this appears if we change the beneficiary. Poland has fought more bravely and suffered more drastically than any other belligerent. Therefore, by the same reasoning, Poland should be permitted to absorb Czechoslovakia and the western

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ *Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (1st February 1943), 260.

⁶⁵⁵ *Security Bulletins*, War Series Part II: (June, 1945), 317.

parts of the USSR, and to impose on Moscow a Polish-sponsored government consisting largely of Poles, Soviet gaolbirds, and Czarist-Russian Red-baiters!

The absurdity of the proposal is manifest; yet when the same sort of arrangement is proposed by Moscow, for Moscow's advantage, Canadian mushheads and political charlatans outdo each other in their enthusiasm. Some even go so far in their folly (or criminality) as to urge that since the existence of a dozen small free states in the Baltic-Balkan zone of Europe is a constant source of temptation to the Soviet's crocodile appetite, it will make for the peace and stability of the world if they are fed to the crocodile as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the crocodile appetite knows no limits.⁶⁵⁶

The coming of the war in 1939 significantly changed the position of working-class immigrants in Canadian society. Wartime industry supplied those who had been under- or unemployed with relatively stable jobs and much better wages. The expansion of the labour movement also meant that immigrants could join labour unions, an opportunity which provided additional security and confidence. Moreover, the creation of government programs, such as the Nationalities Branch and the Committee on Co-operation in Canadian Citizenship in 1942 marked the first major steps toward actively integrating immigrants into Canadian society.

For Polish Communists, the start of the war paved the way to their demise. Despite their "cultural-educational" pretences, the Communists had clearly demonstrated that they were willing partners of the Soviet Union. Embarrassing policy twists and Nazi-Soviet collusion had not prevented Polish Communists from staying the course and executing Moscow directives. The consequences of such anallegiance were particularly hard to bear in the Polish community. While many Canadians were jubilant about the Red Army's success, the majority of Polish Canadians became even more vocal opponents of the Soviet Union. Soured Polish-Soviet relations over the Katyn affair and Stalin's political machinations gave patriotic Poles reason to marginalize the communist camp. By war's end, as we will see in the next chapter, the Polish communist movement was beginning to slide downhill.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 317-318.

Chapter 8

The Last Leap of Faith

The end of the Second World War did not bring the desired outcome that most Polish Canadians had hoped for. In July of 1945, Ottawa recognized the Soviet-backed Provisional Government of National Unity in Warsaw. The new authorities in Poland appointed the chief editor of *Kronika Tygodniowa*, Albert Morski, as their representative in Ottawa. But Canadian authorities rejected him because of Morski's radical political views. After long deliberations, it was decided in 1946 that Dr. Alfred Fiederkiewicz be appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Canada.⁶⁵⁷ Morski was nominated as the official correspondent of the Polish Press Agency in Ottawa. But despite these officially sanctioned positions, the Polish Canadian communist movement was actually beginning to take its last breaths. Shunned by almost the entire Polish community, by 1950 the Communists gradually receded into the abyss.

Out of all the Polish groups, only the Polish Canadian Communists and their sympathizers supported the new government in Poland. On July 15, 1945, the *Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Polsce i Aliantom* – SPPiA (the Association to Aid Poland and the Allies), organized a rally in Toronto to commemorate the 535th anniversary of the victory at the Battle of Grunwald, when a Polish army defeated the Teutonic Knights. According to *Kronika Tygodniowa*, around 800 people took part in the celebrations. Among the invited guests were Professor Leopold Infeld, a renowned physicist, and Leon Krzycki who was the president of the Polish-American

⁶⁵⁷ Fiederkiewicz was born in 1886 in Horodence, in modern day Ukraine. He was educated at Boston University and worked as a surgeon. He returned to Poland in 1922, and became active in the labour movement and the Independent Peasant Party and later the Communist Party of Poland. He was arrested by Polish authorities for his communist activities and later went to the Soviet Union. Between 1943 and 1945, he was imprisoned at Auschwitz. See: Gordon Swoger, *The Strange Odyssey of Poland's National Treasures, 1939-1961*, (Toronto, Dundurn, 2004), 74-75; *Jacek M. Majchrowski, Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Who was Who in the Second Republic] Vol.1, (Warsaw, BGM, 1994), 276.

Labour Council and the American Slav Congress. Those who came to the rally accepted a resolution in support of the new Polish government and they made an appeal to “all broader segments of Poles in Canada, [who] in spite of their views and religious beliefs and differences” should do the same.⁶⁵⁸

In September of 1945, Polish Canadian radicals underwent another organizational change. At a meeting in Toronto, attended by fifteen delegates representing fourteen Canadian cities and one hundred guests, the SPPiA and the Polish Democratic Union merged to form the *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Demokratyczne* – PSD (Polish Democratic Association). The new organization declared that it represented all progressively minded Poles. The members sent a letter of support to Bolesław Bierut, the head of the Provisional National Council, the Provisional Government of National Unity, General Karol Świerczewski and Wanda Wasilewska. And they urged the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send a representative of the Polish government to help counter elements in the Canadian Polonia who opposed the new “democratic” order in Poland.

According to Anna Reczyńska, the arrival of a Polish envoy was significantly delayed, partly because of communication difficulties in post-war Poland, but more significantly, because of bureaucratic obstacles created by the Canadian government.⁶⁵⁹ The majority of Canadians had become highly anti-Communist after the Gouzenko affair in September 1945, which revealed the existence of a Soviet spy ring in Canada.⁶⁶⁰ There is no available evidence to suggest that members of the PSD were connected to the Soviet spy network, even though Morski maintained

⁶⁵⁸ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, July 21, 1945; cited in Anna Reczyńska, *Piętno Wojny* (Kraków, Poland: Nomos, 1997), 253.

⁶⁵⁹ Reczyńska, 254.

⁶⁶⁰ See: Jack L. Granatstein and David Stafford, *Spy Wars: Espionage and Canada from Gouzenko to Glasnost* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1990).

contacts with Fred Rose, who was one of the leading figures arrested in connection with the affair. It is worth noting that Morski had somewhat distanced himself from the activities of Polonia during this period. Władysław Dutkiewicz, meanwhile, left for Poland for several months. In their absence *Kronika Tygodniowa* was edited by another important Polish Canadian Communist, Tadeusz Lewandowski. The entire Gouzenko affair was denounced by *Kronika Tygodniowa* as an anti-Soviet ploy aimed at discrediting the Soviet Union. Non-Communist Polish newspapers occasionally speculated about Morski's and Dutkiewicz's abrupt departures and they spread rumours that they had been arrested. In 1946, Dutkiewicz returned to Canada and resumed his position as editor of *Kronika Tygodniowa*.⁶⁶¹

That same year Alfred Fiderkiewicz, the new Polish envoy, also arrived in Ottawa.⁶⁶² He was greeted by members of the PSD, who staged a warm welcome for him. The greeting was attended by several thousand people, including representatives of the PSD and members of American and Canadian progressive organizations. On June 30th 1946, Fiderkiewicz officially greeted Polish Canadians in Toronto on behalf of Bolesław Bierut and declared that:

feudal Poland [...] in which all kinds of outrageousness thrived has disappeared. In her place democratic Poland has been established, a Poland based on the masses of the people, the labor class, the peasants and the intellectual workers.⁶⁶³

In the following months Fiderkiewicz toured Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish and other organizations to solicit their support for the Polish government and to laud the conditions in the “new” Poland. Meeting with the Women's Branch of the United Jewish Peoples' Order in

⁶⁶¹ Reczyńska, 254.

⁶⁶² Other members of the Polish legation in 1946 included: Dr. Zygmunt Bielski (First Secretary); Kazimierz Gumkowski (Secretary); Władysław Zbik; Edmund Semil (Cultural Attaché); Danuta Witczak; Władysław Pietka; Wanda Uminska; Władysław Fiderkiewicz; Nanci Morska; Ludwika Rzepliennik; Antonina Westwell; Bronisława Andrzejec; Tadeusz Wiewiorowski; Hilary Kozłowski and Stanisław Sigda. AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472 II-3. Note on Polish Legation, Fiderkiewicz to Henry Birks & Sons, December 19, 1946. Władysław Ziemiński was consul in Montreal and Zygmunt Grela was consul in Winnipeg.

⁶⁶³ AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4 (8): Speech delivered on June 30, 1946 in Toronto.

Toronto, Fiderkiewicz spoke of his own experiences as a prisoner in Auschwitz. He urged Jewish Canadians to return to Poland, and ensured them that they would not be “barred from employment” and that they could work “efficiently in the government and other public offices, in industries, trades, and also on farms.”⁶⁶⁴

Fiderkiewicz also underscored the historical break between the “fascist-style” government of pre-war Poland and the new “true democracy” that was being built by Polish workers and farmers. While his speeches mainly highlighted the positive progress in Poland, he also criticized those who remained loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London in order to wield a wedge of disloyalty between Polish immigrants and the London camp. At the national convention of the PSD in Toronto, he reminded his audience that a significant segment of the Polish population in Canada was loyal to the “fascist” Polish government-in-exile and “very well organized” and “hostile to everything that our democratic Poland intends to do.”⁶⁶⁵

The new authorities made a distinction between progressive Polish immigrants and those who maintained contacts with the Polish government-in-exile. On instructions from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the new Polish consuls tried to persuade “progressive” Poles to support the new government. They avoided using communist slogans and exposing their political orientation, and they underscored the “democratic” nature of the changes that were occurring in Poland.⁶⁶⁶ They informed their readers about the rebuilding of Polish ruins and important cultural symbols; of granting land to peasants; about the opening of schools and libraries; and about the government’s fight against illiteracy. *Kronika Tygodniowa* published

⁶⁶⁴ AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4 (52): Speech delivered to the Women’s Branch of the United Jewish Peoples Order in Toronto.

⁶⁶⁵ AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4 (96): Speech delivered at a national convention of the Polish Democratic Association in Toronto.

⁶⁶⁶ The Polish Consul-General Tadeusz Rakowski refused to answer questions from Canadian reporters about his affiliation with the Communist Party in Poland and questions about Soviet influences on Poland’s domestic policies. See: “New Polish Consul-General Here Refuses Comment on Home Politics” in *Montreal Gazette*, November 14, 1947.

letters from Polish immigrants who had returned to Poland to participate in building a “people’s” society to relay the impression that the majority of Poles, including the Catholic clergy, were content with the new system, and that they enthusiastically supported the government. Attacks against the Church disappeared from *Kronika*’s pages entirely and were replaced with news about celebratory masses organized to commemorate the liberation of Poland and about the rebuilding of churches.

Between 1946 and 1947, the Communists tried very hard to increase their support in the Canadian Polonia. They were particularly interested in targeting Polish organizations that were not connected to the Canadian Polish Congress. Their main hopes lay with the Alliance of Poles in Canada. It was hoped that this organization, which was known for its progressive outlook, would strengthen Communist support among Polish immigrants. But the Alliance refused to meld with the Communists.

In late 1945, several prominent Polish guests who supported the Warsaw government were invited to tour Canada to bolster support for the communist movement and to relay first-hand impressions of the situation in Poland. Among them was the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wincenty Rzymkowski and General Karol Świerczewski, who toured the United States and Canada. The Minister of Agriculture Michał Szyszko, who represented the Polish Socialist Party, also visited Polish immigrant colonies and took part in rallies in Montreal, St. Catherine’s, Hamilton and Toronto.⁶⁶⁷ According to *Kronika Tygodniowa*, around 1500 people came to the rally in Toronto. Despite these efforts, however, patriotic Poles remained skeptical and critical of the new Polish regime. Many of them came to protest at the rally in Toronto. *Kronika Tygodniowa* described their behavior as “scandalous.”⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, November 10, 1945, 1.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Patriotic Poles who recognized the Polish government-in-exile maintained contacts with the London camp.⁶⁶⁹ Many of the former consular officials who remained in Canada, such as Tadeusz Brzeziński, continued to represent the Polish authorities in London and to be influential figures in the patriotic Polonia.⁶⁷⁰ In the western provinces, the organizations that were affiliated with the Oblate Father's Polish Society in Canada remained critical of the communist camp and they stopped participating in aid campaigns for Poland, especially when the collections were politically motivated. The Oblates' official organ, *Gazeta Katolicka*, was unsympathetic towards Moscow, although it refrained from making comments or evaluating the political situation in Poland. The Canadian Polish Congress, which had a heritage of propagating loyalty to the government in Poland before and during the war, initially tried to remain apolitical as well. In their statute of October 1945, the first article stated that the Congress should "encourage and propagate in the Canadian Polonia, as much as possible, an interest in Canadian citizenship and the problems associated with our lives in this country [...]."⁶⁷¹ The Polish Alliance also tried to maintain a neutral attitude, claiming that "infertile political discussions [...] are not entirely beneficial for the Polish nation, Canada or for our emigration in this country."⁶⁷²

The majority of Polish immigrants remained cynical. One reader asked why Stalin had reduced the size of Poland in half and "why there can be no agreement between the Polish government in London and the Committee of National Liberation in London [since both are] Polish and fight for an independent Poland [...]."⁶⁷³ Farmers and workers were also suspicious about the new circumstances in Poland. One reader questioned whether Poland was truly free:

⁶⁶⁹ In February 1945 for instance, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski visited Canada.

⁶⁷⁰ See: Swoger, Gordon. *The Strange Odyssey of Poland's National Treasures, 1939-1961* (Toronto, Dundurn, 2004).

⁶⁷¹ *Czas*, October 31, 1945, 1.

⁶⁷² L.S. Garczyński, "Jedyna droga," (The Only Way) in *Związkowiec*, September 23, 1945, 4; cited in *Reczyńska*, 259.

⁶⁷³ *Reczyńska*, 266.

I am not sure if we have a free Poland, one that we wanted, and one to which we would gladly return. Foreigners rule there, apparently they are taking our [...] land, the fields which we bought for hard and toiling work in Canadian factories [...] and paid for by years of separation [...] Today everything has been lost.⁶⁷⁴

In 1946, the PSD had 36 branches in Canada and a membership of around 800.⁶⁷⁵

According to a consular report, the influence of the PSD was equally shared with other Polish secular organizations in some provinces: in British Columbia where there were 8,744 Poles, the influence of the Canadian Polish Congress (KPK) and the PSD was about equal; in Alberta, the clergy had the largest sway over the 26,845 Poles who resided in that province, while the KPK had minimal influence and the PSD only some influence; in Manitoba there were 36,550 Poles, those residing on farms were influenced mainly by the clergy, whereas in the cities the influence of the KPK and the PSD was about equal; the influence of the KPK and the PSD was also equally shared in Ontario which had 54,893 Poles, while in Quebec, the report noted that most Polish people did not belong to any organizations and that the clergy had considerable influence over the population.⁶⁷⁶

Several PSD-supported organizations like the *Polskie Towarzystwo Wzajemnej Pomocy* (The Polish Mutual Aid Society) and the *Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Polską* (Economic Cooperation Committee with Poland) cooperated with the PSD and helped initiate drives to send money to Poland. In the autumn of 1946, the PSD and *Kronika Tygodniowa* organized a large campaign to sell bonds for the Polish Reconstruction Loan. Sixty-two thousand dollars in bonds

⁶⁷⁴ *Związkowiec*, December 29, 1945, 5; cited in Reczyńska, 266.

⁶⁷⁵ AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4 report compiled by Leon S. Garczynski in 1946. Garczynski was the editor of *Alliancer*, but he later established connections with the communist authorities and was shunned by the Alliance of Poles in Canada and removed as editor of the newspaper.

⁶⁷⁶ It is difficult to verify the accuracy of these estimates. The author of the report claimed that he based his information on the 1941 census, but the census data provides no information about the influence of religious and secular organizations in the Polish community. The author may have been exaggerating to the Polish authorities. On the other hand, more Poles attended PSD-sponsored events and read *Kronika Tygodniowa* because it was the only newspaper with access to news from Poland.

was sold.⁶⁷⁷ This was quite a successful campaign for the Communists, because many Poles who were not associated with the PSD had also purchased bonds. Among them was the editor of the *Alliancer* Leon Garczyński, who was removed from his post in 1948 because of his contacts with the Polish consuls and his alleged flirtations with communist circles. The bond campaign turned out to be the PSD's last major successful collection. Ironically, it was later publically criticized by those who had purchased the bonds because the organizers did not provide any certificates confirming their investments. Moreover, no one could explain how the money was used, or even confirm if the funds had actually been sent to Poland. Angry Poles accused the PSD of theft and financial abuse. It was not until 1948 that *Kronika Tygodniowa* published information that the bonds had been received in Poland. It was too late however, to reverse the bitter resentment and general suspicion that the affair had created.

Polish immigrants attended PSD meetings and they read *Kronika Tygodniowa* because these were the only sources that printed news directly from Poland. In fact, Turek noted that the circulation of *Kronika Tygodniowa* briefly increased after the war because it was the only Polish-Canadian newspaper with wire-service to Poland. But such facts should not be used to measure Communist influence in Polonia. Even the purchase of the bonds for the Reparation Loan should not be considered as an act of support for the communist government. Many Polish immigrants purchased the bonds because they considered it to be their duty to help rebuild their war torn *ojczyzna* (fatherland). Still others purchased the bonds purely as an investment.

⁶⁷⁷ One Polish immigrant had purchased a \$50 bond and sent it to Wanda Wasilewska, who was the chief deputy of the Polish Committee of National Liberation in 1944. AAN, Warsaw, KC PPR, Department of Foreign Affairs, 925/XX-66. Dluski to Minister Olszewski, November, 20, 1947; AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4

Making Sense of the Situation in Poland

In 1945, Polish organizations, both communist and non-communist, proposed the idea of sending a delegation to Poland to gather information about conditions there. Albert Morski suggested that the Polish government should invite a delegation consisting not only of members from the Canadian Polonia, but also members representing war refugees, members of the Jewish community who had Polish roots, and two Canadian parliamentarians. The costs associated with sending a delegation of such size and the political obstacles after the Gouzenko affair delayed such an undertaking.

The editor of *Kronika Tygodniowa*, Władysław Dutkiewicz, did travel to Poland in the spring of 1946. Upon his return to Canada, he toured Polish centers in June and in July to speak about the realities of daily life in Poland. According to *Kronika Tygodniowa*, he met with over 7,000 people. He spoke mainly about the new reforms in Poland and about working conditions and the rebuilding of war torn cities and towns. He did not try to hide the fact that there were difficulties in Poland, but he minimized them to counter the arguments of his opponents. Dutkiewicz's visit to Edmonton was relayed by a contributor to the Polish-Canadian newspaper *Czas*, who mocked the entire affair: "all of us were disappointed listening to this nonsense, which was professed by this traitor of the Polish people [...] he said what Osóbka⁶⁷⁸ told him to say [...] that in Poland people have something to eat and something to wear."⁶⁷⁹ The audience at the meeting, noted the contributor, was mainly composed of Russian and Ukrainian Communists.

In the spring of 1946, a delegation which formally represented the United Polish Relief Fund (UPRF) was organized with the help of Fiderkiewicz and sent to Poland. It consisted of A.

⁶⁷⁸ Edward Osóbka-Morawski was the Prime Minister of the Communist-backed Polish Government of National Unity.

⁶⁷⁹ *Czas*, April 24, 1946, 5.

F. Chudzicki (the editor of *Czas* who unofficially represented the Canadian Polish Congress); Wincenty Wojcik (of the Polish Alliance in Canada); Zygmunt Majtczak (of the Democratic Aid Committee for Poland); and the Canadian president of the UPRF, L.J. Burpee, who died in London during the trip.⁶⁸⁰ The leaders of the Congress instructed Chudzicki to objectively “study the relations between poor Polish people in the villages and in the cities [... and to examine] if Poles receive the donations sent by Polonia equally, or if there are some exceptions.”⁶⁸¹ The delegates also took with them letters, information and money for relatives in Poland. Wojcik recalled that “a shoemaker on Queen Street made [him] a special pair of shoes which carried all of these donations.”⁶⁸² Unbeknownst to his family, he mortgaged his house to pay for the trip.⁶⁸³

As it turned out, the delegation did little to help Polish Canadians form a better understanding of the realities in Poland. The delegates returned to Canada, each with a different opinion about the conditions there. In fact, they differed so much, that three of the delegates even refused to meet together to present their observations. Chudzicki’s impressions, which he published in *Czas* and *Związkowiec*, were denounced in the *Kronika Tygodniowa* as “slanderous and deceitful.” The Communists accused Chudzicki of being a “self-declared enemy of Poland” who lied “that only communists benefit from UNRRA [the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], that “the Polish Army is led by Russians, and that on the streets

⁶⁸⁰ Burpee was replaced by Morris McDougall who was president of the parliamentary press gallery in Ottawa. “Morris McDougall Is Honored At Reception” in *Ottawa Citizen*, November 7, 1946, 12.

⁶⁸¹ Reczyńska, 269.

⁶⁸² Irena Wojcik Gabon, “Wincenty Wojcik Prepares to go to Poland” in Wincenty Wojcik (1899-1976): A Lifetime of Service to the Polish Community (20 November 2001): <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~atpc/heritage/articles/wojcik/part3.html> (accessed: October, 2011).

⁶⁸³ Irena Wojcik Gabon, “Wincenty Wojcik Prepares to go to Poland” in Wincenty Wojcik (1899-1976): A Lifetime of Service to the Polish Community (20 November 2001): <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~atpc/heritage/articles/wojcik/part3.html> (accessed: October, 2011).

there are tanks with slogans “onto London” painted on them.”⁶⁸⁴ Wojczyk seemed to be split about the situation. He questioned whether the war was over in Poland, or if a new one was beginning. He did however, urge all Polish immigrants to continue sending aid to Poland to help rebuild their homeland.⁶⁸⁵ Only Majtczak, who had been associated with the Polish communist movement in Canada since the early 1930s, praised the new Polish worker’s society and conditions in Poland.⁶⁸⁶

These conflicting viewpoints only contributed to the two opposite perceptions about post-war Poland which were already present in the Polish community. Patriotic Poles continued to oppose the new Polish government and to marginalize the PSD and its supporters. Non-communist newspapers informed their readers about the deceitful Soviet-backed Polish government, about censorship, mass arrests, and about the ruthlessness of the NKVD. *Kronika Tygodniowa* continued to refute such polemics and to enthusiastically exaggerate the reforms and democratic nature of the new regime.

The Demise

Immediately after the Second World War, thousands of Polish ex-servicemen and women, displaced persons and political refugees who refused to return to a communist-controlled Poland began to make formal requests to the Canadian government for permission to settle in Canada. Thousands of them were still in Italy and scattered in special camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) throughout Europe and as far as Lebanon and British East Africa. Many of their relatives, as well as Polonia organizations and even members

⁶⁸⁴ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, December 21, 1946, 4.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ *Reczyńska*, 270.

representing other ethnic communities who were sympathetic to Poland's fate wrote letters and made appeals to help bring them to Canada. Canadian authorities however, hesitated and they used the immigration restriction legislation from the interwar period to help defend their borders from an influx of post-war migrants.⁶⁸⁷

Pressed by the IRO and by the British government to help with the growing international refugee crisis, the Canadian government decided to set up a special Senate Committee on Immigration in 1946 to debate the desirability of changing the pre-war immigration policy. Many of the Committees' sessions consisted of hearing and discussing petitions and pleas for immigration policy reform presented by delegates representing various organizations and ethnic groups.⁶⁸⁸ Delegates representing the Canadian Polish Congress and other major Polonia organizations including the Polish Communist PSD, came to share their opinions. The hearings exposed the serious divisions within Polish and other immigrant communities in Canada.⁶⁸⁹ As the official representative of the PSD, Władysław Dutkiewicz supported the Soviet view that all Polish displaced persons should return to Poland.⁶⁹⁰ He argued that the displaced persons had a duty and a responsibility to return to Poland from the camps of Western Europe in order to help reconstruct and rehabilitate the Polish state. He accused the Polish-government-in-exile of spreading vicious propaganda about the Polish government, which he claimed discouraged refugees and ex-soldiers from returning to their homeland. He also claimed that the majority of

⁶⁸⁷ See: Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1987) and Turek, *Poles in Manitoba* (Toronto, Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1967).

⁶⁸⁸ Rudolf Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976), 4.

⁶⁸⁹ Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 83. The Ukrainian community was also divided between nationalists and communists. Both groups also presented their opinions at the hearings.

⁶⁹⁰ The category "Displaced Persons" included individuals who had been deported from Poland to Germany and who were in special camps administered by UNRRA and the IRO, and also refugees who were deported to the Soviet Union between 1939-1941 who managed to escape with the Polish Army to Iran in 1942, and other individuals who found themselves outside of Poland and refused to return because of the Communist regime which had been established there.

Polish ex-soldiers who remained outside of Poland had been soldiers in the German army who never fought on the allied side. Such information was widely published in several Canadian newspapers, and propagated by editors who were hostile to non-British immigrants.⁶⁹¹

During this period, the Canadian Polish Congress, which countered the pro-Soviet arguments, evolved into a quasi-political lobby group. In June 1946 it made a submission to the Committee on Immigration urging Canada to accept up to 500,000 Polish refugees and veterans. Its representatives claimed that Canada should accept the displaced persons as political refugees because conditions in their former homeland had become undemocratic and not conducive to the development of individual liberties. J.S. Grocholski, the president of the Canadian Polish Congress, made references to the contributions of the Polish Army, claiming that Polish soldiers would make excellent Canadian citizens.

During the Committee's hearings, Polish Communists tried to convince broader segments of the Canadian population that many of the Polish displaced persons had collaborated with the Nazis and that they should not be allowed into Canada. Speaking at the International Labor Office, the Polish envoy Alfred Fiderkiewicz exclaimed: "We know that the Anders' Army is composed, first of some good patriots, but in addition, the Anders' Army is reinforced by Germans, Polish *Volksdeutsche*, and different traitors that were acting in Poland."⁶⁹² At a meeting with members of the Jewish community in Toronto and later in Montreal, Fiderkiewicz said that the Anders' Army had been poisoned with "nazi fascist and anti-semitic venom", and that many of the ex-soldiers were hiding in forests and being subsidized by "the fascist, General Anders, and others of the former government who ran away from the country in its darkest hour

⁶⁹¹ See for example: *Ottawa Citizen* August 10, 1946.

⁶⁹² AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4. Speech on Displaced Persons at the International Labor Office, 1946.

and settled abroad.”⁶⁹³ During his visit in Brandon, Ontario, the Polish consul in Winnipeg, Zygmunt Grele, accused the Anders Army of cowardice, and urged ex-soldiers to return to Poland to reunite with families and to help rebuild their fatherland.

Fiderkiewicz also wrote to Canadian authorities, telling them that they had no right to determine the fate of thousands of Polish citizens without a bilateral agreement with the Polish government. He later sent a letter to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in which he claimed that the Anders Army was composed of former concentration camp guards, German henchmen, SS-men, and other traitors who helped prolong the war by “helping the enemy, who killed not only Polish soldiers and civilians, but also soldiers of all Allied Armies.”⁶⁹⁴

Despite the Communists’ clamour and vicious assaults, the Canadian government opened its doors to Polish Displaced Persons. In July of 1947, the Senate Committee on Immigration submitted a report which advocated for a substantial increase in immigration in order to benefit the growth of Canadian industries. Between November 1946 and April 1947, the first groups of Polish ex-soldiers, totalling 4,527, arrived in Canada. In keeping with its traditional immigration policy, Canada accepted only those individuals who were capable of physical labour. Canadian recruiting teams signed up Polish refugees for two-year contracts to work on beet farms, in factories, as domestics, or in construction. The British government arranged the transportation of many veterans and their dependants, which enticed the Canadian government to accept even more immigrants. Eventually, Canada admitted thousands of refugees through the International

⁶⁹³ AAN, Warsaw, Alfred Fiderkiewicz, 472; II-4. Fiderkiewicz to the Women’s Branch of the United Jewish Peoples Order in Toronto, 1946.

⁶⁹⁴ Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada: *Documents on Canadian External Relations*. Chapter IV, Immigrants and Refugees, Part 5, 247.DEA/621-PF-40. *Minister of Poland to Secretary of State for External Affairs* “MEMORANDUM CONCERNING SOME MEMBERS OF THE ANDERS ARMY” Ottawa, September 11th, 1946. <http://www.international.gc.ca/departement/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefid=11455>

Refugee Organization. By 1952, it is estimated that around 55,000 Poles settled in the country.⁶⁹⁵

In contrast to the pre-1939 migratory waves, during which the majority of Polish immigrants came mainly from the peasant and labouring classes, the post-war wave was mainly composed of skilled and educated professionals: engineers, physicians, lawyers, civil servants, teachers and army officers, among others. The former immigrants, who generally possessed less education and skills, had had a difficult time establishing themselves in Canada because of widespread prejudice and harsh economic circumstances. The post-war immigrants also had to a difficult time adapting to the new conditions, but their educational and professional backgrounds helped them adjust much faster. Some of them also had a working knowledge of English and French. The usual intolerance accorded to immigrants from Central Europe was not as virulent as in previous periods, allowing many immigrants, especially those with more desirable skills – engineers, mechanics and skilled tradesmen – to find lucrative positions and personal satisfaction.⁶⁹⁶

The new arrivals significantly transformed Polish organizational life in Canada. They were highly politicized and they abhorred the Moscow-imposed regime. According to Henry Radecki, they were ex-soldiers who remained “on duty” as the “early stages of the Cold War, the Berlin blockade, and heightened East-West tensions all carried with them portents of real conflict, which could lead to a true liberation of Poland.”⁶⁹⁷ Many of the organizations that they established, such as the *Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantów* (Polish Combatants Association),

⁶⁹⁵ Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada*, 4.

⁶⁹⁶ See: Martin Thornton, *The Domestic and International Dimensions of the Resettlement of Polish Ex-Servicemen in Canada, 1943-1948* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000) and William B. Makowski, *History and Integration of Poles in Canada* (Niagara Peninsula, Ontario: The Canadian Polish Congress, 1967).

⁶⁹⁷ Henry Radecki, “Poles” in *Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples*, Paul R. Magocsi, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/p6/5> (Accessed, May, 2011).

which by 1958 had twenty-seven branches scattered across Canada (many with women's and youth auxiliaries), accentuated their loyalty to the Polish authorities in London. In 1951, the *Skarb Narodowy* (National Treasury) was established, which was composed of a dozen local commissions and committees designed to help collect funds in support of the Polish government-in-exile. Other organizations and clubs brought together individuals who had been deported to the Soviet Union or who came from Polish territories that had been lost to the Soviets as a result of the post-war border shifts.

The newcomers also revitalized cultural life by forming new Polish-language schools, song and dance groups, recreational clubs and scouting groups which emphasised a connection with Poland's prewar heritage.⁶⁹⁸ Around twenty Polish-language schools were established in Canada before 1950, and another twenty by 1960. Among the new organizations was the *Polsko Kanadyjski Instytut Badawczy* (Polish Canadian Research Institute) which was started in Toronto in 1956. Many of its members, like Victor Turek and Benedykt Heydenkorn, who were also veterans of the war, published some of the first major studies on the Polish community in Canada.

The Congress, together with its affiliates, formed an anti-Communist bastion. It banned all official contacts with the Warsaw government and its representatives. Prior to 1956 individual travel to Poland was forbidden. Even after the political relaxation in post-1956 Poland, the Congress continued to discourage contacts with Poland, arguing that the slightest exchanges could be interpreted as de facto recognition of the Polish People's Republic. This position later led to a rift between the Congress and the Alliance of Poles in Canada, because the

⁶⁹⁸ By the 1950s, Polish veterans formed Polish branches of the Royal Canadian Legion in larger cities; four were organized by Polish Air Force servicemen; four of the Polish Underground Army Association; and Parachute Brigade, Armoured Division, Horse Artillery and Cavalry, Cadets, and Junior Cadets associations were also formed. Former concentration-camp inmates also established six branches of their organization in major Canadian cities.

latter organization encouraged contacts with Poland. All of the Polish-Canadian newspapers, except the communist *Kronika Tygodniowa*, focussed mainly on news with a Canadian content and on local problems affecting Polish-Canadian communities rather than on providing news from communist Poland.⁶⁹⁹

Poles already settled in Canada helped their newly arrived compatriots by opening their parishes, organizations, and social clubs to them. They greeted the arrivals at train stations with bouquets and brass bands, and welcomed them into their homes. Initially, even the Polish Communists extended their help. The editors of *Kronika Tygodniowa* quickly forgot about the slanderous polemics which they had waged against the Anders Army. They tried to obtain the addresses of the newcomers to forward them complementary copies of their newspapers. They also printed letters (apparently free of charge) written by soldiers who were searching for relatives, work and a place to live. And like the non-communist Polish newspapers, *Kronika Tygodniowa* waged a crusade on behalf of the newcomers against “oppression and exploitation” and against the “disgraceful Canadian work contracts” which they compared to slavery. Three incidents in the immediate post-war period prompted Polish Communists to accuse the Canadian government of kidnapping, abuse and thievery, and they created strained diplomatic relations between Canada and Poland.

The first was related to Poland’s national treasures which Canada had delayed in returning after the war. A few days after the Nazis invaded Poland, a massive effort was undertaken by the Polish government to protect Poland’s royal treasures, which included exquisite sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries and an original copy of the first Gutenberg Bible. The Canadian government had agreed to protect the treasures for the duration of the war; however it ended up keeping the treasures until 1961 because of the conflict over their ownership

⁶⁹⁹ Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 27.

between the Communist regime in Poland and the London Poles. The affair turned into a desperate hide-and-seek confrontation in which the apartments of former consular workers were searched and secret passwords and signatures from men, some of whom had died, where desperately needed to access the treasures. Although the Canadian government returned the valuables after negotiating with the Polish authorities, the controversy had soured Polish-Canadian relations and led to an outcry that accused Canada of stealing Polish cultural property.⁷⁰⁰

The second incident involved 100 Polish women aged between twenty and thirty, who had been resettled from a German Displaced Persons camp in 1947. The women had been personally recruited by a Liberal MP, Ludger Dionne on a two-year contract to work in his textile mill in Quebec. Polish Communists immediately took up the issue and accused Dionne of “importing slaves,” “lowering wages,” and “infringing the women’s personal freedoms.”⁷⁰¹

Dutkiewicz personally got involved in the issue and established contacts with the girls to gain first-hand knowledge about their treatment. While most “Dionne girls” appeared to be content with their situation, some (perhaps because Dutkiewicz promised them better opportunities) complained and wanted to leave the mill.⁷⁰² Dutkiewicz encouraged them to flee and offered them train tickets to Toronto. He also advised young single men to contact the girls to convince them to get married and to leave Dionne. One man wrote “I am a farmer, a bush operator by trade [...], Letters to me can be written in Polish or Ukrainian as I handle both

⁷⁰⁰ See: Gordon Swoger, *The Strange Odyssey of Poland's National Treasures, 1939-1961*, (Toronto, Dundurn, 2004); United Nations Archives, Dag Hammarskjöld, “Aide-Memoire Re: Polish Wawel Treasures,” September 19, 1957. <http://archives-trim.un.org/webdrawer/rec/445905/view/Items%20-%20in%20-%20%5BMiscellaneous%20records%5D%20-%20Aide-Memoires%20re%20Polish%20Wawel%20Treasures.PDF> (accessed: September, 2011).

⁷⁰¹ Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz’s personal notes, 1947.

⁷⁰² In one letter to the “Dionne girls,” Dutkiewicz told them that they should escape that “prison house” and come to Toronto where “jobs are exploding with rewards of \$20 to \$30 a day.” Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz to Ms. Mary, September 5, 1947.

languages [...] P.S. I am single.”⁷⁰³ At least three women, Stasia Paluch, Bronisława Fornalik and Maria Nowak agreed to leave. The latter was hired by Dutkiewicz as his secretary. The two other women were employed as domestics and rumours later circulated that they worked as agents for *Kronika Tygodniowa*.⁷⁰⁴

News of the “inhumane” treatment of the “Dionne girls” reached Poland, where newspapers printed stories about their “slavery” and depicted the women as defenceless victims of capitalism. Polish authorities accused Canada of forming “slave plantations” and “slave camps for helpless girls.”⁷⁰⁵

Perhaps the most notorious incident that strained Polish-Canadian relations involved Polish orphans. In the spring of 1949, after conceding to pressure from the Canadian public and the Catholic Church, the Canadian government accepted 123 Polish orphaned children and resettled them from Tengeru Camp in Tanganyika to Canada. Guided by the IRO Constitution, which declared that all war orphans constituted children who were sixteen years of age or younger, unaccompanied and whose guardians had disappeared, Canadian immigration officials admitted the children. Even before the orphans arrived in Halifax on September 7, 1949, the Polish government protested, arguing that the resettlement of these children was a violation of international agreements and that only the Polish government had exclusive rights to decide the fate of displaced children. Moreover, the Polish government also argued that many of the children had parents and guardians in Poland who were anxiously awaiting the return of their children.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ Author’s collection: Adam Brown to Władysław Dutkiewicz, September 4, 1947.

⁷⁰⁴ Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz’s personal notes, 1947.

⁷⁰⁵ Author’s collection: Władysław Dutkiewicz note on Polish reaction to the “Dionne girls”, undated [1947?].

⁷⁰⁶ Library Archives Canada (LAC). Department of External Affairs, RG25-G-2, vol. 1. International Refugee Organization, Transport of Polish Children from Tanganyika to Canada, Draft memorandum to Cabinet, September 23, 1949.

The communist press, both in Canada and Poland immediately took up the issue and accused the Western Powers of “trafficking,” and “illegally deporting” helpless children. An article in the Polish *Życie Warszawy* (Warsaw’s Life) charged that the affair was “shameful” and “organized by international kidnapers supplying “merchandise” for the modern slave trade.”⁷⁰⁷ Illustrations of children toiling on Canadian farms and cartoons depicting frightened children being carried away by shrewd-looking slave masters were printed in the Polish papers. Other editorials and interviews with the children’s alleged parents offered heart-felt accounts of how the parents missed their “abducted” children. One woman wrote that she hoped that the Polish government would repatriate her daughters soon so that they would no longer wander aimlessly in Canada and “work for strangers.”⁷⁰⁸ Others wrote that they feared that their own children would soon be kidnapped, and “deported” for “exploitation.” The affair took on the dimensions of the Cold War, setting the Soviets against greedy Western capitalists who shamelessly forced innocent children into labour in order to fill their own pockets.

Although Canada had joined NATO and maintained close ties with the United States, the Canadian government tried to solve Cold War tensions pragmatically - through communication, cooperation and moderation - in order to promote the idea of containment. This approach prompted the Canadians to pursue a moderate and less ideological approach to solving the disagreement over the resettled children. In fact, Canadian authorities almost immediately conceded that the children who had parents in Poland should be reunited as quickly as possible.

The Polish government raised the issue at a UN General Assembly, and accused the IRO and Canada of “kidnapping” and unlawfully resettling Polish children. The issue became an excellent propaganda ploy for the Communists, who not only accentuated the West’s legal

⁷⁰⁷ LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG25-G-2, vol. 1, File 7, Newspaper clippings.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

transgressions, but also made appeals on humanitarian and moralistic grounds. What made matters worse, was that an IRO investigation revealed that twenty-three of the children were in fact not orphans and that their parents were living in Poland. On the other hand, many of the orphans were actually older than sixteen years of age, which, according to the IRO, meant that they were no longer considered children under the constitution and therefore able to decide where they wanted to stay.⁷⁰⁹

Partly out of its belief in ideal pragmatism, and partly out of a genuine humanitarian desire to help the children, Canada agreed to assist the Polish government in reconnecting the children with their parents. They even provided the names of the children to the Polish Legation in Ottawa, and offered to send their addresses if needed. Despite Canada's conciliatory efforts however, the Communists were more interested in milking the affair for propaganda. Proof of the Communists intentions came in July 1950 when the Polish authorities sent a note which ignored Canada's offers of assistance and reiterated previous accusations. Canada chose to ignore the note because the Polish authorities refused to cooperate and act for the greater good of the children. The UN General Assembly supported this perspective and resolved to allow the children to remain in Canada.⁷¹⁰

Repatriation

Polish authorities in Warsaw instructed their representatives in Canada to encourage Polish citizens (including Polish Jews) to return to Poland. In November of 1946, on instruction from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish consulates printed a notice urging all Polish citizens who resided in Canada to register with the Polish government. Canadian authorities

⁷⁰⁹ LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG25-G-2, vol. 1, File 8. Statement by the Director General of the IRO at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, November 10, 1949.

⁷¹⁰ LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG25-G-2, vol. 1, File 8. Note concerning the Polish orphans brought to Canada from East Africa under the auspices of the IRO, U.N., DIV. File Copy, August 22, 1950.

officially claimed that that such registration was not compulsory. Polish consular officials however, tried to force as many Polish immigrants, especially those who did not possess a Canadian passport, to register. The campaign was extended over several periods, but it brought meagre results. By mid-1947, only 639 individuals (which included 102 Jews) had registered. Instead of bridging the gap between the Polish Canadian community and the Polish consulates, this campaign only further isolated the Warsaw authorities. Fiderkiewicz later noted that the Polish-Canadian Left somehow remained stigmatized by “some indefinite aversion.”⁷¹¹

Some idealists and PSD members decided to return to Poland after the war. In 1945, members of the PSD sent a memorandum to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, in which they enthusiastically declared that they would initiate a campaign to encourage mass repatriation. *Kronika Tygodniowa* once again became the primary instrument of the communist propaganda campaign. Its editors declared that all honest people should “return to their homeland [and that] fascists and [Poland’s] enemies, being enemies of democracy - should search for asylum elsewhere.”⁷¹² They published stories and biographies about soldiers, workers and “democratically minded” public figures who decided to return. They also declared that “Democratic People’s Poland will prevent fascist and aristocratic rascals from returning, regardless of their previous titles and positions.”⁷¹³ Slogans such as “Enough Work on Foreign Land” and “It is Our Duty to Rebuild Poland” were meant to encourage immigrants to head back.

Already in October of 1945, a Polish Repatriation Committee was established in Montreal, which was quickly overwhelmed and dominated by Albert Morski and the

⁷¹¹ See Reczyńska, 256.

⁷¹²“Akcja repatriacyjna czyni postępy” (Repatriation campaign makes progress) in *Kronika Tygodniowa*, June 21, 1947, 1.

⁷¹³ *Kronika Tygodniowa*, December 1, 1944, 4.

Communists. It was composed of several dozen individuals, including engineers who came to Canada during the war and a number of left-leaning war refugees. Attempts were made to form similar Committees in Winnipeg and Toronto, where the Communists planned to open a central office. These plans however, did not materialize and the Polish Repatriation Committee remained in Montreal. By 1947, the Committee began to coordinate its efforts with the Polish consul in Montreal, Władysław Ziemiński. The consul supported the Committee's initiatives, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw did not have enough funds to cover the travel costs, which hampered the campaign.

The PSD also prepared a program to train and prepare the repatriates for work in Poland. Courses in construction, carpentry, earthworks and agricultural methods were organized to create specialists who would be sent to Poland in groups. The candidates were also supposed to receive specialized tools and equipment. Plans were even made to send ten trucks and other mechanized vehicles. But the number of people who registered for the courses and who planned to return to Poland was low. By mid-1947, the Polish consulate in Montreal registered only 231 potential repatriates. News about the bleak conditions in Poland, which were described in the anti-communist newspapers, persuaded many of these individuals to change their minds. Canadian and Polish bureaucrats also made it difficult to obtain visas for Poland, which prevented many of these individuals from returning. It was also a problem to transfer savings and property from Canada. The Polish government allowed repatriates to possess only ten thousand *złotych* (zloty) while the rest of their money had to be deposited in a bank. Canada also had strict laws that set limits on how much money could be removed from the country. A traveller was permitted to take enough to cover the costs of the trip, while larger sums had to be declared and transferred through banks. Some of the repatriates tried to smuggle undeclared sums, but they were caught

by border agents. One Polish repatriate, W. Barabasz for instance, had permission to take \$4,500 (Canadian), but he tried to smuggle an additional \$2,500 (American) in his suitcase.⁷¹⁴

Polish repatriates also had problems acquiring American visas, which were necessary since the only direct trans-Atlantic connection with Poland was from New York. The trucks and other mechanized equipment that the PSD had hoped to deliver to Poland could also only be exported to countries that were receiving aid through the Marshall Plan. Polish consuls tried to arrange that the equipment be purchased in Italy, but such plans never materialized.⁷¹⁵

Despite these obstacles, several Polish-Canadians returned to Poland. Between October of 1946 and the spring of 1947, two groups totalling only about thirty repatriates left for their homeland. In order to encourage repatriation, the Polish government offered free transportation to Poland for a brief period in mid-1947. Most repatriates however, had to cover one-third or one-half of the fare. In most cases individuals and entire families went on their own without any assistance from the government. As a result, it is difficult to estimate how many repatriates returned to Poland from Canada. Scholars estimate the total at around one hundred.⁷¹⁶

Among the repatriates were a few veterans and displaced persons who became disillusioned with the two-year work contracts on Canadian farms. The Warsaw authorities hoped to entice more veteran repatriates in order to use them as examples for propaganda purposes in Canada and elsewhere. Attempts were made, therefore, to obtain the veterans' Canadian addresses to send them propaganda materials about Poland. A report produced by the Polish legation in Ottawa indicates that only thirty-six veterans registered to be repatriated. Only six of them, however, returned to Poland.

⁷¹⁴ LAC, RG 25, 111 vol. 3646, file 4408-40, report made by Canadian border agents, January 23, 1948.

⁷¹⁵ Reczyńska, 283.

⁷¹⁶ Reczyńska, 284.

Among the repatriates were idealists who believed that it was their responsibility to return to their *ojczyzna* (fatherland). In 1950, the renowned Polish physicist, Leopold Infeld, who had worked with Albert Einstein, left his post as a professor at the University of Toronto and returned to communist Poland. He felt that he had an obligation to return “to do a small part towards raising the level of Polish science” from the ravages of the war. Cold War tensions led many to accuse Infeld of betraying nuclear weapons secrets to the Communists. He was stripped of his Canadian citizenship and widely condemned as a traitor.⁷¹⁷

Members and supporters of the PSD also comprised a portion of the repatriates, although surprisingly not a significant one.⁷¹⁸ Their departures were marked by ceremonial banquets during which the repatriates were lauded and showered with souvenirs. *Kronika Tygodniowa* later published letters from the repatriates which were used to show that they were prospering and satisfied. Some editorials even suggested that their comrades found conditions in Poland far better than in Canada. The letters were also printed to dispel the rumours made by non-Communists that the repatriates were being deported to Siberia. One repatriate, Antoni Gorczyński, who had returned to Poland in October 1949, create quite a stir in the Polish community. After his departure, Gorczyński’s family and friends had not heard from him for more than six months. Rumours circulated that he had been deported to the Soviet Union. The Polish consul in Winnipeg complained to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the entire episode “is spreading unrest in the local Polonia, since it is used as an example by reactionary activists [... to suggest] that the repatriates are deported to Siberia and not to Poland...”⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁷ AAN, Warsaw, KC PZPR PPS, 237XXII-476. Prof. Leopold Infeld Professor to S. Beatty, University of Toronto, May 25, 1950.

⁷¹⁸ According to Reczyńska many of them settled near Wrocław and in Żuławach. Reczyńska, 285.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

One vocal admirer of the Polish regime, Jan Koziel, also left for Poland in 1950, declaring that he was going to do his part to help build a new Polish society. After his departure, no one heard from Koziel for a while, until he returned in 1956, completely disillusioned with Communism. He wrote to several Polish non-communist newspapers, condemning *Kronika Tygodniowa* for spreading false information about the realities in Poland.⁷²⁰

Albert Morski was particularly upset about the way Polish authorities in Canada handled the repatriation issue. In a long report addressed to general Komar of the Polish General Staff and to Ostap Dłuski, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Morski criticized the Polish Legation, which included Fiderkiewicz and his successor Milnikiel, of mismanagement, manipulation and political weakness.⁷²¹ He also blamed Dutkiewicz, claiming that he was largely responsible for fomenting discontent and misconduct. According to Morski, under the pretext of repatriation “careerists, speculators [...and] agents” left for Poland. He provided a list of these individuals, and claimed that they “are returning to Canada disappointed [...] and they are covering their desertion by vilifying People’s Poland [...] or they emerge as downright agents of the Canadian reactionaries.”⁷²² One of the disappointed returnees, noted Morski, even alleged that he planned to “send his sons to the RCMP to fight against communism.”⁷²³ Morski suggested that the problem should be solved immediately by confiscating the repatriates’ Canadian passports; by hindering their efforts to

⁷²⁰ Victor Turek, *Polish Language Press*, 154.

⁷²¹ The relationship between the members of the PSD and the Polish consular authorities was also riddled with antagonisms. Old Polish-Canadian Communists like Morski butted heads with the new communist representatives from Poland. Fiderkiewicz complained that Morski was occasionally too “hot in his polemics, which somewhat impeded contacts with other Polish organizations.” A Polish communist named Sokolowski complained that the Polish consul in Winnipeg, Zygmunt Grele, allegedly compared the PSD to a brothel and that he called its members “boors.” According to Sokolowski, Grele told him that he was too left-leaning and that he “should forget about his leftist past.” Sokolowski also complained about the Polish consul in Montreal, Władysław Ziemiński, who allegedly told Sokolowski that active Communists like him did more harm than good for Poland. It is difficult to confirm whether Sokolowski’s grievances about the political views of the Polish consuls were true, or if he exaggerated them because of his personal conflicts with these individuals.

⁷²² Reczyńska, 286.

⁷²³ Reczyńska, 286.

purchase return tickets; and by conducting more strenuous verifications. Morski must have wielded significant influence because his suggestions were implemented and several staff members, including Alfred Fiderkiewicz, were removed from their posts and replaced.

Morski left Canada in 1947. His departure significantly weakened the PSD and its ideological direction. Polish consular reports sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 1947, claimed that the PSD had some 36 branches and 800 members in Canada. A few months later the reports mentioned only about 100 members in Montreal and no more than eighty members in Winnipeg. No information was provided about Toronto, although other sources indicate that the Communists had also experienced a dramatic decrease in that city.⁷²⁴

Attempts to form a branch of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) also failed. On August 5, 1946, the Polish consulate in Montreal helped establish a Canadian section of the PPS. The section was divided into three branches which operated in eastern, western and central Montreal.⁷²⁵ Section members requested propaganda materials, resolutions and instructions from the Party in Poland; they made contacts with the Socialist Press Agency in Poland to obtain news which they intended to publish in English, French and Polish; and they helped form the Polish Repatriation Committee in Montreal. Three of its members were among the first repatriates from Canada. Despite a strong start however, the section met with little success. In July of 1947, its chief representative, Stanisław Adamski, complained about the lack of evolution in the section which he noted had only thirty six members. In January of 1947, Adamski was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland and the Canadian section of the Polish Socialist Party went into decline.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁴ Reczyńska, 287.

⁷²⁵ AAN, Warsaw, 235/XIX-58 PPS, Adamski, Report on Polish Repatriation Committee. January 2, 1948.

By 1948, the optimism that other Polonia organizations would cooperate with the Communists began to evaporate. Many Polish Communists had actually changed their political views and even joined non-communist organizations like the Alliance of Poles in Canada. On July 22, 1948, Polish consuls invited members of Polonia to a banquet to commemorate the signing of the PKWN manifesto, which recognized the communist-backed provisional government in Poland. Out of 65 invited guests, only 35 accepted. The general anti-Communist attitude which prevailed among broader segments of the Canadian population only contributed to the Communists' demise. *Kronika Tygodniowa* continued to be published, but it lost a considerable readership by 1948. Its format was reduced from sixteen pages to twelve in 1949. In later years, it published very little information about the PSD's activities, except on anniversaries. Dutkiewicz once again took over the helm of the paper as its chief editor, and he retained this position until he retired in 1971, and later became its honorary editor until his death in 1981. The bulk of *Kronika Tygodniowa's* readers were mostly "old Communists," the *vieille garde* who had been members of the Polish communist movement since its early years and who remained loyal supporters until their deaths.

⁷²⁶ AAN, Warsaw, 235/XIX-58 PPS, Report on the Canadian PPS Section, Montreal, August 26, 1946; AAN, Warsaw, 235/XIX-58 PPS Adamski's report on the status of the Canadian PPS Section, July, 19 1947.

Conclusion

Polish Canadian communist organizations, like so many of their counterparts in Canada and elsewhere, were launched by a small group of alienated but highly dedicated individuals. Feeling alienated and out of place, and no longer attached to a world in which everything seemed to be chaotic, they longed for a doctrine that would explain the paradoxes and social ills around them. The Soviet Union fuelled their hopes and was an important motivator for joining the communist movement. By becoming associated with Communism, these men and women exchanged a “normal” life for prosecution, insecurity, and total commitment. By becoming a Polish Communist in Canada, these individuals were not only rebelling against economic and social hardship, but they were defying traditional forms of authority and culture. For Polish immigrants, who could rely on little else but their familiar symbols and structures in the New World, becoming a Communist meant betraying and rebelling against the traditional Polish world, the values of one’s forbearers and the values of the general society. In other words, it was not a choice made easily.

Those who joined the movement generally saw in it a credible solution to the anguish and the wretchedness of the capitalist world. Many of them had left their homeland to ameliorate their circumstances, but instead found hardship and misery. They were receptive to the messianic undertones of the radical ideology, but this receptivity constituted only a general background, which helps explain the multilayered phenomenon that led Polish immigrants into the communist movement. The majority of Polish immigrants became receptive to Communism in the early 1930s, when the Great Depression led to unemployment, strikes and general social unrest. The unfavourable position of Central and Eastern European immigrants in Canadian

society and the chauvinism, exploitation and discrimination accorded them, prompted many immigrants to seek consolation in the Communist Party of Canada. The growing spectre of Nazism also became a factor that compelled some to join the communist movement. Arguably, those who joined the movement between the Popular Front period and the Second World War were generally “samplers” or passive sympathizers, who constituted the movement’s main following during its periods of popularity.

The *vieille garde* – Władysław Dutkiewicz, Albert Morski, Zygmunt Majtczak, Tadeusz Lewandowski, Franciszek Baryła and Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel – constituted the movements’ inner core. They were the founders, promoters and organizers who gave the Polish movement its direction. All of them had been associated with Communism since the early 1920s and the 1930s. Most of them had joined as young adults who saw in the movement an outlet for their talents, ambitions and hopes. Fresh recruits were certainly conscripted into the organizations – they formed recreational and educational clubs and headed local womens’ and youth committees - but they were rarely promoted into the inner core. The *vieille garde* was a closed circle of individuals who alone understood the true purpose and direction of the organization. Antagonisms, personal ambition and careerism occasionally plagued the inner circle. Dutkiewicz, who had been at the helm of the PTRF and *Głos Pracy* until Morski’s arrival in 1935, felt threatened by this vibrant and eloquent agitator who had been sent by the Communist Party in Poland. The antagonism between the two never healed. After Morski departed Canada, he made sure to inform the Communist authorities in Poland about Dutkiewicz’s misconduct, and he questioned his loyalty to the Party.

Despite personal tensions and schisms, the Polish movement remained intact. There were no dissident groups like the Lobai movement which broke away from the Ukrainian Labour

Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA), over the *Holodomor* (the Great Famine of 1932-1933) in Soviet Ukraine. Even after the Soviet Union attacked Poland on September 17, 1939, an act which left Communists disillusioned everywhere, Polish communists quickly overcame the confusion over Nazi-Soviet collusion and they continued a united campaign that never flinched from Soviet policy.

In an attempt to evaluate the Polish communist movement, its contributions should not be overlooked. Polish Communist organizations significantly improved the cultural and educational level of their members, especially the youth. While the Communist curriculum has been regarded as unpatriotic, deviant and misleading, it was also inclusive, teaching pupils that they, too, could change the world and play an active role in forging history. Despite the stigma that Communists faced as swindlers, foreign agents, atheists and violent revolutionaries, they also provided hope for many immigrants. During the depths of the Depression, those who had lost optimism received a faith that helped them carry on through the years of economic crisis. Proletarian ideology not only acknowledged the legitimacy of the immigrant's anger but it also focussed it. By providing specific targets such as businessmen, clergy and Polish "fascist" consuls, the Communists absolved immigrants from feeling responsible for their predicament. Like the patriots, the Communists also recognized the importance of preserving language and Old World culture. Familiar symbols and images not only facilitated the transfer of radical ideas, but they offered a sense of belonging to the desolate and nostalgic immigrant.

The Communists' weaknesses were more apparent. State repression and bitter opposition in the Polish community substantially damaged the movement. The mere existence of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Alliance of Poles in Canada, two organizations which tried to organize the working-class with a more consistent ideology and program, further

limited Communist popularity. This was aggravated by effective socialist leaders such as Alfons Jan Staniewski, who were able to rally a significant following away from the PTRF and the PTL. Finally, the Communists self-inflicted their own wounds. Their pitiable excesses and unrealistic goals only created frustration, disappointment and false expectations. The “samplers” who generally responded to the Party because of worsening social and economic conditions, lacked ideological commitment and were unable to endure the inevitable crises. Above all, the Communists’ own policy escapades, theoretical contortions, reversals and blind faith in the Soviet Union were major factors that caused their isolation, discredited the movement and led to its subsequent demise.

Despite the availability of a number of important, though incomplete sources, it is difficult to determine whether the early Polish communist organizations considered themselves to be offshoots of the Communist Party of Poland. Many secular Polonia organizations, like the pro-PPS *Spójna* and the Sons of Poland, were modelled on existing organizations in Poland and they even adopted the same names. In later periods, however, evidence suggests that the PTL considered itself to be a “Polish Bureau” of the Communist Party of Canada. Their involvement in the Canadian communist movement drew Polish pro-Communists out of their isolation and into the whirlpool of Canadian radical politics, although they remained more interested, largely out of necessity, in the affairs of their ancestral homeland.

Idiosyncrasies set the Polish Canadian communist movement apart from its counterparts in Canada and elsewhere. The nature of the Polish Canadian community demanded specific strategies and tactics for distilling the communist brand among Polish immigrants. “Hurrah Revolutionism” as Morski discovered, was not the path for persuading traditional Poles who were generally skeptical of atheism, class struggle and internationalism. Recognizing that Polish

immigrants longed for familiar cultural expressions – language, song and dance groups and patriotic associations – the PTL became a virtual “cultural-educational” organization. The degree of importance accorded to the cultural and educational sphere is an indication that national feelings and familiar cultural expressions are a potent force in the immigrant experience. The politicization of a group’s culture raises several considerations important to the study of immigrants.

As this study has shown, the culture of Polish immigrant communities, rather than a failure on the part of Polish radicals to live up to their ideals, most often determined the limits of their radicalism. In this respect, while the communist organizations worked as a “thought and structure system” for their members, the Polish Canadian community was also a “thought and structure system” for Polish Communists and their patriotic counterparts. Political ideas became enmeshed with other elements of immigrant culture, specifically language, drama, youth clubs, funerals, sporting events and newspapers. While politicization within the Communist camp was more deliberate, patriotic organizations also had to connect familiar symbols and draw a rosy vision of their homeland to ensure that their ideas and ideology would get transmitted. Consequently, the importance of immigrant culture as a transmitter of different, even conflicting, political ideologies not only shed insight into how culture influences community politics, but it also demonstrates how an immigrant identity is intertwined with political ideologies.

Polish Communists remained highly critical of the Polish inter-war government and its representatives in Canada. They sharply differentiated nationality and love for one’s native land from political patriotism. The attitude of Canadian and Polish authorities toward them was marked by considerable restraint and surveillance. Polish consulates compiled reports on their activities in every jurisdiction and exchanged information with their counterparts in the United

States and in Europe. The Canadian government and the RCMP assigned translators to monitor the Polish communist press, they deported Polish agitators and, when necessary, raided and closed their meeting halls, clubs and press agency. The cooperation between Polish authorities and the RCMP, however, was occasionally marred by superficial strains. Polish officials occasionally expressed frustration and doubts about the effectiveness of the RCMP and its ability to crush the communist movement.

The struggle by Polish Communists to maintain themselves was greatly facilitated by their flexibility and adaptability. In support of their cause, they involved naive or unsuspecting passive sympathizers who did not look beyond the fraternal and social nature of their organizations. During periods of economic uncertainty they promised to have a credible solution to misery and unemployment. And when their followers gasped about Poland's fate in the wake of Nazism, they promised to wage a crusade for peace and democracy.

In spite of the numerous factors that favoured their growth in the 1930s, Polish Canadian Communists attracted only a small percentage of the total Polish immigrant population. But it should be noted that patriotic organizations did not fare much better. The circulation figures of the mainstream Polish-Canadian non-communist press and the membership rates in their organizations were comparable to those of the PTRF and the PTL in the 1930s. Considering the risks and the drastic break with traditional values that a decision to join the communist movement entailed, Communist recruiting efforts met with considerable success. In fact, the PTRF and the PTL were not obscure and marginalized federations as some scholars have suggested. On the contrary, they played an active role in shaping the Polish Canadian community and in vying for the support of the Polish immigrant population. The vote by which PTL delegates were asked to leave the founding meeting of the Federation of Polish Societies

(27 to 18), is additional proof that the movement was not entirely isolated and ostracized. Polish Communists could not have existed, much less functioned and flourished, without the degree of tolerance accorded by Canadian society and immigrants who held politically diverse views.

As Cold War antagonisms set in, Communist identification with the Soviet Union progressively alienated their camp from the Polish Canadian mainstream and narrowed its base of support. The influx of conservative and ultra-patriotic war veterans and Displaced Persons after 1945 helped alienate the Communist camp. Another cause for the Communists decline was the disappearance of the circumstances that originally provided such strong incentives for their emergence and development: unemployment and poverty, and the immigrants' isolation from Canadian society. The movement discredited itself in its unquestioned allegiance to the Soviet Union. It had been born as a guardian of the ultimate truth and as a crusader for a just cause. Eventually, however, it became a pawn of the Soviet Union, rejecting and distorting facts for the realization of Soviet policy.

When the most ardent Communists like Morski returned to Poland, the movement lost its firm direction and leadership. But even Morski could not have saved the movement after the war. Others who had travelled to see first-hand the new "democratic" Poland came back disillusioned. Their experiences had seriously affected their attitudes to the Soviet regime. The demise of the Polish communist movement in Canada was marred by several contradictions. Men and women who had dedicated themselves to the communist cause indulged in the promotion of their private interests, and instead of transforming capitalist society they partook in its benefits. Those who began as revolutionaries opposed to the exploitation of labour became themselves capitalist careerists and employers of hired hands. By the 1960s, support for their

organizations had almost entirely evaporated, and membership cannot have been greater than one hundred.

They were the last remnants of those who had rebelled against the rules of the general society, both because they found these rules unjust and because they found rules that better suited their visions of society. For them, joining the movement was a crossing of the Rubicon, which shaped the course of their lives and placed them as actors on the stage of history. In the end all that remained of the Polish Canadian communist movement was a handful of die-hards. But even they knew that their time was up. As one of them said, “We are reaching the end. The old die, young ones do not join. We are finished.”⁷²⁷

⁷²⁷ William B. Makowski, *The Polish People in Canada: A Visual History* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1987), 230.

Table 1: Polish Canadian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War

VOLUNTEER	HOME	DATE OF BIRTH	OCCUPATION	FATE
Baryla, Franciszek	Toronto, Kenora ON; Winnipeg, MB	1 April, 1908	farmer; lumberjack; communist organizer	WIA, survived, died in Poland, 6 February, 1969
Bramberg, Ephraim	Toronto, ON	-	-	hospitalized, unknown
Bucior, Stanislaw	Port Arthur, ON	c. 1902	-	KIA
Chalimoniuk, Stefan	Toronto, ON	c. 1899	-	KIA, Battle of the Ebro, August 1938
Czyzewski, Jan	Mundare, AB; Toronto	c. 1903	-	WIA, survived
Dack, Steve	-	-	-	unknown
Droch, Matao	Fort William, ON	8 November, 1901	blacksmith	survived
Dubel/Duviel, Vincent	Toronto; Windsor, ON	c. 1901	-	unknown
Falkowski, Nikodem	Toronto, ON	18 August, 1909	miner	survived
Franchuck, Jozef	Winnipeg, MB	c. 1910	barber; lumberjack	survived
Fronczysty/Franczysty/ Francis, Karol/Karl	Winnipeg, MB	c. 1903	farm worker	KIA when Ciudad de Barcelona was torpedoed, 10 May, 1937
Galka	Fort William, ON	-	-	unknown
Gawda, Wladyslaw	Port Arthur, ON	c. 1909	-	KIA, March, 1938
Gendy	-	-	-	unknown
Glowacki/Glogowski, Bazyli/Wasil	-	c. 1902	-	KIA
Gordziejuk, Ignacy	Winnipeg, MB	15 July, 1900	-	WIA, survived
Halimoniuk	-	-	-	unknown

VOLUNTEER	HOME	DATE OF BIRTH	OCCUPATION	FATE
Jablowski, Henryk	-	-	-	unknown
Janicki, Sewerin	-	4 May, 1903	-	MIA
Janiszewski, Frantisek	St. Catherine's; Port Arthur, ON	c. 1905	-	WIA, survived
Kandia, Anthony	Winnipeg, MB	c. 1906	-	survived
Kempa, Walerian/Walter	Montreal, QUE; Windsor, ON	27 September, 1905	-	survived
Kierpaul, Casimir K.	Toronto, ON	c. 1906	-	survived
Koslowsky/Kozlowsky, Stefan	Toronto; Kitchener, ON	c. 1907	teacher	KIA, September 1937
Kucz/Kurz/, Mikhail	Montreal, QUE	c. 1903	painter	WIA, survived
Kudebski, Michal	Montreal, QUE	c. 1902	-	survived
Kwiatek, Antoni	-	c. 1890	-	unknown
Lewandowski, Tadeusz/Alex				unknown
Lucasiewicz, John	Montreal; Rouyn, QUE	c. 1909	miner	KIA, Battle of the Ebro, July, 1938
Mangel, David	Toronto, ON; Montreal, QUE	9 October, 1900	painter	WIA, survived
Martyniuk, Wladyslaw/Walter	Montreal, QUE	10 October, 1901	plumber	survived
Matlak, Jozef	Toronto, ON	c. 1901	-	KIA, Retreats, died in hospital, March, 1938
Nagorny, Sedor	Val d'Or, QUE	16 February, 1904	miner	survived
Nus, Olik	-	-	-	unknown
Okonski, Jakob	Winnipeg, MB; Edmonton, AB	4 June, 1912	miner	WIA, survived

VOLUNTEER	HOME	DATE OF BIRTH	OCCUPATION	FATE
Opanowski, Kazimir/Kostur	Toronto, ON	23 December, 1905	blacksmith, welder	hospitalized, survived
Orlovitch/Osemlak, Filip	Vancouver, BC	29 April, 1901	-	survived
Pacyna, Jozef	-	-	-	unknown
Palak, Stanislaw	Winnipeg, MB	-	-	unknown
Poniedzilsky, Joseph	Montreal, QUE	3 March, 1907	artist	survived
Ramonovich, Stanley	Toronto, ON	C. 1903	-	survived
Rawicz, Michael	-	12 January, 1915	mechanic	KIA, Segura de los Banos, February, 1938
Rice, Benjamin	Toronto, ON	c. 1907	-	survived
Rudzinskis, Felix	Windsor, ON	c. 1899	-	WIA, survived
Russel, Tomasz/Thomas	Montreal, QUE; Toronto, ON	c. 1899	carpenter	survived
Rutkowski, Jozef	Edmonton, AB	c. 1896	-	KIA
Sidor, Victor	Toronto, Fort William, ON	11 December, 1903	-	survived
Skibinski, Stanislaw	Toronto, ON	c. 1904	-	survived
Slobodzian/Woodman, Walter	Port Arthur, ON	27 March, 1905	construction worker	WIA, survived
Smalec, Jozef	Fort William, ON	c. 1900	-	survived
Wijatyk, Antoni Filip	-	c. 1898	-	KIA, March 1938
Wilk, Frank	Fort William, ON	c. 1897	-	KIA
Witczak, Ignacy	Leamington; Windsor, ON	10 April, 1906	worker	survived
Wolek, John	Winnipeg, MB	c. 1902	-	unknown
Woloncewicz, Vincent/Stefan/William	Toronto; Fort William, ON	12 December 1898	worker	survived

VOLUNTEER	HOME	DATE OF BIRTH	OCCUPATION	FATE
Zaremba/Zaramba, Jan	Hamilton, ON	c. 1898	-	unknown
Zdybel, Wojcicek	Sudbury, ON	c. 1903	-	survived
Ziemski, Jan	Winnipeg, MB	1 June, 1914	-	MIA, Retreats, April 1938
Zojda, Bogdan	-	-	-	unknown
Zygarowicz, Kornil	Toronto, ON	c. 1899	roofer	KIA, March, 1938

This table lists the names of volunteers who indicated that they were ethnically Polish. Source: Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto and Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Library and Archives Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau collection, R2609-0-0-E.

Table 2: Gainfully Occupied Poles in Canada over the Age of 14

1941

Occupation	Total in Canada	Poles in Canada	% of Poles in Canada
Agriculture	1,083,816	20,980	1.93
Fishing, Hunting, Trapping	51,450	129	0.25
Logging	80,250	1,122	1.4
Mining and Quarrying	71,886	3,709	5.16
Manufacturing	703,162	13,229	1.88
Construction	202,848	2,708	1.33
Transportation and Communication	268,656	3,818	1.42
Trade	355,079	2,651	0.75
Finance	31,392	69	0.22
Service Sector	734,424	9,080	1.24
Clerical	338,031	1,699	0.5
General Labourers	263,544	7,211	2.74
Not Stated	11,413	172	1.51

Table excludes data for Yukon and the North West Territories. Source: Victor Turek, Poles in Manitoba (Toronto, Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1967).

Table 3: Population of Poles Residing in Major Canadian Urban Centers, 1931-1951

Urban Center	1931	1941	1951
Calgary	807	1,370	2,342
Edmonton	1,643	2,923	5,984
Hamilton	4,362	5,462	9,021
Kitchener	1,509	1,997	2,899
London	688	787	1,719
Montreal	7,184	7,947	13,663
Ottawa	355	955	1,857
Regina	719	1,024	1,584
St. Catherine's	-	1,552	2,433
Saskatoon	528	715	1,098
Sudbury	600	815	1,127
Thunder Bay	-	2,026	2,698
Toronto	8,483	13,094	26,998
Vancouver	1,222	3,199	7,899
Victoria	43	267	759
Winnipeg	11,228	13,109	17,637
Brantford	870	927	1,231
Guelph	-	413	481
Windsor	1,495	3,554	4,974
Sydney	-	783	647

Source: Rudolf Kogler, *The Polish Community in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1976).

Table 4: Polish Population in Canada by Province and Territory, 1901-1951

	1901		1911		1921		1931		1941		1951	
	Total	Poles	Total	Poles	Total	Poles	Total	Poles	Total	Poles	Total	Poles
CANADA	5,371,315	6,285	7,206,643	33,652	8,787,949	53,403	10,376,786	145,503	11,506,655	167,485	14,009,929	219,845
Ontario	2,182,947	2,918	2,527,292	10,631	2,933,662	15,787	3,431,683	42,384	3,787,665	54,883	4,597,542	89,825
Quebec	1,648,888	274	2,005,776	3,233	2,360,510	3,264	2,874,662	9,594	3,331,882	10,086	4,055,681	16,998
Manitoba	255,211	1,674	461,394	12,321	610,118	16,597	700,139	40,249	729,744	36,550	776,541	37,933
Saskatchewan	41,279	669	492,432	3,922	757,510	8,161	921,785	25,961	895,992	27,902	831,728	26,034
Alberta	73,022	470	374,295	2,297	588,454	7,172	731,605	21,157	796,169	26,845	999,501	29,661
British Columbia	178,657	136	392,480	610	524,582	1,361	694,263	4,599	817,861	8,744	1,165,210	16,301
Newfoundland	.	.	.	.	-	.	.	.	.	.	361,416	79
Nova Scotia	459,574	15	492,338	535	523,837	980	512,846	1,488	517,962	2,206	642,584	2,364
New Brunswick	331,120	3	351,889	69	387,876	65	408,219	121	457,401	233	515,697	340
P.E.I.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	95,047	1	98,429	54
Yukon	27,219	126	8,512	34	4,157	19	4,230	12	4,914	35	9,096	136
N.W.T.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9,316	4	12,028	40	16,004	120

Source: Victor Turek, *Poles in Manitoba* (Toronto, Polish Alliance Press Limited, 1967).

Table 5: List of Polish Communist Branches in Canada in 1938/1939

Branch	Location	Branch Leader(s)
Central Executive of the Polish People's Association	Toronto, ON	Albert Morski, Tadeusz Lewandowski, Zygmunt Majtczak, Gronowicz, Kierpaul, Falkowski
<i>Glos Pracy</i> Press Agency	Toronto, ON	Albert Morski, Władysław Dutkiewicz, Tadeusz Lewandowski
Juliusz Slowacki Branch	Winnipeg, MB	M. Choptiany
Gabriel Narutowicz Branch	Port Arthur, ON	-
Gabriel Narutowicz Branch	Kenora, ON	-
Polish Pioneer Group	Winnipeg, MB	-
Emily Plater Polish Women's Section of the Polish People's Association	Winnipeg, MB	K. Paczkowska, K. Kuchta
K. Frączysty Young Communist League	Winnipeg, MB	-
Jan Polka Branch	Brandon, MB	M. Hurkot
A. Kochanek Branch	Cadomin, AB	A. Sagala

Branch	Location	Branch Leader(s)
Marie Curie-Sklodowska Branch	Fort William ONT	W. Wilkołaski, L. Abroziak
Antonina Sokolicz-Merkel Branch	Edmonton, AB	J.C. Królik, E. Strojicz
Mikołaj Kopernik Branch	Vancouver, BC	-
Maria Konopnicka Branch	Spruce Valley, AB	S. Bator
Polish People's Association Branch	Diamond City, AB	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Calgary, AB	-
Adam Mickiewicz Branch	Blairmore, AB	Jan Jakubiec, A Pcion
Polish People's Association Branch	Lethbridge, AB	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Saskatoon, AB	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Cochrane, ON	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Athabasca, AB	-
Polish People's Association Branch	The Pas, MB	J. Takuski
Dąbrowski Branch	Toronto, ON	S. Kochmański, F. Krasocki
Polish People's Association Amateur Circle	Toronto, ON	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Regina, SK	-
F. Płaskowicka Women's Section	Toronto, ON	-

Branch	Location	Branch Leader(s)
Stanislaw Żeromski Branch	Montreal, QUE	-
Lelewel Branch	Montreal, QUE	-
Polish Women's Section	Montreal, WUE	-
W. Łukasiński Branch	Windsor, ONT	P. Kuliszko
L. Waryński Branch	Hamilton, ONT	-
Kazimierz Pułaski Branch	St. Catherine's, ONT	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Kitchener, ONT	-
Polish People's Association Branch	Sydney, NS	-
Stefan Kozłowski Branch	Mountain Park, AB	-
Tadeusz Kosciuszko Branch	Driftwood, ON	-
Independent Worker's Section	Hamilton, ON	-

Source: AAN, Warsaw, 761d. Polish Legation in Ottawa, Consul Juliusz Szygowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, report on Polish Communist organizations, December 12, 1938.

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- Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Montreal
- Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Pittsburgh
- Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Winnipeg
- Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London
- Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow
- Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington
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