

Ukrainian National Youth Federation: a look back, a look ahead

by Sen. Paul Yuzyk

The 1930s saw the emergence and rapid rise of three national Ukrainian youth organizations in Canada. The Canadian Ukrainian Youth Association (SUMK) was established in 1931 by the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (SUS), supporters of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian National Youth Federation was formed in 1934 in affiliation with the Ukrainian National Federation (UNO), which espoused the cause of Ukrainian nationalism. The Ukrainian Catholic Youth (UKYU) was brought into being in 1939 by the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood, a secular wing of the church.

All of these organizations were established in Saskatoon, which was identified as the cradle of Ukrainian organized life in Canada. It should be mentioned that earlier, in 1926, the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association, a pro-Communist group, had established in Winnipeg its youth section, which used the name Young Communist League (Komsomol).

In the 1930s, the children of the Ukrainian pioneers who had settled on vast prairie lands and in cities and towns of western and eastern Canada prior to World War I, had grown into their teens and 20s. Thousands were finishing high school, and hundreds were entering universities. This was the first Canadian-born generation of Ukrainians that began organizing all aspects of their life in this country — religious, educational, cultural, social, political and economic. Youth was seeking its place within the Ukrainian community as well as in Canadian life. At this time, the Ukrainians were preponderantly rural, which explains why organizations easily established branches in hundreds of villages. However, these gradually decreased in number as urban centers grew, particularly after World War II.

This year, 1984, marks the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian National Youth Federation of Canada, whose Ukrainian name was Molodi Ukrainski Nationalisty (Young Ukrainian Nationalist), which in the 1970s changed to Molod Ukrainskoho Natsionalnoho Obiednannia (MUNO). It is interesting to note briefly the achievements of this organization, which was very dynamic in its early stages, but which later gradually lost ground and influence.

Founders' ideals

In the early 30s, during the Great Depression, the situation among the quarter million Ukrainians who at that time were preponderantly farmers and laborers led by a small but growing group of Canadian-educated intellectuals, was, to say the least, most discouraging. The people were divided into three apparently irreconcilable camps: Greek Catholics, Orthodox and Communists.

The latter were making the most rapid headway as the movement was financed by Stalin's Comintern. With a popular name, the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA), under the leadership of the Communist Party of Canada, openly advocated materialistic Marxism, supported Soviet Ukraine and the Soviet Union, and agitated for a proletarian revolution in Canada. (Today this small pro-Soviet element operates under the misleading, popular name of Association of United Ukrainian Canadians).

The bitter Orthodox-Catholic religious struggle, sometimes resorting to violence among the Ukrainians, only



Paul Yuzyk of Saskatoon, dominion organizer, with Mary Tuchak, executive member from Winnipeg, with the UNYF plane with MUN insignia at air show in Oshawa in July 1938.

served to strengthen the force of the subversive Communists and to embitter serious-minded Ukrainians.

No level-headed Ukrainian, and least of all Ukrainian Canadian students and youths, could be happy with such an eruptive state of affairs in Canada. They knew that the Ukrainians could hope to make progress and prove themselves to be a constructive and loyal element in Canadian life only if religious tolerance was achieved and the stamp of communism was wiped off the Ukrainian image. The crying need was for unity directed toward idealism and supported by action.

In 1934, a group of high school, teachers' training school and university students, together with other youths, met in Saskatoon in the beautiful new Ukrainian Home of Education and launched the Ukrainian National Youth Federation. Working in cooperation with the Ukrainian National Federation, the leaders of this new youth movement crystallized their aims in a credo, later known as the Seven Beliefs. In brief, they are as follows:

- faith in Canada;
- faith in the dignity of the individual;
- faith in social progress through democratic reform;
- faith in the moral principles of Christianity;
- faith in cultural traditions;
- faith in the liberty of all peoples;
- faith in the liberty of Ukraine.

The leaders were convinced that these time-proven ideals would motivate the youths to use their boundless energy for constructive purposes that would benefit Canada and the Ukrainian people, and would thus contribute to progress in all walks of life. Pride in their ancestry and the development of their cultural heritage would surely enrich the life of Canada and make this country one of the finest in the world. Their vision was in many ways fulfilled.

Rapid expansion

With a clear-cut policy of action, the UNYF immediately made rapid pro-

gress. Branches sprang up in rapid succession in most of the Ukrainian-populated urban centers and in many rural communities in all the provinces, except the Maritimes, where few Ukrainians had settled.

At the first national convention in Saskatoon in June 1935, there were delegates from 14 branches who elected a national executive. At the next convention a year later there were 28 branches. The number soon increased to over 40.

The UNYF published a page in both Ukrainian and English in the weekly newspaper New Pathway. Elected organizers toured most of the Ukrainian communities, established branches and gave instructions regarding various activities. The response of the youth everywhere was better than had been expected. In 1939, prior to World War II, there were 53 branches. The UNYF reached its peak in 1948 with 61 branches in Canada.

Record of achievement

The youth of the 30s was idealistic and dynamic. The members of the UNYF used their unbounded energy for good constructive work as well as recreation. They attended meetings, often weekly; learned the Ukrainian language, literature and history, public speaking in both languages, organizational procedure, Ukrainian folk-dancing, and choral and instrumental music. They took part in meetings, concerts, plays, socials, bazaars, picnics, rallies and in a variety of sports. The girls also practiced needlework, weaving, Easter-egg designing and coloring, and home cooking. Prior to World War II, the halls which accommodated these branches were virtual beehives of activity.

Several outstanding achievements during the 50 years of organizational work warrant special, even though brief mention.

• In 1935, the UNYF established a Ukrainian Radio-Telegraphy School in Toronto. Many boys graduated from these courses, most of whom later volunteered for service in the Canadian armed forces, some becoming officers in the navy. Some paid the supreme sacrifice for their country.

• In 1938, the UNYF conducted a fund-raising campaign, which made it possible to purchase an airplane and establish a Ukrainian Flying School in Oshawa, Ont. Close to 100 took the course in aeronautics and practical flying, with 35 graduating with pilot's licenses. At the outbreak of the war, most of them joined the RAF and the RCAF, with some being killed in action. Many other UNYF members served in the Canadian armed forces during World War II.

• The UNYF went into the Communist strongholds and, along with the Ukrainian National Federation, greatly weakened the Communist movement in such Ontario cities as Sudbury, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, as well as in Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver and other places. Many former Communist followers joined the nationalist associations.

• From the outset, the organization maintained a bilingual youth page in the New Pathway, and later published its own magazine, *Holos Molodi: Youth Speaks*, followed by *MUN Beams and New Perspectives*. It published several pamphlets, such as "A Ukrainian Song Book," "Seven Presidents in Uniform" and Prof. Andrusyshen's "Ukrainian Literature and its Guiding Light, Shevchenko," and booklets such as Andrew Gregorovich's "Books on Ukraine and the Ukrainians" and "Canadian Folk Dance."

(Continued on page 12)

vided with a railway ticket — Saskatoon-Montreal, return with stopovers — costing \$29, plus \$10 for

Twenty-five...

(Continued from page 3)

In the end, Mr. Bandera, Mykola Lebed and Yaroslav Karpynets were sentenced to death, while the others received lengthy prison terms. The death sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment.

In 1938, Mr. Konovalts was assassinated in Rotterdam when a bomb went off in a package he was carrying.

After the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939, Mr. Bandera, along with scores of Ukrainian political prisoners, was freed.

The war years

Following the German invasion of Poland, Cracow became the seat of Ukrainian nationalist activity. Poland ceased to exist as a country and became the so-called Generalgouvernement (of Poland) which also included a small area of Ukrainian lands west of the Sian and Bug rivers. German-occupied Poland also became a refuge for some 20,000 Ukrainians from Soviet-controlled western Ukraine.

Under the Germans, tensions soon mounted in the OUN, and by 1941 — the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union — it had split into two factions, one controlled by Mr. Bandera and the other by Col. Andriy Melnyk.

The German attack on the USSR in June 1941 provided the opportunity for Ukrainian nationalists in Germany and German-occupied Poland to return to Ukraine. Many of them accompanied the German army as interpreters.

There were also two Ukrainian companies in the German army composed of members of the OUN faction led by Mr. Bandera. One, called Nachtigall, was commanded by Roman Shukhevych, who was later to die as commander of the underground Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). It entered Lviv with the Germans on June 30, 1941. The other, Roland, fought in Rumania.

On June 30, members of the OUN headed by Mr. Bandera organized a gathering of citizens in Lviv, proclaimed the re-establishment of the Ukrainian state and announced that Mr. Bandera had appointed Yaroslav Stetsko as the head of the provisional government.

Shortly thereafter, however, the Gestapo arrested Mr. Stetsko and other nationalist leaders, including Mr. Bandera. After refusing to revoke the proclamation, Mr. Bandera was sent to prison in Berlin and later to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he sat out virtually the remainder of the war.

After the war, Mr. Bandera resumed his activities with his faction of the OUN in Munich. He became editor of a newspaper, *Shliakh Peremohy*, and was instrumental in the establishment of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations. To many of his followers in the West and in Ukraine, he came to symbolize the ongoing revolutionary struggle in Ukraine against Soviet occupation, which was epitomized by the partisan warfare of the UPA, which fought on against Soviet and Communist forces until the mid-1950s.

Assassination

Given the volatile situation in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, the Soviets were irked by the activities of the OUN in the West. In 1950, they had approached a young Ukrainian named Bohdan Stashynsky and, as he was to testify later, told him to cooperate or his parents and sisters would be harmed. He was ordered to report on nationalist activities in and around Lviv. When Ukrainian nationalists assassinated pro-Soviet author Yaroslav Halan, Mr. Stashynsky provided the KGB with information that led to their arrest. Later, he was trained in Kiev and sent to Germany under an assumed identity.

On October 12, Dr. Lev Rebet was found dead near his Munich office. At first, it was believed that the OUN leader had died of natural causes. In fact, he had been stalked and killed by Mr. Stashynsky, who used a weapon similar to the one he would employ two years later against Mr. Bandera.

After assassinating Mr. Bandera, Mr. Stashynsky fled to the Soviet zone. In August 1961, he crossed into the Western zone in Berlin and told authorities that he had murdered two well-known emigre nationalist leaders in Munich several years earlier. After a trial, a German court sentenced him to the relatively light term of eight years' imprisonment. Released in the late 1960s, Mr. Stashynsky disappeared. There were persistent reports that he was brought to the United States for intelligence purposes, although this was never confirmed.

Earlier this year, a South African newspaper quoted a South African military official as saying that Mr. Stashynsky had undergone facial surgery and was living in the coastal city of Durban. The report said that he had worked for South African security forces.

Mr. Bandera was survived by his wife, Yaroslawa, now deceased, and three children, Natalka, Lesia and Andriy, who died this year in Toronto.

Ukrainian National...

(Continued from page 9)

• Besides giving wholehearted support to the Canadian war effort to make the world safe for democracy and human freedom, the UNYF aided the movement for the freedom and independence of Ukraine by spreading information about the situation in Ukraine and about Ukraine's right to freedom. Canadians were reminded that the Soviet Union was an aggressive, imperialistic Communist power, which destroyed freedom and democracy and supported subversive fifth columns in Canada and the free world.

• UNYF activities greatly expanded on a broader and more popular base during the period following World War II. The national organizer, Michael Orychiwsky, a Montrealer, organized six Youth Festivals and 45 Ukrainian Cavalcades in most of the large Ukrainian centers across Canada. These involved the youth talent of the regions performing Ukrainian dances and conducting choirs, which were appreciated by thousands of people. Ukrainian culture was popularized, which attracted large numbers to the UNYF. Unfortunately, there was almost no follow-up to these popular activities and the organization soon declined.

• From the UNYF ranks emerged several distinguished parliamentarians such as Anthony Hlynka, federal member from Vegreville, Alta; Ambrose Holowach, federal member from Edmonton and later provincial secretary in the Alberta government; Michael Starr, mayor of Oshawa and federal minister of labor in the Diefenbaker government; Michael Wladyka, mayor of Port Hope for many years; Brigadier-General Joseph Romanow; Leon Kossar, journalist and executive-director of the Canadian Folk Arts Council; Walter Klymkiw, conductor of the Koshetz Choir; Andrew Gregorovich, editor of *Forum*; and others.

• When the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism held its briefings in the mid-1960s, the UNYF strongly advocated a policy of multiculturalism for Canada, as it was the only concept that guaranteed the equality of Canadians of all origins and the free development of all cultures in the Canadian mosaic pattern. Through their excellent folk-dance ensembles, choirs, orchestras and artistic creativity, the UNYF significantly contributed to the cultural enrichment of Canadian life.

This is an impressive record of achievement, which would be much more meaningful if an illustrated history of the UNYF were written and published. I am happy to have played some part in the founding of this youth federation and in the development of its many-sided activities during the first two decades.

The next half century

Even after the UNYF had a network of over 50 branches from coast to coast in Canada prior to World War II, and cultural and economic activities were at their peak, there were voices of the older generation which prophesied that the Ukrainians could not overcome assimilation and were doomed to extinction in another generation.

On the contrary, the Ukrainian Canadians have not only survived culturally, but have won many high positions in all walks of Canadian life. For example, they have made tremendous achievements in municipal, provincial and federal politics, having elected over 130 parliamentarians,

many of whom have attained high Cabinet positions in provincial and federal governments. Their leading role in multiculturalism was instrumental in the establishment of a federal ministry of multiculturalism in 1972, the entrenchment of multiculturalism in the new Canadian constitution of 1982, and the recognition of Ukrainian in the public and secondary schools and in the universities. This political action guarantees the preservation and development of Ukrainian culture, and, hence, the survival of Ukrainians in Canada.

On the threshold of the next half century, the leaders of the UNYF, and the UNF, are planning their future. They are painfully aware that the once dynamic organization has dwindled to a few branches existing only in large cities. Hopefully, they are also aware that with its broad appeal to all sectors of the Ukrainian youth the potential for the expansion of their activities and membership is there.

Looking back, one fact becomes clear. The generation of the 80s is vastly different from the generation of the 30s. So are the situations and attitudes. The pioneer youths of the 30s, having just discovered their rich cultural heritage, forged ahead with idealism and enthusiasm to win recognition and a viable place in Canadian society. They were conscious that protection of their cultural rights and the defense of the cause of Ukraine's freedom required political action. UNYFers Hlynka, Holowach and Starr won seats in the federal parliament, the latter becoming minister of labor, where they ably defended the interests of their people. My role in the Senate helped to achieve implementation of multiculturalism through a federal ministry and its recognition in the Constitution as well as the defense of human rights at NATO, Helsinki review conferences and the United Nations.

The present generation of youths in the UNYF apparently is interested in the retention of some of the beautiful visible aspects of Ukrainian culture — and that is good to a point. They are, however, much less interested in political and community action. It appears that the leadership has little knowledge and little understanding of the significant achievements of the past. Certainly the UNYF founders and achievers were not honored or featured in the 50th anniversary celebrations in Saskatoon in June and Toronto in October. No clear vision, direction or drive is evident.

A non-partisan, non-sectarian organization, such as the Ukrainian National Youth Federation of Canada, which will continue to emphasize Ukrainian Canadian unity as well as Canadian unity, is indispensable at this time. If the leadership and membership reeducate themselves to the high ideals expressed in the Seven Beliefs and push forward with an all-around constructive program of activities, they will attract new youth into the UNYF ranks. This will necessitate adaptation, a difficult but necessary process. If the UNYF will train and provide new leaders for the whole Ukrainian society in Canada, as was done in the past, this will be a positive service and contribution to the well-being and progress of the Ukrainian people and Canada. The cooperation and support of the past members of the UNYF, as well as the leaders of the UNF, of the Churches and of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee are vital in order to achieve success and a better future.

Should every generation start on its own, or should lessons be learned from the past?

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