

On the Politics of Multiculturalism

By Andriy J. Semotluk

It is impossible to describe something totally objectively. In making any description or recounting any story, we select relevant items from many possibilities. What we see or observe is often the result of what we are looking for more than "objective reality."

In his book, *The Politics of Multiculturalism: A Ukrainian-Canadian Memoir*, published by CIUS Press, Dr. Manoly Lupul sets out his impressions of the history of the multicultural movement in Canada, from its early days in 1967 to 1996. The challenge was to select what was most relevant.

Thousands of events took place and numerous people played a role. By necessity, some had to be overlooked. In the Ukrainian-Canadian community, alone, Yuriy Darewych, Bohdan Onyshchuk, Michael Wawryshyn, the late Andriy Bandera, and others made significant contributions, perhaps more than this book acknowledges. Yet, though not complete, the book is, nonetheless, of extraordinary importance because it is an authoritative and thorough recounting of events in Canadian history in regard to linguistic and cultural policy by someone who was in the epicentre.

The multicultural movement was largely born out of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism's report in which the contribution to Canada of "The Other Ethnic Groups" was discussed. The Royal commission's work, which included the input of Ukrainian-Canadian Slavics Professor Ivan Rudnytskyj, viewed Canada in a bilingual and bicultural context. This did not square with the reality of the many ethnic groups in Canada. Their reaction to the commission's work led to the multicultural movement that acknowledged Canada was a bilingual society, but argued that it was multicultural, not bicultural.

Another key factor was Quebec's Quiet Revolution. It sought to reassess the role of Francophones and gave rise to the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.

In the provinces of Canada, aside from Quebec, the Ukrainian community was in the midst of an Anglo-Saxon sea; in Quebec (apart from Montreal), in a French-speaking one. In part, the politicization of the Ukrainian community occurred due to the unique situation of the Quebec Ukrainians. Were they to learn French or English? Were they to be bilingual? Or trilingual? Some who took on leadership roles in the multicultural movement and grappled with such questions came from Quebec, including Bohdan Krawchenko, Roman Serbyn, and Lubowyr Kwvasnycia.

In the context of the Quiet Revolution, three Quebec politicians stood out: Pierre Elliot Trudeau, later the Prime Minister, Gerard Pelletier, later Secretary of State, and Jean Marchand, who became Minister of

Labour. They had a vision of Canada as a truly bilingual and bicultural country.

Supporting the Ukrainian-Canadians' efforts were, Gerard Pelletier's assistant, Doug Bowie, in the Department of the Secretary of State, Steve Jaworsky, a civil servant, and later, Orest Kruhlyak, who headed the Multicultural Secretariat. Through these individuals, community leaders had access to Gerard Pelletier and other Ottawa power centres. This access invigorated the community and its efforts to leave its mark on national

policy. The government wanted to find a new role for some 5 million unilingual French speakers in Quebec without igniting a revolt from ethnic minorities in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. At the first SUSK conference on Canadian cultural policy in 1969, Gerard Pelletier and others attended a panel discussion.

In 1970, at a SUSK conference entitled *Whither Canada*, at the University of Toronto, representatives of other ethnic groups and federal and provincial politicians took part. SUSK President, Bohdan Krawchenko in



Dr. Manoly Lupul Inducted into the Order of Canada by Governor General A. Clarkson

cultural policy.

A third factor relating to the Ukrainian community's leadership role in the multicultural movement was the political situation in Ukraine. The threat to the existence of the Ukrainian language and culture under the USSR's Moscow-based leadership provided Ukrainians in Canada with an additional impetus for maintaining their language and culture and taking a lead in the multicultural movement.

In his memoirs, Lupul does not relate some of the movement's beginning steps because they occurred before he got involved, but they are worth recounting. One of the leading organizations was the Ukrainian Canadian University Students Union (SUSK). The students, led by figures such as Bohdan Krawchenko, Roman Serbyn and Roman Petyshyn, were able to access federal and, in some cases, provincial and municipal funds, to pursue a cultural agenda.

SUSK campaigned to alert the Ukrainian and other ethnic communities of the danger of a federal bicultural policy that had a place only for the English and French. In 1969, SUSK undertook a project that engaged Bohdan Krawchenko to organize students. Funding came from the federal government, which wanted to promote discussions among cultural groups with a view of gaining their support, or at least minimizing their resistance, to the concept of Canada as a bilingual coun-

try. A speech he wrote with other SUSK members, asserted that defining Canada as a bicultural country excluded the Ukrainian and other ethnic communities from the national cultural scene. A bicultural country might be able to accommodate individuals in either the English-speaking or French-speaking societies, but its framework did not have a place for a community.

Through SUSK's fieldwork program in 1970 and 1971 and conferences in 1970 in Montreal, Edmonton and Winnipeg, the idea of multiculturalism started gaining ground.

In 1970, Lupul was approached by one of the fieldworkers, Hanya (Anna) Balan, to work with them. The moment when he was drawn into the battle for multiculturalism was a pivotal one for the Ukrainian community—and for the movement in Canada.

Manoly Lupul is an extraordinary individual. He made his way up from the farms of northern Alberta to Harvard University, becoming an expert in minority education in Canada. Though his Ukrainian language skills were weak, he nonetheless became a dynamo who mobilized others to get involved in the movement.

"Bilingualism," he argued, "understood merely as French English bilingualism is completely unacceptable to thousands of other Canadians who have nothing against the French language and are not interested in unilingualism. Bilingualism confined merely to

French-English bilingualism is unacceptable because it means the eventual extinction of other languages and the sub cultures they support. What is needed is a language policy that recognizes Canada's multicultural reality."

A powerful speaker, Lupul sometimes got so passionate about multiculturalism that he appeared to be having a heart attack! But, his fervour resulted in lasting contributions.

Perhaps the greatest was his "tripartite linguistic proposal." In it, Lupul echoed a theme advanced by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, namely, that "language is the key to culture; without language, culture cannot survive".

Lupul's policy proposes:

"1. Unilingualism, either French or English, for all parents who have reason to believe that their children will live in a predominantly unilingual environment such as rural Quebec, British Columbia, or many other parts of Canada.

"2. Bilingualism, English French for those English speaking parents who are reasonably sure that their children will live in an predominantly French environment (as in Montreal), or English Italian, or English Ukrainian for Italian speaking or Ukrainian speaking parents who are reasonably certain that their children will live in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon (i.e. English speaking) environment..."

"3. Trilingualism, French English Italian, or English French Ukrainian, or English French German, etc, for individuals who wish to be mobile Canadians, able to occupy positions in national organizations, whether public or private, yet at the same time are interested in retaining the psychological and cultural benefits of their ancestral origins which are neither British nor French..."

Later, Lupul added a section on languages of instruction in schools. His proposal became the cornerstone of the Ukrainian-Canadians' case for multiculturalism. It was and remains the most well-thought-out and rational policy advocated in linguistic politics in Canada. For reasons unknown to many, unfortunately, the policy was never adopted, and Canada is worse off as a result.

One of Lupul's most galvanizing arguments was his analogy between a tourist visiting Kyiv where Russian is spoken and Paris, if only German were spoken there. It brought home the message that Russification in Ukraine justifies special consideration for the Ukrainian community in Canada.

In his book, Lupul describes three kinds of Ukrainians in Canada. The first are "Ukrainians" pure and simple. The second type, who are born in Canada of Ukrainian parents are, according to Lupul, "Ukrainian-Canadians." The third are second-generation or third-generation Canadian-born "Canadians" (like Lupul himself). In Lupul's view, those who had longer roots in Canada better understood the importance of developing a multicultural cultural policy.

Lupul participated in many delegations to meet the Prime Minister and other politicians. It was in the

discussions leading up to the meetings that Lupul developed his disdain for the leaders of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. He was frustrated by the humiliating approach they took and the absurd and unrealistic positions they proposed in front of Canada's leading figures.

As Lupul points out, such experiences spurred him to try to reform the community's leadership. He inspired young people from coast-to-coast. There were other reformers, like Walter Tarnopolsky and Stan Frolich, but Lupul was always in the forefront.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Ukrainian community was fortunate to have in its ranks Members of Parliament and members of Legislative Assemblies. Steve Paproski, Bill Yurko, Bill Skoreyko, Burt Hohol, Julian Koziak, and Bill Diachuk all played significant roles in advancing multiculturalism. Senator Yuzyk also played a pivotal role in Ottawa.

The efforts of Lupul, SUSK, and individuals of Ukrainian and other backgrounds culminated in 1971. By then, various parliamentarians were persuaded of the merits of a multiculturalism policy. Among them were MPs Don Mazankowski (later the Deputy Prime Minister), Edmonton's Steve Paproski, Manitoba's Jake Epp, Warren Almond, a Liberal from Quebec, and others. In October, after introducing his new policy in Parliament, Prime Minister Trudeau came to a Ukrainian Canadian Congress banquet and outlined the details of his "Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework" policy. This was the movement's peak and greatest achievement.

Lupul's memoirs make clear the effort that many put in to advance their goals. Yet, there were three important accomplishments that were directly the result of Lupul's work.

The first was the creation of bilingual schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, copied in similar forms in Ontario and British Columbia. The bilingual schools made it possible for parents to send their children to a public school that taught in their native language, from grade one to the end of high school. The school used the mother language and the dominant language of the community (usually English) as the languages of instruction, alternating between the two.

These schools are the greatest asset Canada has to offer, and they came to fruition thanks to the efforts of Lupul, Peter Savaryn, and a few others, supported by individuals in government like Burt Hohol.

Lupul's other major achievement was the creation of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian (CIUS) at the University of Alberta. This research and publications institute has become a leading voice in the Ukrainian community in Canada and beyond. By providing leadership and supporting and addressing community concerns, it has pumped new life into the Ukrainian community in Canada.

Lupul, along with Savaryn, was also instrumental in forming the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies, which became the fundraising

arm for the CIUS and Ukrainian studies programs.

Lest I leave the impression that Lupul was an angel, I should add that he had some shortcomings. A major one was a tendency to get involved in all aspects of Ukrainian affairs and to present himself as an expert on all things. Savaryn also tended to over-extend himself. When I challenged them about this, they responded: "You are going to have to wrench these matters out of our hands if you feel that we are not appropriately representing our community in this regard."

Maybe their approach was justified, yet sometimes it did not always serve the community well.

There is a sense of fatalism in Lupul's memoirs. He suggests that the Ukrainian community's efforts and multiculturalism policy have run their course, and that it is only a matter of time before they subside. However, though no doubt changing, neither the Ukrainian community nor multiculturalism is on the verge of extinction.

Granted, the movement has faded in time. Multiculturalism, which was once a policy of community development with respect to minority groups in Canada like Ukrainians, now centres on race relations and human rights. The issues of group dynamics and the place that communities hold in Canada, sadly, have been taken off the national agenda.

Recently, several other factors have led to multiculturalism's decline. The Reform Party strongly attacked multiculturalism and the use of government funding for ethnic education and community affairs. The party (and the Conservative Party of Canada) failed to appreciate that the money used is collected from the same people on whom it is spent. It is a racist to suggest that cultural development should take place only in English or French to the exclusion of other groups.

The issue of Canadian unity, a key impetus that animated the movement, has morphed into a more Quebec-oriented struggle for a new vision for French Canada. The presence of the Bloc Quebecois in the federal parliament and the creation of the Parti Quebecois have posed new challenges to a bilingual and multicultural Canada.

In sum, *Politics of Multiculturalism: A Ukrainian-Canadian Memoir* is an outstanding achievement. It is a gift to the Ukrainian community and all of Canada. Lupul has done us a great service in recording, as best as he could, from his own recollection and papers, the history of the development of cultural policy in Canada. The book deserves careful reading and reflection, and Lupul deserves our unbridled gratitude.

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