

**WOMEN, NATION, AND THE GENERATION GAP:
DIASPORIC ACTIVISM OF THE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF
AMERICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**

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Statement

I hereby state that the thesis contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. The thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Abstract

The present study examines a co-formative relationship between the diasporic and women's activism of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America at the time of Ukraine's independence. Founded in 1925, this voluntary-based non-profit organization of Ukrainian migrant women and women of Ukrainian descent has carried out philanthropic, educational, and cultural activities along with political protests and lobbying, taking a recognized place among organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States. Having been a women's organization in the Ukrainian diaspora and an ethnic organization in American and international women's movements from its inception, the UNWLA often considered its participation in international women's forums instrumental in promoting the cause of Ukraine's sovereignty. Instead of withdrawing from this arena in the early years of Ukraine's independence, however, the UNWLA started to adopt the women's rights and equality discourses for generating relations with the state and non-state actors in Ukraine and for conceptualizing a vision for the organization's future.

Drawing on fieldwork findings from the New York City branches of the organization, I argue that the current shift in the UNWLA's relation to women's rights movement has been triggered not only by the changes in the political status of their homeland, but also by the generational shift in the UNWLA membership as well as by the growing currency of women's rights discourses in the international politics. This study considers the tensions that arise from the diversity of views and backgrounds of women within one organization and the discourses on the *Ukrainian woman* which are used to create a shared frame for the UNWLA's work. The primary tension in the diasporic women's activism, however, lies between their action for homeland, which is informed by thorough understanding of gendered position of women in the nation, and the lack of explicit attention to their own position within the diasporic community and the family.

Engaging with the “stubbornly genderless” (Morawska 2011, 1029) interdisciplinary field of diaspora studies, the present study aims to contribute to the scholarly effort to foreground experience of women in diasporas. Instead of simply adding women, however, this research follows the diasporic women’s networks in the international, North American, and Ukrainian women’s movements to argue for the need to conceptualize the (self)positioning of diasporas in relation to the growing significance of transnational advocacy networks, non-governmental organizations and global social movements. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on women’s movements, which has been interested in the ability of women to organize around their gender identity and to combine national or other struggles with issues of women’s empowerment. The tensions between the national and women’s rights causes in women’s activism in the diaspora and the ways in which they are reconciled in everyday practices of the organization bring an important angle to the previous discussions.

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Abbreviations

CEDAW – Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CSW – U.N. Committee on the Status of Women

DP – Displaced People

ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council

ICW – International Council of Women

IWD – International Women’s Day

IHRC – Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota

NCW/USA – National Council of Women of the United States of America

UCU – Ukrainian Catholic University

UNWLA – Ukrainian National Women’s League of America

U.N. – United Nations

WFUWO – World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations

WIDF – Women’s International Democratic Federation

WWII – World War II

Notes on Transcription

The references to the Ukrainian language sources cited in this dissertation appear in Latin transcription following the Library of Congress Romanization rules without the use of the ligature sign and simplification of the signs *ï* and *ĩ* to “*i*”. The same rules are followed when a transcription of a Ukrainian word appears in the text next to its English equivalent, e.g. Branch (*viddil*). The English spelling the Ukrainian family names of pre-1991 immigrants sometimes diverges from currently accepted transcription rules and I use them in their accepted official English spelling whenever I am familiar with it. In those instances where I could only find a Ukrainian version of the name, I transliterate it following the Library of Congress rules. All the geographic names are used in their accepted international spelling.

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Chapter One. Women in the Diaspora: Opportunities and Challenges

1.1 Introductory Remarks

“And you know, it was a bitter-sweet moment for me. Because I was a woman without a state. And I realized that I had to define where I belonged now. Ukraine was speaking for itself, I lived in the American world – and my decision was to talk more about the American world. But it didn’t happen that way (*tse ne stalosia*).” (Iryna Kurowyckyj, interview with the author, May 2009)

In the academic literature on contemporary women’s movement in Ukraine, the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) is often marked as the starting point for the growth of women’s rights activism and the beginning of legitimization of claims for gender equality in political discourses in Ukraine (Kis 2013; Zhurchenko 2004). For women of the Ukrainian diaspora, who also attended the conference, it held an important meaning as well, being a “bitter-sweet moment,” as Iryna Kurowyckyj, Honorary President of the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America, referred to it in one of her interviews with me. It was part of the larger process of transition from being a stateless diaspora to a diaspora with a state. To see an official delegation from independent Ukraine in the international forum could not be but a welcome development because their homeland’s sovereignty and its recognition by the international community had been the utmost aspiration of the Ukrainian diaspora for decades. And yet it came with a tinge of bitterness, leaving the diaspora to wonder what their role should be from then on and how to continue their work, if at all.

For some women’s organizations in the diaspora, the changing relation to Ukraine implied changes in their relation to women’s movement which caused a shift in their approach to the incorporation of women’s issues into their diasporic activism. In this dissertation, I analyze this shift using the case-study of the Ukrainian National Women’s

League of America (UNWLA), or *Soyuz Ukrainok Ameryky*, the largest and oldest organization of Ukrainian women (and women of Ukrainian descent) in the United States. Established in New York in 1925, this voluntary based non-profit organization has carried out philanthropic, educational, and cultural activities with specific programs focusing on social welfare, education, culture, scholarship, art and public relations. However, it has also been known for joining and launching political lobbying campaigns and public protests, in cooperation with other Ukrainian diaspora groups or on its own. At the same time, the organization maintained connections with Ukrainian, North American, and international women's movements: it gained membership in the National Council of Women of the United States in 1952 and was among the founders of the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations in 1948, which currently unites 27 Ukrainian women's groups in 16 countries. Through these and other affiliations, the UNWLA could send delegates to international women's conferences and participate in the U.N. led forum of women's rights activism.

Having been a women's organization in the Ukrainian diaspora and an ethnic organization in the American and international women's movement from its inception, the UNWLA often considered its participation in international women's forums instrumental for promoting the cause of Ukraine's independence. Instead of withdrawing from this arena in the post-Soviet period, the UNWLA, according to its leaders, became more active than ever in the international women's movement in the last two decades.¹ The organization has been proud of its participation in the Conference on Women in Beijing and welcomed the election of their member – Iryna Kurowyckyj – to the position of the President of the National Council of Women of the United States (1992-1995). Her subsequent presidency in the

¹ The statement about the intensification of the UNWLA connections with the women's movement reappeared several times in my interviews and conversations with former president of the UNWLA Iryna Kurowyckyj and members of the Executive Board. It was also previously stressed in reports or interviews about the work of the organization in the post-1991 period that appeared in diaspora's publications (Krawczuk 1998, 2; Kurowyckyj 2001, 19; Sawyckyj 1999).

UNWLA (1999-2008) helped to maintain ties between the organizations as well as to build connections with the International Council of Women (ICW), whose General Assembly in 2006 was held in Ukraine. Despite the fact that the assembly was officially hosted by the National Council of Women of Ukraine, it is often mentioned among the achievements of the UNWLA, since women in the diaspora were responsible for the idea and their connections with the ICW helped to see it through to fruition.

Increased contacts with women's organizations indicate but do not reflect the actual change. They were often explained through the need to facilitate the entry of newly created Ukrainian women's organizations into the network of international women's movement, which echoed with a more general discourse among diasporic groups of moving from *representing* Ukraine in the Free World to *facilitating* its bilateral U.S.-Ukraine and other international contacts after 1991. The more important process, in my view, was the eventual shift from seeing the international women's forum as a space for promoting Ukraine's interests to adopting the women's rights and equality discourses for generating relations with the state and non-state actors in Ukraine and for conceptualizing the vision that women in the diaspora hold for the country's future. As a part of that process, the UNWLA started to rethink its historic connection to Ukrainian women's movement framing its new projects for Ukraine through the language of tradition of Ukrainian women's activism.

This co-formative relationship between the diasporic and women's activism of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America at the time of Ukraine's independence is the primary focus of my research. The present study aims to highlight the horizontal interaction between the diasporic and other causes that are mobilized in the name of transnational and global solidarities. This perspective allows us to contextualize discussions about modern diasporas taking them beyond the recognition of the important role that the increased mobility and ease of communication carry for formation and maintenance of transnational

communities. Having conceptualized diasporas as “exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991, 5), scholars in the broadly defined field of diaspora studies still often hear criticism for failing to locate those communities *in* that moment. The focus on bounded belongings and nostalgic longings, which lies at the core of most definitions of diasporas, only helps to “obscure the ability [of the diasporic subject] to connect with the realities of immediacy or the present” (Fikes 2008, 53), requiring a constant reminder that diasporas’ lived experience and orientation are historical and context-dependent (Campt and Thomas 2008; Morawska 2011). Without denying that particular challenges faced by their homelands remain to be the primary trigger for diaspora’s mobilization, this research shows that diasporas also respond to global discourses, being aware of the ideas and modes of activism used by other transnational actors in the web of the global civil society. Seeking access to the international political bodies, like the United Nations, and supplementing the state’s welfare role through financial assistance to the orphans and the elderly in Ukraine, diaspora contributes to the process of “repositioning” (Burawoy 2000a, 348) of the nation-state in the global system of power, where the “supranational forces” and “transnational connections” push to transform the meaning of sovereignty without undermining the state (ibid.).

Engaging with the “stubbornly genderless” (Morawska 2011, 1029) interdisciplinary field of diaspora studies, this research aims to contribute to the scholarly effort to foreground diaspora women’s experience. It examines how the ideas of gender shape women’s understanding of nation and ethnic belonging and their participation in transnational diasporic activism. Instead of simply adding women, however, this research follows the diasporic women’s networks in international, North American, and Ukrainian women’s movements to argue for the need to conceptualize the (self)positioning of diasporas in relation to the growing significance of transnational advocacy networks, non-governmental organizations

and global social movements. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on women's movement, which has been interested in the ability of women to organize *as women* in different social movements and in the "double militancy" that frequently results from it having the women's activism located "in two political venues, with participatory, collective identity and ideological commitments to both" (Beckwith 2000, 442). The question of women's ability to organize transnationally and the impact that international organizations have had on that process has received some attention in the literature before (Moghadam 2005). The tensions between the national and women's causes in women's activism in the diaspora and the ways in which they are reconciled in everyday practices of the organization bring an important angle to the previous discussions.

As a women's organization whose origin goes back to 1925, the Ukrainian National Women's League of America has been influenced by development of the international women's movement throughout its history – directly, by adopting some of its causes and joining certain women's networks, and indirectly, being affected by changes in the social context for women's activism and public work that the women's rights struggles brought about. In this work, I will argue that the organization's diasporic mobilization for Ukraine has been premeditated by the discourses on *Ukrainian woman*, which combined expectations for women in nation-building with the lived experience of women's activism in the diaspora and in national movements. The figure of the *Ukrainian woman* could embody the oppression or suffering of the Ukrainian nation at different times; but if during earlier periods of the UNWLA's work the national sovereignty was understood to be a prerequisite for the alleviation of that suffering, recently the empowerment of women in Ukraine for public and political work started to be discussed as a stepping stone to national revival and successful democratic transformations in the country. The *Ukrainian woman* provided a framework for solidarity where the differences between the diaspora and post-Soviet Ukrainians created a

conflict. At the same time, it opened an opportunity to revise the national cause through changes in the understanding of women's rights and duties.

These changes were undoubtedly instigated by the momentary confusion about the future of the women's organization which resulted from the loss of the status of a stateless diaspora. The ensuing discomfort and even disappointment with the country and people of post-Soviet Ukraine who differed too much from the cherished memories and imagined ideal homeland (Markus 1998, 166; Satzewich 2002, 206) made it difficult for some of the diasporic organizations to persist in their work for the better future of Ukraine. The "incompleteness" of the state-building in Ukraine, however, motivated others to stay involved. Members of the UNWLA became aware that the continuous existence of their organization could not be taken for granted and that, at the same time, they were not willing to allow it to perish. This fear created a context for exploring discourses and objectives other than Ukraine's sovereignty that could provide motivation and foster unity within the organization. It also encouraged the UNWLA to extend their membership invitation to post-Soviet immigrants from Ukraine – an uncommon gesture among the organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States.

While the leaders of the Ukrainian diaspora continued to look for new directions and ways of engaging with the proverbial homeland in the new political context, members of the UNWLA insisted on developing projects in and for Ukraine. They extended their charity work – previously run for Ukrainians in Brazil, Argentina, Poland, Romania, now former Yugoslavia and other countries – to Ukraine and developed a number of new initiatives specifically targeting their country of origin. Between 1990 and 2005, the medical and humanitarian aid covered by the UNWLA Social Welfare Fund totaled to over 3 million dollars (Danyluk and Kurowyckyj 2007, 11); and that sum would probably have to be

doubled were we to include the resources directed to the Scholarship Fund and a number of other smaller projects.

Carrying a political meaning of their own, the charity projects for Ukraine were only one of the ways to remain engaged with their country of origin, express solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and maintain a minimal level of mobilization within the diasporic community while waiting for opportunities for political involvement to arise. By the time of my fieldwork in the New York-based headquarters and branches of the organization between May 2009 and March 2012, the UNWLA had developed a range of activities that allowed it to talk about having a role in supporting Ukraine in the early stages of state-building. They persisted in their work of informing American and international audiences about Ukraine and its people by correcting misinformation that could appear in press and publishing English language translations of books on Ukrainian history. Their previous experience of representative work for Ukraine as a captive nation and the acquired knowledge of international diplomatic practices and jargon helped them to engage with the official Ukrainian diplomatic missions in this new phase. They also continued their practice of sending petitions to the American government to lobby for a particular vision of the bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Ukraine. The set of their direct political activism was extended to include open letters and petitions to Ukrainian officials usually upon disagreement with particular policies of the government of the independent state.

With the full arsenal of practices that are believed to be constitutive of diasporas: philanthropic, political and cultural activities (Werbner 2002a, 128), the UNWLA stands as one of the key organizations of the Ukrainian American diaspora and is recognized as such by the mainstream diaspora associations. Yet much of their work is understood in gendered terms by their community. If theories concerning diasporas single out philanthropy as a gender-neutral diasporic action, the *charity* work that the UNWLA undertakes, as the choice

of the word suggests, is interpreted as fitting a women's organization. This same work, however, may regain its diasporic (and thus political) meaning once it reaches Ukraine. It is still to be answered whether these shifting gender expectations that women experience when engaging in transnational work allow for a contestation of gender norms in other spheres of their life. Available insights from research on women in migrant communities (Harzig 2002; Salih 2001) and in global civil society (Howell 2005) suggest that gender differentiation and inequalities tend to transform rather than perish in transnational social space, leaving us with the task of capturing gendered experience of diasporic political activism.

The remaining part of this chapter offers an overview of the key theoretical debates in diaspora studies and of the literature that introduced a focus on women, their opportunities and types of diasporic activism to existing scholarly discussions. *Chapter Two* provides the historical background required for a more complete understanding of the place of the UNWLA among other organizations of Ukrainian Americans and continues the discussion of women's mobilization around political causes, including nationalism. It contextualizes the internal diversity of the diasporic community and its cross-generational differences, which support the idea that diasporas are best understood in terms of their mobilization around a shared cause rather than in terms of a shared identity.

Chapters Three and Five focus on the internal workings of the organization by looking at the attempts to overcome the anxiety caused by the realization of difference across the transnational imagined community of the Ukrainian people, which translates into differences within the UNWLA as well. I single out celebrations of three "women's holidays" – the Day of Heroines, the Mother's Day and the International Women's Day – which aim to produce solidarity among Ukrainian women, succeeding in that task on different levels. In both chapters I look at "traditions" and celebrations which have been invented or reinvented in the diaspora and yet are perceived to be a faithful link to Ukraine and its past. I will argue

that the UNWLA does not rely on any single national or international discourse on women in their pure form, but rather draws on different sources and reinterprets them to best fit their own lived experience.

A closer analysis of the UNWLA connections with the Ukrainian women's movement, in Ukraine and abroad, as well as their participation in international women's forums will be developed in *Chapter Four*. It will discuss the evolution of strategies and approaches of their participation in international women's movement over time. The UNWLA delegates attended all the four World Conferences on Women, held by the United Nations between 1975 and 1995, coming back every time with a more nuanced understanding of the components of a successful representative work in this international assembly. Today this experience expands the opportunities for cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the U.N., but at the same time, provides tools for *soft* criticism of the Ukrainian government, which allows the UNWLA to condemn certain policies without discrediting the state and questioning its legitimacy. In *Chapter Six*, I will further explore tensions in the relationship between the diaspora and independent Ukraine, the latter understood at two levels by the diaspora – as a state and as the nation. I argue that discourses on human rights, universal freedoms, and gender equality prove to be more helpful for naming the problems and suggesting solutions than the language of national unity or tradition.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations

1.2.1 Defining diaspora: from identity to social movement

In my dissertation, I follow the approach proposed by Rogers Brubaker who argues that *diaspora* should be treated “as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group” (2005, 13). This approach steps away from studying underlying characteristics of diasporic communities and identities and focuses on the processes and

discourses that enable their construction. It does not dismiss the previously highlighted notion of *homeland orientation* or *boundary maintenance*, but asks what their origins are and how they are sustained, refusing to see them as a pre-given and singular destiny of dispersed people. Most importantly, it points research in the direction of *diaspora politics*,² making it possible to consider the diaspora as one of many forms of transnational political mobilization and ask how they compare to or interact with other transnational social movements (Adamson 2008; Betts and Jones 2012). Examining activism of a women's organization in the diaspora, which at different times drew on notions of human rights, democratization, and women's rights, occasionally adding other issues that constituted recognized frames for transnational mobilization, I argue that diasporic activism for their homeland should not be analyzed in isolation from other contemporary transnational movements. Building their work around an identity-based solidarity rather than particular issues, diasporas present a distinct case of transnational activism, yet the role of global movements and discourses in the shaping of diasporas cannot be continuously discounted.

Having originated from the Greek verb with a broad meaning *to sow, to scatter*, in its academic use the term diaspora went from a singular and case-specific reference that centered on the Jewish (and later Greek and Armenian) experience to become an all-inclusive descriptive of any group of people who have been “dispersed,” “dislocated,” “deterritorialized” or otherwise found themselves living outside of their ancestral homeland. The abundance of definitions of *diaspora* that have appeared in the last two decades and the term's current popularity across different disciplines in humanities and social sciences deserved it the status of “one of *the* most fashionable terms in academic discourse” (M. Baumann 2000, 325) and that of “a promiscuously capacious category” (Tölölyan 1996, 8). Searching for a definition that would prevent further conflation of diaspora with other

² Back in 1994 James Clifford pointed out the “currency of diaspora discourses,” which add weight to an ethnic or religious group by evoking reference to historic roots and connections outside of the host-nation and thus help to break the majority-minority discourse and resist subordination (Clifford 1994, 310–311).

categories, like émigrés, ethnic communities or transnationality and exile, but at the same time would remain open enough to accommodate cases beyond the paradigmatic examples, scholars often agree that it is the persisting orientation towards their homeland that distinguishes diasporas from other dispersed populations.³ When *diaspora* is analyzed as a social form or type of consciousness, rather than a mode of cultural production (Vertovec 1997), that orientation is said to be associated with the feeling of “co-responsibility” with co-ethnic groups located in other countries, including the homeland (Cohen 2008, 17; Werbner 2002a).

The stress on the homeland orientation, “retain[ed] sense of membership in their group of origin” (Morawska 2011, 1030), and the “*perpetual recollecting identification with [...] geographic territory and its cultural-religious traditions*” (M. Baumann 2000, 327) allowed scholars to talk about diasporas as “a special case of ethnicity” (Sökefeld 2006, 266). That argument, however, comes with a foreword that ethnic identity, like ethnic community, should be seen as an outcome of previous construction (G. Baumann 1996; Cohen 2008, 11–14; Sökefeld 2006, 266). With this approach, scholarship on diasporas completed a nearly full circle – from seeing *diaspora* as a category that could help to leave the ethnicity, race, and nation behind to adopting the constructivist view of ethnic, national, and racial identities as a starting point for their own analysis. This turn came in response to the criticism that despite the promise that *diaspora* could help destabilize the old categories offering an example of a new, more flexible, hybrid, and mobile identity of the transnational moment, in practice the research on diasporas often returned with the conclusion about an enduring attachment to

³ Additional characteristics are sometimes specified, for example, dispersal to more than one location, durability of the attachment to the homeland over time and generations, the return movement (Cohen 2008, 16–17; Safran 1991). However, all these characteristics are listed as pertaining to the Weberian “ideal type,” from which diasporas as social phenomenon are expected to differ. As Brubaker (2005) shows, even such canonic features of diasporas as *dispersion*, *homeland orientation*, and *boundary-maintenance* have been re-interpreted many times and leave space for speculation.

ethnic bonds and transnational work in the name of national interests.⁴ Moreover, it has been argued that on many occasions that conclusion was taken for granted or that it was conditioned by certain presumptions built into the research from the start which resulted in reiteration of ethnic and cultural absolutism and helped to essentialize diasporic communities (Anthias 1998; 2001; Soysal 2002).⁵ This criticism proved to be more challenging than the problem of the overuse of the term and the resulting “dissolution” of its meaning because it asked not only to specify who can be considered a diaspora or what we can call diasporic,⁶ but also confronted fundamental theories and questions behind the interpretative frames.

In the latest edition of his work *Global Diasporas*, Robin Cohen (2008) provides examples of three approaches that aim to overcome the cited criticism. One of them is a reassessment of the diaspora-homeland relationship and a resulting recognition that the relationship can be really weak, with diasporas focusing on reproduction of their own local community and tradition rather than longing for the homeland and identifying with its contemporary political incarnation. Another is the study of diasporic mobilization, where the scholars found the framework of the social movement theory to have a productive

⁴ The studies of diasporas often rely on the notions of yearning for a single homeland as opposed to cosmopolitanism and transnational thinking, long-distance nationalism and the pre-homeland one (Anderson 1998; Lie 2001; Pratt and Yeoh 2003; Safran 1991), which invite a conclusion that *diaspora* can be seen as a useful tool for understanding the construction of national identities and nationalisms rather than for deconstruction of the traditional categories. While many of earlier works did not challenge the accepted categories, more recent studies started to pay attention to the insights on the relation between the state and the nation or the national identity and citizenship that the experience of diasporas helps to elucidate (Adamson and Demetriou 2007; Soysal 2002).

⁵ Anthias (1998) points out limitations of the concept of diaspora (along with hybridity), which in its contemporary use tends to homogenize the groups it is applied to, not allowing to see the different stakes that various actors within a diasporic community have in maintaining a diasporic identity. She warns that it flattens our discussion about social exclusion and inequality which can be argued to be more important than cultural affiliations in their role in the process of modern identity formation. Soysal (2002), on the other hand, criticizes theories of diaspora for encapsulating the immigrant population in the concepts of nation, ethnicity and bounded belongings while “obscuring the new topography and practices of citizenship, which are multiconnected, multireferential, and postnational” (2002, 149). She refers primarily to the universal human rights and other discourses that immigrants (and diasporas) actively engage when shaping their claims to the states or institutions that have an impact on their everyday lives. Thus these scholars problematize the theories of diaspora in different ways, agreeing, however, that an uncritical use of the “ethnic” and “national” frameworks hampers our understanding of the phenomena we try to analyze.

⁶ Baumann argues that we should focus on the definition of the adjective *diasporic* rather than the noun diaspora, as the former can help us to study connections between the dispersed groups and their ancestral homeland instead of searching for the internal characteristics of the diaspora as a community (M. Baumann 2000, 326).

explanatory power for understanding the formation of diasporas. Lastly, Cohen highlights the potential of post-colonial diaspora studies, which may advance our understanding of the tactics and spaces of resistance of people deprived of political rights and full representation (Cohen 2008, 12–14). Different as they are, those studies move away from the discussion of identities and analyze diasporas in relation to social and political processes that do not lie directly on the diaspora-homeland vector.

While Cohen cites only one example of research that brings together the social movement theory and diaspora studies – that of Sökefeld (2006) – since the publication of his work, this approach has been applied by several other scholars of political science and international relations to explain the formation of diasporas and their political mobilization (Adamson 2008; Aydin 2007; Baser and Swain 2010; Koinova 2010). Rather than equating diasporas with social movements, they all agree that the (transnational) social movement theory provides appropriate conceptual framework to study how individual grievances and collective identities related to the experience of displacement, statelessness or oppression become mobilized for collective political action of diasporas. In their analysis, the scholars most frequently rely on the concepts of “political opportunities,” understood as external circumstances and political context that enable social mobilization, “mobilizing structures and practices,” i.e. organizations and networks that facilitate protests and other forms of activism that defines social movements, and “framing” – a set of ideas that are used to interpret and represent the experience, events, and overall reality of a group in a meaningful way that enables their further common action (Sökefeld 2006, 269–71). For diasporas, the political opportunities include the legal and institutional environment in the host-country which either facilitates or impedes the formal organizing of immigrants; armed conflicts or other dramatic developments in their home-country; and access to means of communication and transportation. The networks, community organizations and associations that are often

established by migrants to manage their everyday life can become mobilizing structures for dissemination of the calls for collective action. The ideas of “home” and “identity” are described as master-frames in case of the shaping of diasporic communities (ibid., p. 270); while Aydin (2007) and Koinova (2010) take it to a case-specific discussion of diasporic political mobilization that used frames of “human rights” and “democratization,” respectively, to articulate their causes and aims.⁷

Borrowing the tools and concepts from social movement theory to explain formation of the transnational “imagined community”⁸ (Anderson 1991) of diasporas as an example of social mobilization, scholars have only started to consider the status of diasporas among and their relation to other *transnational* social movements and mobilization practices.⁹ Sökefeld (2008) states that diasporas are not a form of a social movement and never returns to discuss it in more detail. Baser and Swain, however, argue that the two share some characteristics, for

⁷ The “human rights” frame is considered to be a meta-frame of the global civil society providing shared ground for activists across cultural and religious differences. Sylvia Walby (2002), for example, talks about the new spaces that the globalization helped to create for the human rights discourses, giving them more influence in the global political arena, and the impact it had on the spread of women’s rights and feminist principles.

For a critical reflection on the transformative potential that the human rights discourse can offer to the global civil society and/or to the advancement of gender equality, see e.g. Fiona Robinson, 2003, “Human Rights and the Global Politics of Resistance: Feminist Perspectives,” *Review of International Studies* 29 (Supplement S1): 161–180; Niamh Reilly, 2011, “Doing Transnational Feminism, Transforming Human Rights: The Emancipatory Possibilities Revisited,” *Irish Journal of Sociology* 19 (2): 60–76; and Karen Brown Thompson, 2002, “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights,” in *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms*, edited by Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, p. 96–122, University of Minnesota Press.

⁸ Sökefeld (2008) defines diaspora as “imagined transnational community” to stress that diasporas are often linked across boundaries of several states, however, in my view this approach privileges national belonging and misidentifies non-diasporic ethnic identities as being contained within the boundaries of one state. It is not only diasporas whose “imagined community” extends across borders of one country; the core ethnic groups that reside in their own nation-state often make a count of their co-ethnic fellows who live around the globe as well, and the homeland nationalist groups or states may develop discourses about protecting the rights of “their” populations outside of state-borders (see e.g. Brubaker 2000; Sheffer 2003). That way in my school years in Ukraine, I learned that there were 20 million Ukrainians living outside of Ukraine, like I am certain schoolchildren in Armenia are expected to know there are about 11 million Armenians in the world with only 3 million residing in their home-state. The question of differences between the “transnational” imagining of the diaspora and that of the population that resides within the boundaries of its nation-state could make a starting point for a separate research project; in my analysis, however, I will refer to diaspora as “imagined community,” contextualizing its transnational reach separately when necessary.

⁹ For a discussion of transnational social movements, see, for example, Jackie G. Smith, Charles Chatfield, and Ron Pagnucco, ed. 1997. *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity beyond the State*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press; or Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, ed. 2002. *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms*. University of Minnesota Press.

example, informal interaction networks, shared beliefs and solidarity, collective action focusing on conflicts, and use of a protest (2010:43). Adamson, too, suggests there may be a need to extend the definition of transnational movements and networks in order to include the actors who share collective identity: religious, ethnic or national. *Transnational identity networks*, she specifies, could be the rightful category in transnational network theories, complementing the existing analysis on economic networks, epistemic communities, and advocacy networks that constitute the global civil society (Adamson 2008:12). Different in the type of solidarity they perpetuate,¹⁰ they all may employ similar methods and use the same opportunities cooperating or contesting each other in the transnational social space.

The ideas discussed above do not directly challenge Benedict Anderson's assertion that diaspora politics, on the one hand, and global activism around the causes of human rights and universal justice, on the other, are two distinct phenomena: the former being "rooted in a consciousness" and the latter – a product of activism of voluntary "serendipitous" interest groups (1998, 74). However, their insights about the productive use of the same frames by identity and interest groups invite further enquiry into the possibility of co-formative influence that different types of transnational activism may have on each other. For Michael Burawoy, ethnic diasporas, together with deterritorialized nations, nongovernmental organizations, and professional associations – all form the global civil society, as they try to push against the political forces of the Global Postmodern (2000b, 349). In the context where hegemonic orders are maintained through consent rather than coercion, offering us new ideologies – of market freedom, liberal democracy, sovereignty and human rights – the transnational actors, he argues, work to "radicalize," "appropriate," "democratize" and

¹⁰ Differences between the intragroup solidarity and the one that characterizes transnational relations are theorized by Carol Gould, who argues that solidarity does not have to be seen as linked to identity and instead defines it as an "identification with the lived situation of others" (2007, 156) and a readiness to act in their support. She further proposes to extend the concept of solidarity to include organizations that have a transnational scope and revises the characteristics of "particularity" that defines the work of identity groups and transnational solidarity networks.

“expand” the definitions of those ideologies, fighting hegemony on its own grounds. In other words, Burawoy is not concerned with the differences of bonds and identities that stitch every group together, talking about the need to look at those groups as being influenced by the same forces and embedded in the same processes. Diasporas, like other transnational groups, exist in the world of “supranational forces” (represented by the free market or organizations like the U.N. or IMF), “transnational connections,” and “postnational imaginings” (ibid, 348), where nation-states do not disappear, but are repositioned and reimagined through the prism of the transformed system of global relations.

My research examines the interaction between a diaspora and other transnational actors, namely the women’s movement, to argue that diasporic orientation and mobilization is informed by the political phenomena that do not directly involve or target their homeland, being rather a part of global processes. I develop this argument to show that diasporas, indeed, can respond to the changes in the forms of transnational activism, engaging the discourses productively used by international organizations and networks to frame their own activism for political or social change in the country of their origin.

I adopt the definition of *diaspora*, as a *transnational “imagined community,”* a group of displaced people who continuously identify with their place of origin and its culture. Subject to prior social construction, this identification includes the readiness to act in support or on behalf of the “homeland” and its people. This homeland orientation is not a direct outcome of immigration or deterritorialization, no matter how traumatic; and diasporic identities and solidarities need to be mobilized and sustained through certain practices and discourses. To foreground those mobilizing structures that stand behind the “imagined community,” I base my analysis on a case-study of a formally organized women’s association rather than focus on women in the diaspora as a general group. This way I am able to discuss in a more focused manner the mobilization of women and their role in formation of diasporic

claims. How do gender norms of the host society and those of the diaspora influence the ability of women to organize, their access to resources and forms of activism? Does the transnational space in which diasporas operate offer more opportunities for women's organization compared to the territorially bound nation-states? What can we learn about diasporas by paying attention to women's experiences? These questions will be in the background of this research which will analyze how women in the Ukrainian diaspora rely on various discourses about women and womanhood in order to turn their personal experience of displacement into political action.

1.2.2 Gendering diaspora studies

Telling the life stories of four Mennonite women who immigrated to Canada as parts of diasporas that originated in different countries and at different points of history, Marlene Epp (2001) observes that what all the women shared was not their religious or ethnic identities, but the experience of immigration, displacement, and transnational lives. That experience, she shows, is gendered, and so is the women's sense of religious and ethnic belonging, often "localized" in their descriptions of families and specific community practices.

Epp's is one of the studies in the growing corpus of research that draws our attention to women in diasporas whose experience is often obscured in theoretical discussions and general definitions. The internal diversity within every diaspora and diasporic community characterized by persisting ideological and class differences has been previously recognized in the literature (see, e.g. Gabaccia 2000; Werbner 2002b; Winant 2007). While it helped to see diasporic identities as sites of ongoing negotiation and contestation and argue that solidarity is produced through collective action rather than precedes it (Camp and Thomas 2008; Erdmans 1998), still little work has been done to discuss the internal inequalities and marginalization rather than mere pluralism of diasporic projects. The hegemonies "in and upon" diasporic groups can be (re)constructed in the academic discourses about diasporas,

note Campt and Thomas (2008, 1) in the editorial to the special issue of the *Feminist Review* on gender and diaspora. Marginalization of women's investment in the production of diasporic identities and communities exemplifies that phenomenon as the theorization of diasporas continues in gender-neutral terms and women's experiences seldom become foregrounded in research on diasporas.

The few studies that took women's place in the diasporic communities as central points of enquiry provide important insights about formation and functioning of diasporic communities. Fikes (2008), for example, challenges the accepted focus of diaspora studies on the "leisure-time" as the locus of diasporic practices, while the diasporic communities can be produced within the people's "labor-time" where culture does not circulate in expected ways. She highlights the importance of looking at the ways in which diasporic lives are lived and relationships developed at present – then we would notice that those lives get incorporated into market relations apart from being expresses through aesthetic productions. The impression that the aesthetic (re)production of culture in the form of dance performance, literature and other forms of art is a diaspora's "escape" from the oppression or the authority of the state and dominant society is often misleading, she argues. For Fikes the enquiry into the ways women are included in that production or the reasons they are excluded from it offers an entry to a more comprehensive understanding of the position of the diasporic subject in the Western societies where it often resides.

Working within the tradition of African diaspora studies, Fikes is concerned with the global inequalities that translate into the daily oppression of diasporic people and the possibility of resistance through aesthetic production, which becomes a site of transnational imagining. Some scholars who research diasporas' involvement with nation-building in their homelands started to draw attention to the gendered nature of transnational activism as well. Mojab and Gorman's (2007) study of four women's organizations in the Kurdish diaspora

reveals, for example, how the women's mobilization is shaped not only by social and political contexts in their homeland and host-lands, but also by international policies and discourses. The research shows how in Sweden, Kurdish women stressed their status of immigrants to formalize their organization because they could not compete for state funding with other, mainstream Kurdish organizations that claimed to represent the local ethnic community. In Turkey women did not face resistance from the host-state (though could count on little support of the Kurdish diaspora) when identifying themselves as a feminist association, not a Kurdish women's group. Nevertheless, in their transnational work they rely on their ethno-national solidarity and come together in the International Kurdish Women's Studies Network and other initiatives. Talking about the plight of Kurdish women in their homeland, the Network promotes the questions of women in peace negotiations and violence against women in conflict zones, which they believe should become an integral part of the international discussion of the "Kurdish question" today.

The political trope of the "Kurdish women" is reiterated by the women in the diaspora themselves, Kurdish political parties, Western women's organizations, and international policy makers. It became a productive mobilizing frame for this group of women, helping to link their own experience and intersectional identity to that of the women in their homeland who are doubly oppressed as women and a non-state ethnic minority. Further, the frame allowed them to formulate political claims that would speak to the international community, whose sensitivity to the questions of gender in conflict areas and violence against women is heightened today. Mojab and Gorman show a complex interaction between international discourses and diasporic claims; they also depict how diasporic women's organizations challenge the imagination of the Kurdish community, only to reconstruct it on their own terms. Identifying themselves as feminist groups, organizations in the International Kurdish Women's Studies Network contest some cultural norms and traditions they find oppressive

for women, which sometimes results in a conflict with other Kurdish political or community organizations. At the same time, in my understanding, their work relies on the same homeland orientation and solidarity with other women in the extended co-ethnic community, located across boundaries of several states and sometimes differentiated by language.

Mojab and Gorman oppose the example of the Network of Kurdish Women to “colonial feminism” (2007, 70), since it emerged at an initiative of a group of Kurdish women themselves, even if that group was composed of educated professionals with Western citizenship. These women work to challenge women’s position in their local diasporic communities as well as in their homelands. While this topic is not discussed in detail, it raises the question of power relations between the diaspora located in the West and its co-ethnic kin in non-Western countries. That question is challenging because diasporas not only mobilize for but are often mobilized by their homeland elites who appeal to shared identity and diasporic responsibility for the fate of the people who stayed behind. Mojab and Gorman make a welcome break from interpreting any transnational work along the West to East or North to South vector as tainted by unidirectional power relations. This approach encourages considering mutual influences and contestations in the relations between differently located diasporic actors and their homelands.

There are several parallels that run between this case-study and my own research. They will be discussed further in this work and I will only mention one of them here. Unlike the network of Kurdish women in the diaspora, the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America should be seen as a women’s group organized around their gender identity rather than feminist ideas. However, the discourse of the “Ukrainian woman,” which became their mobilizing frame, gave them access to transnational networks of women’s movement and international discourses of women’s rights and equality – the networks and discourses that are not easily accessible to other organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora. It resulted in certain

autonomy of the organization in the Ukrainian diaspora and gave them tools for engaging with Ukrainian nation-building through interpreting “women’s equality” as one of the measurements of democratization and development of the nation. In both cases, diasporic women’s mobilization was based on recognition of the intersection of women’s gender and ethno-national positions. Women in the Ukrainian diaspora chose to prioritize the cause of national sovereignty, which did not exclude the possibility of contesting gender norms as I will argue further in my work.

One of the main outcomes of the separate mobilization of women *as women* within diasporas may be a production of “alternative forms of nationalism, that challenge gender and class hierarchies” (Fouron and Schiller 2001, 565). That conclusion is drawn from a case-study of the Haitian diaspora, mobilized against the Duvalier dictatorship (1971-1986) in their homeland. Women, who first joined the movement for liberation of their homeland, later developed what Fouron and Schiller refer to as transnational Haitian feminist movement (2001, 567–568). The scholars argue that the movement was shaped in the context of the second wave feminism in the United States and the growing United Nations support for women’s rights worldwide. However, it did not separate the question of women’s rights from general claims for social justice, calling for redistribution of power and wealth and changes in the country that would eliminate poverty and discrimination for everyone, men and women alike. Women of the Haitian diaspora reproduced conventional definitions of the Haitian nation, imagined through the metaphors of blood relations, familial ties and responsibilities. At the same time, their new economic position after immigration to the United States allowed them to challenge male domination within their families, thus filling the familial metaphor of the nation with a more egalitarian meaning.

Among the scholars who were the first to point out the gender-blindness of the diaspora studies and studies of diasporas, Anthias (1998) specified that the question of

gendered diasporic experience can be studied on two levels. First, one can focus on the impact that existing gender norms – of the homeland, the diaspora and the host society – have on the men’s and women’s position in the country of their settlement and their access to transnational networks. Second, we would need to analyze how actual or perceived gender relations within diasporic groups influence their standing in the host country (1998, 572). These levels may be interconnected but not in a straightforward manner. If we can learn from the examples of immigrant groups, ethnic minorities or (post-)colonial nations who are usually made aware that the status of women in their community can be used as a discursive tool for the group’s marginalization, exclusion, or subordination, we should expect that this awareness may result in different outcomes for women – from better inclusion in public life to more rigid demands on traditional role reproduction in private sphere, or a certain combination of the two (Benhabib 2002; P. Chatterjee 1993; Song 2005).

In this dissertation, I bring together the two levels of analysis when discussing the mobilization of women within the Ukrainian diaspora, however, moving the focus from individual women to a women’s organization in order to show women’s participation in the negotiation over their role in the diaspora and women’s experience of relating to their homeland and its people. The diaspora’s and host-country’s gender norms have an important role in shaping the specific discursive space for a women’s organization or involvement with particular causes. At the same time, the examples of Kurdish and Haitian diasporas discussed above show that the mobilization of diaspora women residing in Western states can be a response to the international discourses which for some time already have included “women” as a policy area. In the following chapters I discuss the co-formative relation between international and national discourses on women, on the one hand, and the personal gendered experience of women in the diaspora, on the other. The tensions that arise from the diversity of views and backgrounds of women within one organization is only one of the important

issues to consider; another is the tension between their action for homeland, which is informed by their understanding of gendered position of women in the nation, and the lack of explicit attention to their own position within the diasporic community and the family. These will be starting points for examining the interaction between the diasporic cause and identity of the Ukrainian women in the United States.

1.2.3 Organizing around gender identities

A few words need to be said about the definitions of feminism, women movement, and women's activism that are used in this study, since their conceptual distinction in academic literature have been but straightforward. The simultaneous focus on actors and issues raised by the movements as well as the attempt to take into account their transformative potential for women's position in society resulted in several different approaches to the classification of women's organizations that form around gender identities. In one of the most recent overviews on the topic, Kretschmer and Meyer talk about "feminist movements," "antifeminist movements," and "ostensibly nongender-specific movements" (2013, 161) understanding the latter as women's activism around issues that do not concern the status of women or women's rights or are explicitly gendered in any other way. That grouping makes a useful distinction in their analysis because its primary aim is to pinpoint that women's participation in social movements is gendered on many levels regardless of the actual issues at stake.

In this study, however, I will follow the slightly different categorization offered by Beckwith (2000), who distinguishes "feminist movements," "women movements" and "women in movements." It is based on recognition of difference between feminist movements, which explicitly and consciously aim at challenging patriarchal norms and women's subordination to men, and other women's movements for social change that are organized and headed by women, targeting women as their actors, raising women-specific

issues and evoking gendered experiences to articulate them, however, are mobilized around their shared ethnic, racial, class, or other position rather than around issues of gender based discrimination. Defined this way, the women movements include right- and leftwing women movements, anti-feminist women movements or the women movements that uphold national liberation causes, but they exclude the cases of women's mobilization within male-headed movements which do not address gender-specific issues and exclude women from decision-making (2000, 437).

This distinction is useful for cross-country comparison, however, it is not always easy to draw clear boundaries between the categories it uses. Of particular challenge is the definition of feminist and non-feminist causes because historically that distinction has been shown to privilege experience of Western women and exclude non-Western women movements which upheld anti-colonial or national liberation struggles of their people (see Basu 1995; Mohanty 2003). The uneasy fit of the categories to the Ukrainian context can be illustrated by the continuing attempts of scholars to define different types of women's movements in Ukraine through the concepts of "community feminism" (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1988, xix), "feminist nationalism" (Kichorowska Kebalo 2011) and "national feminism" (Zhurchenko 2011, 174–178).

The categorization is further complicated when the transnational and international level are considered due to the accepted distinction between feminism and international women's movement with multiple layers of historic connections and continuities between them (Ryan 1992). It should also be clearly understood that when one discusses the U.N. led women's rights movement, for example, it is a platform that brings together actors from feminist movements, women movements and women from other movements, each with their causes, ideologies, and situational alliances.

Understanding the vast differences within each of the categories and the problems that may arise from any generalization, I talk about feminist movement, women's movement, and women in movements to be able to discuss links between women's movement in Ukraine and in its diaspora both of which saw themselves to be a part of international women's movements at different times and contexts (for example, the first wave international women's movement/feminism and women's rights movement promoted by the United Nations). In the following chapters, I will argue that the transnational scale of diaspora women's work allows them to be a women's movement and women in movement at the same time (while the potential of adding feminist movement to that range should not be excluded either). It is the historic connection and the interaction between different types of women's activism and between different struggles that women uphold that is of primary interest to this study. Women movements have been known to transform into feminist movements, in particular after their initial cause has been achieved (Hipsler 2001; Stephen 1997). It has been recognized, however, that even in the cases where such transformation does not take place, women movements often help to challenge patriarchal norms. To quote Ferree and Mueller, "While women's movements are not to be confused with specifically feminist claims, it is also clear that there will be a relationship between mobilizing women as women and challenging existing gender relations that still situate women as "outside" politics and the public" (2003, 598). The degree and success of that challenge varies,¹¹ but women's groups as different as rightwing women organizations in Latin America (Blee and Deutsch 2012) and Muslim women organizations in Indonesia (Rinaldo 2008) have been shown to benefit from their autonomous mobilization in terms of their access to political discussions.

¹¹ Jill Vickers has undertaken a large-scale comparative project that aims to analyze the experience of women's mobilization around national(ist) causes and define main factors that influence women's ability to secure "positive outcomes," i.e. to insert their gender specific needs and considerations into the national projects that they support. The project is still ongoing, some preliminary arguments and conclusions can be found in Vickers, Jill. 2006. "Bringing Nations in: Some Methodological and Conceptual Issues in Connecting Feminisms with Nationhood and Nationalisms." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8 (1): 84–109.

If organized within male-headed diaspora associations, women and women's chapters are known to be relegated to supportive roles: fundraising for the organizations and churches, preparing meals for community celebrations, and performing other types of "women's work" that has low prestige and visibility (Gabaccia 1994; Swyripa 1993). Traditional gendered division of labor and power relations can also be reproduced when women organize separately, influencing the impact they may expect to have, choice of the forms of activism and issues, which has been observed to be the case for women's activism in social movements (Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson 2000; Kretschmer and Meyer 2013; Taylor 1999). The UNWLA has been supporting the cause of Ukrainian national liberation – the cause that responded to the oppression of their "sisters" rather than their own. How that work was mediated through their participation in the international women's movement and how that participation has been re-conceptualized after the Ukraine's independence are important questions to ask. *Chapter Three and Four* in particular will consider the impact that the transnational and international connections to other women's movements have had on the mobilization of Ukrainian women in the diaspora, trying not to lose the site of the agency of those women themselves.

1.3 Fieldwork Methodology

1.3.1 People

Most data for this study was collected during ethnographic fieldwork in New York City, or rather in the branches and headquarters of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America located there. The fieldwork was conducted in several stages between May 2009 and March 2012, totaling to 17 months that were filled with participant observation, interviews,

and archival research. It left me with three notebooks of scribbles, 73 hours of audio,¹² countless photocopied pages and original documents, and some pictures that were supposed to help me remember and eventually understand, systematize and explain, not necessarily in this exact order, the studied experiences and phenomena. It also left me with a few friendships and bonds, which I am told is an inevitable part of ethnographic field research that is supposed to become experience in its own right.

Today, leaders of the UNWLA tend to repeat that the organization “unites women across waves and generations,” and this statement reflects the actual heterogeneity of the UNWLA membership as well as gives out the anxiety about the “unity” across those cohorts. Currently the UNWLA membership includes immigrants from Ukraine as well as American-born Ukrainian women, each of the groups further divided into two or three different groups. More specifically, it is common to talk about a) post-WWII immigrants; b) their daughters and less often grand-daughters, second and third generation Ukrainians; c) and recent immigrants or “new-comers” (though some people explicitly stated their dislike for the latter “label”). In practice, however, the boundaries between the groups or the homogeneity within them are less than obvious. At the time of my research, the post-WWII immigrants were a rapidly passing generation, some of them still having a nominal membership in the organization but little actual involvement into its work. Many of those active members who were referred to (and often referred to themselves) as the post-WWII immigration were, in fact, in their teens or early childhood years when their families arrived to the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. In sociological terms, some of them would have to be identified as 1.5 generation, taking an intermediary and ill-defined position between immigrants and second generation. The people I came in contact with would always point out that they were born in Ukraine without necessarily clarifying that they had not spent more than four or seven years

¹² The audio materials include 49 hours of interviews, 3 hours of audio-fieldnotes, and over 20 hours of miscellaneous presentations and discussions, usually from official meetings of UNWLA branches (not all of which were of equal interest).

of their life there. They had some childhood memories from Ukraine and of immigration – sometimes very strong and vivid – but they were undoubtedly different from those of the adult perceptions and traumas of war and displacement.¹³ How much did their experience of growing up in a family of recent immigrants and speaking Ukrainian at home and in their Ukrainian neighborhood but not at school, for example, resembled that of their younger siblings who were born already in the United States in the early years of the post-WWII immigration? And how much do their today's interpretations of that experience differ? The second generation Ukrainians born in the 1950s or 1960s or a decade later can also be seen as belonging to different cohorts, yet sharing some of the assimilation patterns and experience of Ukrainian community life.

The third generation is mostly thought of as grand-daughters of the post-WWII immigrants; the same category (but not the age) is shared by the women who trace their ancestry to the pre-WWII Ukrainian immigrant families in the United States. Both are few in the UNWLA, however, and have a small presence in my research. At the same time, together with recent immigrants, the ethnic Ukrainian Americans of the third and further generations are an important target for the current recruitment campaigns of the UNWLA and the organization will have to incorporate their views and perspectives on their Ukrainian ethnic background if it wants to be successful in engaging this group.

The post-1991 immigrants also arrived to the United States at different life-stages, and although the UNWLA has only attracted to its membership the women who immigrated in adulthood, their age at immigration ranged between early twenties and late forties, indicating different family status and resulting in different opportunities for professional achievement in the new country. The recent immigrants who appear in my study are between their late 30s and mid-60s. The ones on the younger end formed their own branches while the

¹³ For an insightful discussion about the differences that .5 generation makes in experiencing and relating to the traumatic events of the past see Suleiman (2002) who brings up the example of child survivors of the Holocaust.

older group joined the already existing branches, usually those of a mixed 1.5 and second generation membership, to whom they were closer in age.

One needs to add to this the differences in class and thus educational and professional achievements within each of the cohorts, which can be seen across, but also within, some of the UNWLA branches. The UNWLA members are all aware of those divides, the most prominent discursive distinction, however, is between the “diaspora” and the “new” Ukrainians in America which will be discussed in detail in *Chapter Two*. Due to the prominence of those distinctions in the work of the UNWLA, in people’s self-identification, and stratification of groups, in this dissertation I will talk about the post-WWII immigrants (including 1.5 generation), Ukrainian Americans (which will imply second generation unless otherwise specified), and recent or post-1991 or 4th wave immigrants. Although composed of different cohorts, from the perspective of their current location in the UNWLA, they can be conceptualized as three distinct “political generations” in the Ukrainian diaspora, each contributing to the changes in the discourses if they enter the organizational life in substantial numbers (see Whittier 1997). This approach diverges from the usual application of the term “generation” in the studies of immigrants, where it carries a clear reference to kinship and age.¹⁴

1.3.2 Location

With nine Regional councils,¹⁵ 69 branches and 1811 members across the United States, the UNWLA claims the status of the largest Ukrainian diaspora women’s organization in the country. The high autonomy of each branch and their embeddedness in their local Ukrainian

¹⁴ Each immigration wave, despite the wide age range within it, if mobilized as diaspora can be seen as a “generation in actuality” in Mannheim terms, where the experience of immigration triggered by particular historic events in their homeland meets the criterion of the “participation in the common destiny” (1952, 303) of their group.

¹⁵ They are the Regional Councils (*Okruhy*) of Detroit, Philadelphia, New York City, New York – North, New Jersey, Ohio, Chicago, New England, and New York – Central. Regional Councils are formed in the areas where there are at least three branches located in relatively close proximity; those branches that do not belong to any Regional Council are known as Branches-at-Large and have their liaison person to represent them to the UNWLA National Council.

communities mean that they differ across states and towns. If there is more than one branch in close vicinity, they should be expected to differ, too, because branches tend to form around personal networks and shared interests, and women will prefer setting up a new branch to joining the existing one in their neighborhood only when those networks and interests differ. Thus any branch and member of the UNWLA is as representative of the organization as any other, if representative can be used in this context at all. With all the internal diversity, New York was not selected for the primary site of research at random. It is the city where the history of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America officially started in 1925 and where its headquarters is located now.¹⁶ The home of one of the UNWLA Regional Councils and nine branches across the city's boroughs, New York gathered all the levels of the organizational structure in one place,¹⁷ thus offering the best possible view of the organization's diversity, even if it did not capture its full range. That diversity was further aided by the fact that the City and the greater Metropolitan Area of New York have

¹⁶ For some time, between 1943 and 1974, the main office of the UNWLA moved to Philadelphia because it had to depend on the physical location of the organization's president. A special liaison person located in New York was appointed after 1952 to keep connections with the National Council of Women of the USA and their United Nation's related work. Since the UNWLA headquarters' return to New York, the successful candidates for the position of the president and Executive Board members had to be from New York or its larger metropolitan area because the cost of continuous relocation would have been too high and the organization found New York to be the right place for its purposes. Most recently, with the advance of the internet and telecommunication, it became possible for the UNWLA Board to have regular meetings and handle the work of the organization without having to fly in to the main office.

¹⁷ The UNWLA is a three-level organization, composed of local Branches, Regional Councils, and the National Board. The presidents and committee chairs elected in each branch make up the Regional Council, which then elects its own president and committee chairs from among the branch representatives. The president and committee chairs of each Regional Council are members of the National Board which comes together for a general meeting once a year. Every three years, the UNWLA holds a Convention, which is the highest regulating body of the organization. Every branch is supposed to send at least one delegate there and has one vote for every 25 members in the branch. Here the questions concerning the By-laws and the budget are decided, members vote for resolutions that sometimes outline the work of the organization for the following three years. They also elect the UNWLA president and the Executive Board members (four vice-presidents, treasurer, corresponding secretary, press secretary, financial secretary and one or two members-at-large as well as different committee chairs) who are delegated the rights to run the organization's affairs between the conventions. The Executive Board also includes liaisons for members-at-large and for branches-at-large, those members who do not belong to a branch and those branches that do not belong to any Regional Council.

In practice, the Executive Board – whose work is voluntary based, although the travel expenses related to the UNWLA's work are covered from the organization's budget – meets once a month, sometimes via teleconference calls these days, to oversee ongoing projects, finances, etc. They keep in touch primarily with the heads of Regional Councils, help to prepare annual meetings of the National board, and perform representative functions. Thus it is the Executive Board that speaks for the organization, sends out circulars, attends meetings with officials of different level. According to the By-laws, any member of the organization can run and be elected to the Executive Board.

traditionally had the largest population of Ukrainian descent in the United States in absolute numbers¹⁸ and were among the primary destinations for all the major immigration waves from Ukraine.

Walking around the East Village in downtown Manhattan today, one will come across the Ukrainian National Home (which is the only place with a visibly large sign in Ukrainian), Ukrainian restaurant (or two) and café, Ukrainian Self-Reliance Federal Credit Union and Self-Reliance Association of American Ukrainians, Ukrainian souvenir store “Surma,” Ukrainian museum (with a souvenir store of its own), homes of several Ukrainian associations like the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Ukrainian American Soccer Society, Youth Association, a Ukrainian Greek Catholic and an Orthodox Church, a Ukrainian delicacy (meat) store. Once in the neighborhood, one may pass the Taras Shevchenko Place, a small square next to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church and its school and academy. A few blocks away, there is a building of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in the U.S., and those with a good eye for Ukrainian family names will spot a few businesses, like a funeral home or a chiropractor’s office, that reflect their Ukrainian background on the signs above the entrance doors. The main office of the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America is also located here, taking two upper floors of a five-story building on 203 East 2nd Avenue.

All these organizations and offices are found several blocks away from each other, in a small district of “Little Ukraine” that is said to be bound by the Houston and 14th Street, and Third Avenue and Avenue A, though in practice the listed community homes and organizations are concentrated in an even smaller area within the outlined boundaries. Each May the Ukrainian cultural festival takes place in this neighborhood and for two days the 7th

¹⁸ According to the available data, in 2008 the New York-Northeastern NJ Metropolitan Area was a home to 114,681 Ukrainians and Ukrainian Americans (or 12.3% of all ethnic Ukrainian population of the U.S.A.), followed by Philadelphia Metropolitan Area, PA/NJ – 50, 852 (5.5%) and Chicago, IL – 45,161 (4.9%) (Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research of Ukrainians in the United States, “Ukrainians by Metropolitan Area” [Table]. Accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.inform-decisions.com/stat/index.php?r=fixed/ukrbyma>).

Street in front of the Ukrainian church is crowded with people who look, speak, and eat Ukrainian. On an average day, however, Little Ukraine in Manhattan is not the place where one will expect to hear the Ukrainian language in the streets or see signs in Cyrillic in stores; unlike Little Poland or Little Ukraine in Chicago or the “Russian” Brighton Beach, the Ukrainian East Village dissolves into the large and multicultural city and its Ukrainian community rarely spills into the streets, being contained (and becoming visible) mainly within the walls of the community centers, banks, and churches, gathering there by particular schedules or on certain occasions, and leaving for home in other parts of the city or even outside of it.

It has not always been this way, as the mere abundance of Ukrainian association homes in the area suggests. Ukrainian immigrants started to settle in the Lower East Side in the 1870s and Little Ukraine grew as the numbers of Ukrainians in the United States increased. The community is said to have been at its largest when the post-WWII immigrants arrived and the number of Ukrainians and Ukrainian-Americans in this small district reached 60,000 people by some accounts. Gradually, however, Ukrainian families started to leave for the greener suburbs as is common for the American city dwellers who reach better material standing. Much property in the East Village is still owned by Ukrainian Americans today, and quite a number of people of the pre- and post-war generations stayed there too, but the scarce number of Ukrainian businesses that remained open confirms that the neighborhood turned from the place where Ukrainians lived to the place where they come back on occasions to practice their Ukrainian identity.

The choice of New York for the site of the research was largely influenced by the co-presence of UNWLA branches that united different generations (though rarely within one branch) but shared the premises of the organization’s headquarters for organizing their events. In addition, the location in New York had a particular meaning for the UNWLA

reflecting some important priorities of its work and the role it tried to carve for itself as a diasporic organization. Having built the Ukrainian Museum in New York, the UNWLA contributed to the rich cultural landscape of the city, strengthening the visibility of its own ethnic group there at the same time. In return, the diverse and ever changing ethnic make-up of the Big Apple has helped to shape the Ukrainian American community there, too. Being a hub of the international politics since the late 1940s, New York allowed the UNWLA to take over the representative work that the Ukrainian émigré women had been carrying out in Geneva and Paris before the Second World War. It helped them to nurture not only the identity of Ukrainian Americans responsible for representing their ethnic group in the country, but also that of the “Ukrainians in the world” whose duty was to stand for the Ukrainian nation before it had a sovereign state. The “global city” where “much of what we experience and represent as the local level turns out to be a micro-environment with global span” (Sassen 2002, 218), New York reflects and enables the transnational reach of the diasporic work that is discussed in this dissertation.

1.3.3 Data collection

Searching to understand how that transnational transpires in particular location and how the mobilization of diasporic identities becomes a gendered experience, I attended formal meetings of some UNWLA branches and New York City Regional Council, celebrations of their anniversaries, as well as the events they organized for the public. I volunteered to rearrange the library in the UNWLA headquarters and helped to prepare bilingual presentation for the new charity project that was launched in 2010. I assisted with Ukrainian translations for the UNWLA monthly *Our Life* and with sandwich-making for a fundraising event. On the invitation and under patronage of the UNWLA members, I went to seminar presentations on Ukraine-related topics in the United Nations and attended the 55th Annual Session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (2010). I celebrated Ukrainian and

American holidays with the families of the UNWLA members and lived for some time in the homes of two of them. Apart from that, I frequented Ukrainian churches on Sundays, ate at the Ukrainian restaurant (not all the time, however), went to a protest-demonstration in front of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the U.N., volunteered for the Ukrainian film festival in the Ukrainian Museum and for the “Music at the Institute” event in the Ukrainian Institute of America – always running into some UNWLA members there as a reminder that the New York Metropolitan Area may have an over 114,000 population of people of the Ukrainian descent,¹⁹ but when it comes to active “community engagement,” one had to expect to see many familiar faces. I also spent time with those recent immigrants whose interaction with the Ukrainian organizations was occasional if any. They would usually know there was a “Ukrainian diaspora” in New York and some Ukrainian organizations and a museum in the East Village in Manhattan, sometimes they attended a Ukrainian church nearest to their home, otherwise having little interest in any “community life.”

Most importantly, at least for this study, I talked to UNWLA members and at some point they started to talk to me, too. It often took a form of an informal conversation, but I sat down for pre-arranged interviews with 21 women, with 9 of them more than once, although I followed up on our discussions in some less formal setting with all but two of the women. In many instances the interviews themselves were a follow up on our previous discussions. I do not treat the interviews as a separate set of data in this work due to the diversity of the information they provided, on the one hand, and the similarity they had with many of the informal conversations that became a part of my fieldnotes, on the other. They undoubtedly helped to draw my attention to certain information during the fieldwork, and later to see some reappearing themes and discourses. I did not transcribe all the audio data but rather made *précis* of the interviews taking detailed notes with selected quotes and marking the times

¹⁹ Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research of Ukrainians in the United States, “Persons of Ukrainian Ancestry by Age, Nativity and Period of Immigration: New York-Northeastern NJ,” [Table], 2013. Accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.inform-decisions.com/stat/index.php?r=immig/verimmig>.

when they occurred. The summaries of the interviews allowed me to look for reappearing themes and patterns and facilitated the search for detailed quotes when needed. They were also closer to the format of the interviews that were not taped but took a form of handwritten notes, which I believe helped me to see it as an integral part of the ethnographic data rather than outweigh the fieldwork experience with the detail of individual stories. All the interviews were taken in Ukrainian. I agreed with my informants not to identify them by their real name or position in the organization when their personal opinion is discussed and when their formal capacity in the organization has no significance in the particular section of the text. I usually provide an in-text description of the person whose opinion is quoted without a use of any fictitious names; whenever a person is referred to by their first name, it is not the real name of the informant, the full names of the UNWLA President, Honorary presidents, and other members when they appear in their public capacity are real.

The experience of getting the interviews was insightful by itself. While I never had any difficulty with gaining access to the UNWLA meetings and people often invited me for coffee or lunch after different events, when I approached them asking whether they would spare some time for an interview, several of them politely declined my request. They reasoned that they were not the best person to talk about their UNWLA branch and always referred me to someone else whom they believed would be able to represent the organization better. After my explanation that I would be interested to hear about their personal experience and motivations for joining the UNWLA, for example, they would give me a short, while insightful answer, sometimes leading to a longer conversation about their immigration experience or family history, which they did not mind to be written down. But they often did not expect it to be of relevance to my research, which thanks to the initiative of the Ukrainian language editor of the UNWLA monthly *Our Life*, was featured as “Research on the Work of the UNWLA” (Slyzh 2009) in November 2009 issue of the magazine. After that interview

about my research was published, I noticed that people started to include me into the more mundane activities of their branches and treated me with higher familiarity, though I had spent four months around by that time, and familiarity may have been expected to develop in any case. Whether the article legitimized my nosing around or not, it completed the representation of my project as being about the organization (rather than experience of immigration, women in the Ukrainian community in the U.S., diaspora's relation to Ukraine, etc.). The same idea was communicated when I asked permission to attend a branch meeting and then actually attended it, soliciting further invitation to formal gatherings.

In other words, the way I presented my work and the way it was presented undoubtedly influenced the preconceptions about the information I would find useful, which was only confirmed by the fact that on many occasions I returned from pre-arranged interviews with some copies of documents: magazine/newspaper articles, booklets and books, reports, pictures – that people prepared to give to me as important data about the work that the UNWLA had been involved in since as long as one could remember. The tendency to present me with “the history” of the UNWLA appeared to be quite strong to assume the members of the organization believed there was one, even if they did not personally know all the milestones. The women to whom I was usually referred were known to be responsible for preparing summary reports about their branch for jubilee or convention books or had served in some formal function in a branch, Regional Council or Executive Board, thus dealing with formal reporting and often keeping some written archives at home. One could congratulate the UNWLA on having succeeded in instilling the idea that each member belonged to something larger than their personal experience or relations, but at the same time something formally organized rather than naturally bound by identity or duty. I further continued my enquiry paying attention to the role of the formal organization rules and structure in the work of the branches, whose meetings often bordered on informal friendly gatherings, yet were

never just that. However, it also cautioned me in the use of the interview material, which often offers the benefit of extended quotes, because most of it came from the women in some leadership position in their Branch or National Board. By paying attention in my chapters to the actual interactions and discussions that took place in the UNWLA over their projects in addition to personal opinions shared in the interviews, I hope to be able to overcome this unintentional bias.

Since the references to the history of the organization were frequent in personal accounts and in the official narrative of the UNWLA, I turned to the archive currently stored in the UNWLA New York office in order to better understand the common references to the past events and see the selective use of the past achievements in today's interpretations. Thanks to the work of the previous Archive Committee Chair Olha Trytyak and her assistant Alexandra Kirshak, the documents have been arranged by period and topic, and a relatively detailed catalogue was prepared to facilitate the search. The folders were not numbered, however, and in the future, they are planned to be sent to the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) in the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, where a part of the UNWLA archive is already stored, that is why I refer to any documents that I directly mention in the text by their name and type, rather than by their place in the box or folder. Among the documents one can find correspondence, reports of UNWLA presidents, press releases, photos, publications (including flyers, pamphlets, advertisements, etc.). Most of the materials cover the work of the UNWLA Executive Committee, while branches and Regional Councils are supposed to manage their archives separately. In 2001, eleven boxes with documents related to the first 50 years of the organization's history were shipped to the IHRC in the University of Minnesota, whose collection includes archival documents of 24 ethnic groups in America with Ukrainian holdings being among the largest containing materials sent by individuals and other organizations. I have never had a chance to do the research in the IHRC

archives and will have to rely on Olha Trytyak's assurance that the most interesting and revealing documents remained in the New York headquarters.

Another source of the information on the evolving views and discourses of the UNWLA were the Convention books, which include reports of the Executive Board members, heads of Regional Councils and branches for the three year periods between the consecutive conventions. The UNWLA monthly publication *Our Life*, however, was by far the most interesting reference because in addition to some reports of the organization's leadership, it includes articles by and about the UNWLA members, their poetry and fiction, reflections about the challenges that Ukrainian women and families face in the United States, letters to the editor and opinion pieces, stories about events in branches, information about the work of the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations and other women's organizations that the UNWLA is affiliated with, health and beauty advice, and much more. Coming out regularly, 11-12 times a year since 1944, and being delivered to the home address of every UNWLA member, *Our Life* gives an opportunity to trace changes in the UNWLA discourses and the reaction to events in and around the organization as they were taking place. Since the late 2012, the complete collection of the magazine can be accessed online on the UNWLA website.²⁰ To contextualize some events, I have also used the archive of the oldest Ukrainian newspaper in the United States *Svoboda* (Liberty), in circulation since 1893 to date,²¹ its English language sister-edition *The Ukrainian Weekly* (since 1933), and some other primary and secondary sources on the history of the Ukrainians in the United States that I found in the UNWLA library and other collections.

Together with the members of the UNWLA, I traveled outside of New York on several occasions – to attend the UNWLA triennial Convention that took place in Whippany, New Jersey, and to the UNWLA annual National Board meeting in Kerhonkson, New York,

²⁰ The direct link to the collection is <http://gallus.lunarfific.com/~unwla0/Ukrainian/OurLifeMagazineg1.html>, or it can be accessed via the menu option "Publications" on the UNWLA website www.unwla.org.

²¹ The *Svoboda* newspaper offers free online access to its complete collection at <http://www.svoboda-news.com>.

better known among Ukrainians as “Soyuzivka,” a Ukrainian cultural center and resort in the Catskill Mountains. Both occasions gave me a chance to meet members of the UNWLA from around the United States as every branch is supposed to send delegates to the Convention and the National Board meeting brings together the heads of the nine Regional Councils, liaisons for Branches-at-Large, committee chairs and Executive Board members. I did not follow the UNWLA members or their connections to Ukraine, which is one of the limitations of this study. Since my interest lies in the gendered experience of diasporic mobilization, the daily life of the organization, its projects and routine meetings were given a priority. As much promise as the “multisited ethnography” promoted by some researchers holds (see Burawoy 2000; Levy 2000; Marcus 1995), I agree with the scholars who argue that while people’s social relations transgress bounded locations, a situated ethnography of the locality can lead to valuable insights even in today’s globalized world (Nieswand 2009). People, news, and issues traveled to New York all the time to enter the UNWLA’s agenda for a short moment or a longer while. I heard UNWLA members tell stories of their most recent trip to Ukraine at the meetings of all levels, met guests from Ukraine and Canada who attended events organized by the UNWLA, read letters from recipients of the UNWLA stipends, and saw the organization publish open letters to the Ukraine’s state officials and sign petitions online. With the permanent orientation to Ukraine reflected in the projects of the organization it was hard to overlook the transnational span of the UNWLA’s network; but the everyday pace of the organization’s work and the gravity of the diasporic discourses and their contestation in the interactions between the UNWLA members called for an extensive and focused study in one location.

1.3.4 Position of the researcher

While I did not follow the UNWLA members to Ukraine, some of them “followed” me there, all the way to my hometown as they appeared to be related to my neighbors or to colleagues

of my parents. On one of my most recent trips home, after telling an acquaintance about the topic of my research, I heard back, “Oh, my aunt from the U.S. was a *soyuzianka* [member of *Soyuz Ukrainok* of America/UNWLA]. She was very active.” This was followed by the account about how pleased the said aunt was to hear “our songs” at the wedding of her son, who married a woman from Ukraine. I was somewhat surprised that people would know to what organizations their relatives – post-WWII immigrants to the United States – belonged, although given the fact that the UNWLA members I met would always agree to perform some organization-related duties on their private trips to Ukraine (or around the U.S.A.), their relatives may be often exposed to the information about the organization.

It was of lesser surprise that someone in my immediate circle back in Ukraine would have an extended family in North America. I have always known that my hometown, located close to the Carpathian Mountains, was in the epicenter of emigration movement from Eastern Galicia to Canada in the late 19th – first decades of the 20th century and later periods. In the village of Nebyliv, some 15 km from the town where I was born, there is a memorial to Vasyl Yelyniak and Ivan Pylypiv who are believed to be the very first immigrants in what became the first wave of mass economic migration from this region to North America. I have seen or rather heard about the diaspora Ukrainians, primarily from Canada, come to visit their distant relatives since 1991. It was thanks to one of them that my secondary school first connected to the Internet in 2004 (six years before the Global Libraries Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation brought computer equipment and internet connection to our town’s public library). And as I recently found out, in the early 1990s our local church, which was closed during the Soviet times, was renovated with the financial assistance from a Ukrainian American family whose grandfather served as a priest there before the Second World War. I do not recollect any direct encounters with “the diaspora” when growing up, but from the conversations around, I knew they remembered their roots and valued Ukrainian

tradition, although their Ukrainian language, if any, sounded archaic and their relationship with the distant kin in Ukraine rarely gained real warmth and closeness, due to the differences in worldviews, backgrounds, and expectations.

It was those memories that shaped my preconceptions of the Ukrainian diaspora, making some of the phenomena I observed during the field research recognizable rather than surprising and noteworthy. My birth place also made me more “recognizable” for many of the Ukrainians and Ukrainian-Americans that I met, most of whom have their roots in Western regions of Ukraine. Irrespective of the actual differences between the customs and traditions practiced in the diaspora and in Ukraine today, there is an implicit expectation that many of them will be at least familiar to the people who come from the same location. When my Ukrainian American friend talked about “our” *knydli* (dumplings), the ones with plums, and when I wrote in my fieldnotes that the Easter basket on a display in the Ukrainian Museum was arranged “as it should be” – we both relied on and reproduced the idea of shared “grandmother’s tradition.”

That expectation of shared tradition was most visible when I had to admit that I had never heard about a particular custom or that “we,” be it my family or the people I know, did something differently from what I saw in the Ukrainian American families. My interlocutor and I would often reason that the difference was probably due to a local variation (two neighboring villages may have their own set of customs) or the tradition had been forgotten in Ukraine. But that discussion would soon move on to something new as it usually had a status of a chat about the weather. The understanding of the differences between the diaspora and contemporary citizens of Ukraine is prevalent by now and my familiarity with some traditions could not compensate for that difference, nor did my failure to recognize them carry much negative consequences. After all I was a young scholar from a university in Budapest, which left some people confused about my own “immigration history.” The

overwhelming majority of the recent immigrants in the ranks of the UNWLA, however, come from the Western regions of Ukraine sharing the local “ancestral” geography with the post-WWII immigrants, which suggests a certain importance of the imagined and actual shared cultural background (understood as the set of customary beliefs and artifacts, rather than values and social practices) for the mutual recognition.

Whether my origin had an impact on that or not, I felt welcomed and well-accepted by the UNWLA members of all generations, even though it was easier to develop a closer rapport with the post-1991 immigrants to whom I was closest in age and with whom we could think we shared some actual “cultural intimacy” (Herzfeld 2005). That “cultural intimacy” included the embarrassment of being post-Soviet Ukrainians amidst the people who, as one of my interviewees said in a moment of self-deprecating reflection, “did not have the infection of the Soviet Union.” The diaspora and post-Soviet Ukrainians remain “visibly” distinct as the former prefer an older version of the Ukrainian language while the latter have moved on from the 1927(1929) orthography of Holoskevych.²² By marking the contemporary version of the Ukrainian language as “corrupted” by the influence of Russian, the diaspora leaves no space where the post-Soviet Ukrainians can be fully “Ukrainian.”

By the time of my fieldwork, the difference between the “old” and “new” Ukrainians in the United States has been accepted for a fact rather than reconciled. Within the UNWLA a particular care has been taken to create an atmosphere of acceptance to the differences and unite around goals which they should be able to share as Ukrainian women outside of

²² This is not to say there has been no attempt in independent Ukraine to bring the Ukrainian language closer to its pre-Soviet version. In 1999, a project of new Ukrainian orthography that was supposed to “reconcile” it with the norms of the orthography of Skrypnyk/Holoskevych or rather to re-introduce the authentic patterns into the language was developed. The Parliament of Ukraine did not pass the proposed language reform in response to the negative public reaction. Through the natural language development and an added effort of the Soviet linguists, the contemporary Ukrainian language diverged from the 1927 orthography enough to require a major effort from the native speakers to learn that “correct” form of the language today, that is why the question of the return to the old orthography could never gain a broad support in Ukraine. Several publishing houses and at least one national TV channel (STB, news section) use the orthography proposed in 1999, however, and the orthography finds recognition among the people who want to position themselves as Ukrainian nationalists or “conscious Ukrainians.”

Ukraine. But the sources of previous tensions keep reminding about themselves. It was I whose Ukrainian was corrected, however politely, by the post-WWII immigrants, never the other way around. And despite the fact that the recent immigrants often express their disagreement over the use of some words and phrases, which sound archaic or foreign to them, when writing the UNWLA reports, they tend to adjust the language they use to the rules of the “diasporic Ukrainian,” at least to the few they know.

While I was never perceived by the UNWLA members as a person who would join their organization (or had joined it already), I was often included in their small and larger projects. Closer to the end of the fieldwork, I was invited to speak and write about the importance of integration of women and gender studies into academic programs in Ukraine, which was connected to the UNWLA’s fundraising for an endowment to launch a lectureship in Women & Gender Studies in the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv (Ukraine). From my later conversations with some UNWLA members, I realized that some of them believed that I not only supported, but also initiated or encouraged the UNWLA Executive Board to develop the project. Despite the fact that such an initiative could have been compatible with the ideas of feminist research that inform my study, any “transformative” effects that my presence had on the choice of projects and discourses by the UNWLA should be seen as unintentional.

Chapter Two. On Waves and Generations: Contextualizing Research

Introduction

Although I am talking about the Ukrainian diaspora in the singular, it should be noted that I refer to the ideas and processes in the part of the diasporic community which upholds the Ukrainian nationalist thinking and which in the immediate past (in historic terms) was supporting the cause of Ukraine's sovereignty and was characterized by a strong anti-communist position. The split within the Ukrainian Western diaspora into nationalists and socialists, or Catholic and Orthodox, from the early stages of their organizational attempts has been admitted by a number of studies on the history of the Ukrainian diaspora (Kuropas 1984; Pawliczko 1994; Satzewich 2002, 17; Swyripa 1993). Thus in this paper I am talking only about one particular imagined community of Ukrainians in the Western diaspora, but even that community is internally divided around political views, religious belonging, class standing, and immigration time, not to mention gender, age, sexuality, and other subject positions that organize people's experience.

It is hard to tell which of those divides are bridged by the UNWLA, since officially the organization membership is open to any woman of Ukrainian descent or affiliated with the Ukrainian community. Declaring itself a non-partisan organization guided by the principles of Christian ethics, religious tolerance, and respect for human rights (Danyluk and Kurowycky 2007, 2), the UNWLA stands out among other diasporic associations whose membership is usually more explicitly limited to Ukrainians of a particular church denomination or political view resulting in rivalry or at least competition between different groups. In the early decades of the UNWLA's existence, its leaders had to reproach men in the Ukrainian community because there were instances when they did not allow their wife to join a UNWLA's local branch on the grounds that she would work there together with a wife of a political opponent.

By the time of my research those divides became less pronounced, although they never disappeared, and the main antagonism developed between the post-1991 immigrants and the established diaspora. Like in the earlier periods, the UNWLA was among the first organizations that made an attempt to overcome that divide. Its successes and failures on that road will be discussed throughout this work. In this chapter I provide a historic background for a better understanding of the Ukrainian immigration to the United States and the most recent meeting between the diaspora and post-Soviet Ukrainian immigrants and the relationship between them at the time of my research. This will help to contextualize the challenges that the UNWLA faces when trying to look for new directions for its work.

2.1 Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States: Past and Present Encounters

2.1.1 More than one diaspora: historical overview

What is now referred to as the Ukrainian diaspora in North America is made up of the immigrants, as well as of their descendants, who arrived to Canada and the U.S.A. in three major waves of immigration from the territory of contemporary Ukraine. They were drawn by different economic and political factors and ensured the heterogeneity of the Ukrainian community in those countries in terms of class, age, religion and political views. The *first wave* of migration, the pre-First World War one (1880s-1914), consisted almost exclusively of peasants who left their homes in the largely agricultural and economically depressed outskirts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Galicia, Bukovyna, and Trans-Carpathian region) to look for land and work in the New World.²³ In the United States they often found jobs in

²³ The immigration from Galicia and Bukovina was largely encouraged by the Canadian government who was seeking to populate its western prairies, promising ownership on a 160 acre homestead to anyone who would turn about 30% of that land into a farmed field in three years and built a house there to settle. Steamship ticket agents who targeted the impoverished rural population of Eastern and Central Europe as potential immigrants making profits from selling tickets and lending money to those who decided to go to North (or South) America for work contributed to the increased interest in immigration among the local population, too. Already by the 1880s, any solicitation of immigration on the territory of Hungary and Austria were banned, however, the brochures and advertisements about the work opportunities in Canada and the United States continued to be

the mines and factories of Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, less frequently on the farms in Virginia, North Dakota, Georgia, Texas, and Illinois. The exact number of Ukrainians who immigrated in that period is difficult to establish due to the fact that they were often registered by the country or region they came from (as Poles, Austrians, Hungarians, Galicians, etc.), some of them referred to themselves as Ruthenians (or Rusyns, sometimes registered as Russians), which was a common name for the Ukrainian population in different parts of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires before the Ukrainian national identity was solidified.²⁴ It is also difficult to know how many of the immigrants settled in the new country and how many of them returned, but the existing estimates of the scope of the first wave migration say it brought between 350,000 and 500,000 Ukrainians to the United States (Pawliczko 1994, 90; Powell 2005, 299).

The WWI and the restrictive immigration laws that were passed in the United States in the early 1920s led to a considerable decline in the immigration to the country in the interwar period. Only between 15,000 (Powell 2005, 299) and 40,000 (Kuropas 1984, 9) Ukrainians are estimated to have come to the United States in the *second immigration wave* (1924-1939). While the majority of the immigrants of that period came from a similar to the first wave immigrants' background and for similar reasons (often within the family reunification program), their sense of national identity was much stronger already. The peasants and laborers of the second wave were also joined by a group of political émigrés who had played an active role in Ukrainian national state-seeking movements that led to the establishment of the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic (1917-1921) and Western Ukrainian People's Republic (1918-1919). Small in numbers, these educated political

distributed and by some estimations there were five to six thousand ticket agents in Galicia around 1920 (United States Immigration Commission 1920, 76). The process soon turned into a chain migration with the letters from immigrants said to play the main role in encouraging further migration from their villages (for more on early immigration of Ukrainians to North America see, e.g., Halich 1970; Kuropas 1984; Markus 2009; Powell 2005, 299–300).

²⁴ Ruthenian or Rusyn is also a name of a separate ethnic minority that is concentrated on the territory of Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

immigrants contributed to the politicization of the Ukrainian communities in the United States.

The *third, post-World War II wave* brought additional 85,000 Ukrainians to the country, for the first time including a noticeable number of immigrants from non-Western regions of Ukraine, that is from the parts of the country that historically were under the authority of the Russian Empire. This immigration wave consisted mostly of displaced persons or refugees, who found themselves in non-Soviet zones of the post-WWII Europe at the end of the war and refused to return to the Soviet Ukraine on the grounds of the fear of persecutions by the government. Out of the over 200,000 Ukrainians who avoided the voluntary and forced repatriation, the majority were former forced laborers in German and Austrian factories and farms. Others were the Ukrainian intelligentsia and political activists, members of nationalist and monarchist movements, who fled from Ukraine before the end of the war being afraid of political repressions. There were also former soldiers of the Red Army captured by the Germans and survivors of concentration camps. Having refused to return to the Soviet Ukraine, this diverse group spent many years in the so called DP camps – temporary settlements for displaced people set up for East European post-war refugees by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency in Germany, Austria, and Belgium. Some camps existed until 1958, by that time the DPs were either incorporated into the economic life of the countries where the camps were located or immigrated to the Americas, Western Europe, and Australia which agreed to accept them for permanent residency not without an active role of the Ukrainians who had settled in those countries before the WWII (for more on the Ukrainian DPs see, e.g. Dyczok 2000; Isajiw, Boshyk, and Roman 1992).

Between the 1960s and late 1980s, Ukrainians continued to arrive to North America, however, in numbers insufficient to constitute a “wave” (Pawliczko 1994: 374-381). Many of these later immigrants were resettling from Europe or Latin America; very few among them

were “new” immigrants coming from Soviet Ukraine. In the 1970s, a small number of dissidents were allowed to leave the USSR and found exile in the United States and Canada. During the same period, the Ukrainian American community was joined by ethnic Ukrainians from Poland, however, this flow of economic migration was cut off in 1982 when the Polish government introduced the martial law in the country.

In 2008, the number of people of Ukrainian ancestry in the United States, defined as persons with single, first or second Ukrainian ancestry indicated during the census, totaled to 930,434, according to the data available through the Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research of Ukrainians in the United States. Together with the number of the Ukrainian migrants of different waves and their descendants who admit their Ukrainian ancestry, this figure includes the 218,824 Ukrainians who arrived to the country since 1988, forming the *fourth wave* of Ukrainian migration.²⁵ While the statistics tends to take 1988 as the beginning of the new immigration cycle because that was the year when religious refugees started to arrive to the United States from Ukraine in larger numbers, in the popular discourse it is more usual to refer to Ukraine’s independence as the starting point of the fourth wave migration, since it resulted in the expansion of the freedom of movement (and the right to leave) to all citizens of Ukraine. The year 1991 will also be the main reference point in this study for the fourth wave immigration.

The statistics on the ethnic Ukrainians in the United States is only significant for this work when it is used as a discursive tool for outlining the boundaries of the Ukrainian community. The attention to different waves of immigration is important, however, because every wave, it appears, would bring a new layer of divisions, new system of coordinates for the internal organization of the Ukrainian community life. But every wave would recognize at least a part of the work carried out by their predecessors as important and reach out to the

²⁵ See Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research of Ukrainians in the United States, “Persons of Ukrainian Ancestry by Age, Nativity and Period of Immigration: United States, 2008.” [Table]. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://www.inform-decisions.com/stat/index.php?r=immig/verimmig>.

established organizations for the resources they could offer: from churches, newspapers and Saturday schools that help to maintain a symbolic and cultural link with Ukraine and to resist complete assimilation, to the knowledge of American and international political scene that can be used for advancing political causes. That recognition may be not immediate, and it may be quite painful for one or both of the sides. I happened to do my research at the time when that process was ongoing and some of the “old” and “new” Ukrainians in the United States were trying to work across their differences clearly understood by that time.

2.1.2 “Old” and “new” Ukrainians in America today

In her book *Ukrainian Immigrants in New York: Collision of Two Worlds*, Halyna Lemekh shares that her research was motivated by the examples of animosity that she saw and even experienced between the established diaspora (post-WWII immigrants and their descendants) and the post-1991 Ukrainians (2010, 1). This animosity has been described in various written sources and people’s oral accounts as ranging from mutual suspicion to hostility (Markus 1998, 165; Satzewich 2002, 196–198). High numbers of Russian speakers among the post-Soviet immigrants, their “ignorance” of the Ukrainian culture, and lack of enthusiasm for community life drew harsh criticism from many of the older diaspora members, who labeled the new-comers “*Homo sovieticus*” (Satzewich 2002, 198). The recent immigrants were often deeply offended by the attitude, since there was always someone among the diaspora to tell them they should go back to Ukraine to build their own country instead of looking for “easy money” abroad. In return, they came to mock the diaspora for the peasant background and the lack of formal education in many of the immigrants of the previous waves (but not their children, to be certain) – the discursive turn that was interesting in the context where the recent immigrants experienced a noticeable devaluation of their own educational attainment as their degrees from back home counted for little in the new country and they had to take up low-skilled employment upon arrival, often in building and construction and cargo

transportation for men and domestic and care work for women as well as to go back to school if or once their language proficiency allowed it.²⁶

Through abundant interview material, Lemekh (2010) depicts various expressions of ensuing hostility or, rather, of lack of understanding between the established diaspora and recent immigrants, leaving little hope for a possible reconciliation. Her research concludes, as the book's subtitle suggests, that the "new" and "old," "recent" and "established" Ukrainians in New York (and the United States by extension) belong to two different worlds, which think, talk, dress, and celebrate differently and which even if they shared a neighborhood, would never blend or smelt together. She does meet many of her interviewees of all the generations in the East Village, but similarly to her respondents, Lemekh does not consider the recent immigrants' membership in the Ukrainian credit union (or their employment there), their attendance of the churches or their love of the delicacies from the butcher's shop – all of which were built by the previous generations of ethnic Ukrainians in the city – for examples that could give promise for future cooperation.

What Lemekh observes is theorized in more general terms by Erdmans (1998), who saw a similar disconnection between ethnic Poles and more recent immigrants from Poland in Chicago in the 1980s. Erdmans explains that the overall phenomena may be expected because ethnic Americans or established diasporas and recent immigrants have different needs resulting from their different standing in the host country and their relation to the country of origin. If the ethnic Americans (in Erdmans' case, the third and further generations of Poles) sought to strengthen their Polish ancestry in terms of cultural heritage and its expression, recent immigrants needed to take care of the issues related to settling in a new country – to find a job, to learn the language, etc. And if for the former their Polish identity was voluntary,

²⁶ For discussion on the actual human capital devaluation in the case of the immigrants from the former Soviet space in the United States, see John R. Logan and Julia A. Rivera Drew, 2011, "Human Capital, Gender, and Labor Force Incorporation: The Case of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 52(1-2): 25–44.

for the latter it was “political” because it marked their social status, that of an immigrant in the new country (Erdmans 1998, 222). These differences caused frictions and even conflict, but at the same time, the ethnic and immigrant groups had something to offer to each other in terms of resources which then helped them to find a mutual interest in each other, continues Erdmans. In her research, it was the first-hand connections to Poland versus the knowledge of the rules and procedures of the American political activism that became the medium of exchange between the groups. She also concludes that the collective identity did not precede the cooperation between the ethnic and immigrant Poles, but was forged as a result of the efforts of the collective action; however, that shared identity had been initially expected, triggering tensions when it first became clear that the immigrants and Polish Americans had little in common (ibid., 226).

Could there be a space for collective action or the need for each other’s resources in the case of the different Ukrainians in the United States? Lemekh carried out her research in the 1990s when the emotions were still high and the differences strongly felt. The post-WWII immigrants were disappointed primarily with the State of Ukraine that came to existence and had to fulfill their lifelong dream but instead was unable (or unwilling) to deal with the post-Soviet legacies in a decisive manner. The Communist party of Ukraine that was banned in 1991 sprang back to existence two years later, while some of its former members never left the political Olympus renouncing their Party membership but not so obviously their views. Even more frustrating for the overseas Ukrainians was the fact that in the streets of Kyiv, the Russian language could be heard more often than Ukrainian, and the recent immigrants would often speak Russian among themselves as well. This was unacceptable for the WWII immigrants who had invested a tremendous effort to pass the Ukrainian language to their children and grandchildren, pushing against the assimilation forces in the United States. As one of my interviewees who was born in the late 1950s in the United States recalled, when

she was still a child she had to wash her mouth with soap as a punishment if she uttered a word in English at home; and another one, from a later generation, mentioned that her father would usually call her when she stayed for a sleepover at her Ukrainian American friends' house as a teenager to remind they should speak Ukrainian to each other. She wittily remarked that he did not seem worried that they could smoke or drink while the parents were not watching, asking only to make sure that whatever is done is done in Ukrainian. The ethnic Ukrainians in the United States and in other western countries could not understand why they appeared to have cared more about their language and traditions than the people of Ukraine. They could assume that the Soviet government exerted pressure on the people of its republics in the effort to raise a Soviet man, but there was little explanation for the fact that once the Soviet system collapsed, the Ukrainians did not turn to the revival of the lost traditions and culture.

Together with that, many of the post-WWII immigrants realized they were Americans of Ukrainian origin rather than Ukrainians living in the United States by now and this realization made some among the diaspora see that the recent immigrants despite their difference presented a valuable resource for the Ukrainian American community if it wanted to continue its existence. Maybe not all of them speak Ukrainian, but those who do increased the number of Ukrainian native speakers in the United States by 16.4 percent as of year 2000 (Wolowyna 2005, 255). Given the aging and passing of the post-WWII generation, the weight of the recent immigrants in that category will only be increasing. And they may be unaware of some traditions of their grandparents, but their "Ukrainianness" is in many senses more organic. "When they get together, they sing," said one of my interviewees about the recent immigrants in the UNWLA. Her family left Ukraine during the WWII when she was ten. "They sing like our parents did when they got together in groups for some celebration. My generation does not sing. Our children don't."

For many of the post-1991 immigrants the status of the “new-comers” has worn off by now, too. If in the first few years following their immigration they were preoccupied with the challenges of settling in a new country and did not have time for any community life, by the early 2000s the question of their Ukrainian identity became more prominent for some. New local and large transnational organizations started to form as the recent immigrants tried to seek protection of their economic rights and legal status as well as to meet their cultural needs. For example, in 2007 a new Ukrainian American organization “New Ukrainian Wave” was registered in Albany, NY. Its declared aim is to unite Ukrainians of the fourth wave in their effort to preserve “Ukrainian customs and traditions, promote the Ukrainian national idea, protect political, cultural and historical achievements of the Ukrainian people” (Nova Khvyliia 2013a). According to their website, they want to develop a bilateral relationship between “the diaspora and the state of Ukraine,” where the word diaspora refers to the fourth wave immigrants. Whether a slip of the tongue or not, their by-laws talk about the Ukrainian identity, language and cultural heritage in a similar manner to the associations of the established Ukrainian diaspora. One prominent difference is the statement that the New Ukrainian Wave will seek cooperation with the state of Ukraine and other organizations to protect the status and the rights of economic immigrants from Ukraine; but the very next sentence returns to the New Wave’s commitment to the promotion of Ukraine and its patriotism abroad. The membership in the organization is open to citizens of Ukraine or persons of the Ukrainian origin who “showed themselves to have deep patriotic beliefs, support the ideas of development and protection of independence, unity, and democratic nature of the state of Ukraine, and those who work to build Ukraine and the Ukrainian community in the U.S.A.” (Nova Khvyliia 2013b, sec. 3.1). A member of one of the main coordinating bodies of the Ukrainian diasporic organizations in the United States (the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America) and in the world (the Ukrainian World

Congress), the New Ukrainian Wave can be considered as an example of “diasporization” of the post-1991 immigrants.²⁷

The recent immigrants who joined the UNWLA did not always favor the establishment of parallel organizations by the post-1991 immigrants, however, arguing there were not enough people who would be ready to volunteer to do that work.

We already came having everything ready here – churches, schools, organizations. And we have to continue it because we can establish a lot of new organizations but the question is whether we can carry it. There are a lot of people but no one wants to work. And those who work are usually the same people.
(Tania, 4th wave immigrant)

Every sentence from the statement above was reiterated by many of the recent immigrants-members of the UNWLA who referred to other Ukrainians that arrived to the United States after 1991 as “lazy” and unwilling “to move a finger” when it comes to community work, and “not there yet” in their understanding of its importance. Without any real hostility, but rather as recognition of their own difference from many other Ukrainians of their wave, they would direct that criticism even to their friends who did not want to join the UNWLA or other similar organizations, “There are many Ukrainians, but no one wants to do anything. I have many friends from Ukraine, they are all nice people and they are always ready to go out or celebrate something together, but when it comes to doing something for others, no, no one is there” (Olena, 4th wave).

The question why women of both the previous and recent waves saw it important to maintain the local community and to help Ukraine and its people (not just their families) back in their homeland is not devoid of certain complexity; but those two aims appeared side by

²⁷ Similar in aims and structure is the Ukrainian Public Organization “Orange Wave” founded in Chicago in 2005. The International Organization of Ukrainian Communities “Fourth Wave” is registered in Canada, and another one, International Civic Organization of Ukrainians “Fourth Wave,” was established in Kyiv, Ukraine, claiming to unite Ukrainian communities in 23 countries in five regions of the world: Russia and FSU, North America, Europe, Middle East-Africa, and Ukraine itself (Chetverta Khvyliia 2013). The latter organization seems to substantially diverge from the similar in structure umbrella organizations of the diaspora of previous waves, stressing the protection of political, social, professional, and economic rights of Ukrainian immigrants in the world. It does not mean, however, that their motto “Ukrainians for Ukraine” cannot develop into another mobilizing frame for some section of the Ukrainian population abroad.

side as equally important in the statements of UNWLA members, being also official objectives of the organization. This question will be further discussed in the following chapters and more attention will be given to the accommodation of differences within the organization. In this section I wanted to highlight that Ukrainians who came to the United States at different times as well as those born in the country were looking for and finding some ways of cooperation. In the 1990s that thought was unacceptable to many – or rather it became unimaginable after the initial expectation of an organic bond among all ethnic Ukrainians had to be dismissed. It is still unimaginable to many today. However, doing my fieldwork almost twenty years after the first encounter between the “new” and “old” Ukrainians in New York, I did not see the boundary between the two groups (though they were more than just two) to be made of steel in terms of their relationship with each other and their attempts to engage with their homeland. The two protests against policies of the government of Ukraine that were held in front of the building of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations in 2011 while I was in town were attended primarily by recent immigrants despite the accepted idea that as economic immigrants, they were not interested in Ukraine or politics, caring only for their own financial well-being. Many of the people I met mentioned the lack of accord between the diaspora and the recent immigrants and could tell some personal stories related to it. But as one of my interviewees observed: “In our church choir – when I joined them [in 1995], I was the only “new-comer.” Now, we maybe have two or three from the old generation” (Olha, 4th wave). Today one can find post-1991 immigrants among editors of Ukrainian language newspapers of the diaspora’s organizations or among the volunteers on the Board of Directors in the Self-Reliance and National Credit Unions²⁸ where they represent interests of their cohort and challenge the work of the organizations from within.

²⁸ The Self-Reliance New York Federal Credit Union and the Ukrainian National Federal Credit Unions are two

2.2 The Question of Generations in the UNWLA

2.2.1 When two waves meet: past experience

This is not the first time when different immigration waves met in the UNWLA or when the organization had to accommodate immigrants and American born Ukrainians under its roof. From its early years, leaders of the UNWLA – educated elites in the Ukrainian American community, although immigrants themselves – tried to involve American born Ukrainian women into the work of the organization. Already in 1934, nine years after its foundation, the UNWLA had its first American-born president Anneta Kmetz (1934-35, 1939-43). Her Executive Board took care of the organization's legal status in the United States²⁹ and started to work on expansion of membership among young Ukrainian American women. Although resigning from the position a year later, she became the first English Corresponding Secretary taking the post that was introduced upon her suggestion with the aim to facilitate communication with Ukrainian American members who did not always spoke or read Ukrainian well. A few “youth branches” were organized and the seventh Convention in 1945, for example, had a separate half a day “Youth forum” where the question of the role of the UNWLA in the lives of the Ukrainian American women was highlighted.³⁰ The program of the forum was published exclusively in English. While the Ukrainian language remained to be the primary language of communication within the organization, all convention books were partly bilingual and included a few reports in English.

This linguistic situation has not changed with the arrival of the post-WWII immigrants and remains to be the same today, although it has never been easy to keep a

non-for-profit financial institutions owned by its members who have to belong to the Self Reliance Association of American Ukrainians or the Ukrainian Orthodox Community respectively (or to be related to or recommended by their members). The revenue generated by the organizations is returned to its members in the form of lower interest rates on loans, low fees for services, higher rates on deposit accounts, etc. Both organizations were established by the post-WWII immigrants from Ukraine, in 1951 and 1965 respectively; they have sponsored many of the community cultural events and remain to be in a good financial standing today.

²⁹ The UNWLA received the Charter of Incorporation in the state of New York on May 6, 1935.

³⁰ The topics of presentations included: Merging Nationality with Americanism, Careers with a Ukrainian Background, Ukrainian American Undergraduates, American Youth Program, Mothercraft, and Role of Ukrainian-American Educators.

balance between the need to reach its English speaking members and the determination to promote the knowledge of Ukrainian and to have the UNWLA as one of the spaces where people could have a Ukrainian speaking environment. The By-laws of the organization and many of the circulars are fully dubbed in both languages. However, the UNLWA monthly *Our Life*, which has been bilingual from its first issue (January 1944), allocates fewer pages for the English content. In addition, while some articles appear in both parts of the magazine, much of the content of the two parts of the magazine is original. On the one hand, it may encourage readers to look through the entire issue, since some level of proficiency in both languages can be expected from many of members; on the other, it does not allow the English speaking members of the organization to feel fully included. Meetings of Regional Councils and of the National Board are also held in Ukrainian. It is difficult to judge how much difference it made in the past, but today (that is during my research), the Executive Board is aware that the language barrier is one of the factors that discourages English speaking branches from participation in the work of the organization outside of their own branch. The question was mentioned several times during different meetings and the brief discussion of the issue suggested that while active membership and cooperation of branches on the regional level were important, the UNWLA did not see any immediate solution for it. Dubbing all meetings and written documents in two languages would be too costly, in particular given the relatively low number of branches with exclusively non-Ukrainian speaking membership. During one of the recent conventions that took place in Detroit in 2008, simultaneous interpreting was offered for the delegates and guests. However, that was rather an exception, the initiative came from the local branches which hosted the convention and reflected the fact that Ukrainian community in Detroit engages Ukrainian Americans of second and further generations as well as recent immigrants.

The question of language has never caused any major dispute because the organization targeted and attracted Ukrainian American women who were interested in their Ukrainian background and thus had to be willing to accept that language was an important part of the Ukrainian identity of the organization. Also, Ukrainian immigrants rather than ethnic Americans seem to have always dominated the organization. The “youth branches” formed in the 1930s and 1940s with their growing presence in the organization were soon outnumbered by the post-WWII immigrants. Their encounter with the then “old” Ukrainians in America was not as painful as the one in the 1990s, nevertheless their entry into the organized community life left a strong mark.

If the most recent immigrants can complain they often did not find support from the post-WWII immigrants when they came to the United States and were looking for a job or any guidance, the seeds of a good rapport between the settled Ukrainian community in the United States and the WWII immigrants were planted while the latter were still in the DP camps. In 1944 the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee was established to aid the Ukrainian DPs in Europe. It lobbied the U.S. government to introduce special quotas for accepting Ukrainian (and East European) refugees from Europe, and once that was achieved, its member-organizations provided affidavits for the immigrants sponsoring their resettlement to the United States. It also provided humanitarian aid to Ukrainians in the camps for displaced people. The UNWLA cooperated with the committee, but established its own Mother and Child Fund which sponsored widows with children or single women devoid of family support to help them to move to the United States. A temporary residence was organized for the resettled refugees in Philadelphia with a pre-school for children to allow women to take up jobs upon arrival. Between 1949 and 1951 about 150 people passed through the residence.

The UNWLA was also sending humanitarian aid (clothes, food, money) for the Ukrainian DPs in Europe; in 1953 it was decided to change the type of assistance and branches started to support kindergartens and Ukrainian schools in the DP camps in Germany, Austria and Belgium (the work that later transformed into the scholarship Fund for Ukrainian students in Brazil and around the world). What the UNWLA documents do not mention often but what remained in the “collective memory” of the WWII immigrants and their children were the stories that when the immigrants stepped off the ship that brought them to the U.S., they were met by women from the Ukrainian community in New York who greeted them with a bun and a glass of milk or something warm to drink. This was an initiative of some members of the UNWLA.

The initial accord being established, the relationship between the third wave immigrants and the Ukrainians they met in America was not always unclouded. One woman recalled in a conversation with me how she rented the first room for her family from a Jewish landlord in the East Village because he charged one fourth of what “old” Ukrainian landlords asked. Those little episodes of everyday life did not become the main reason for a discord, however. What turned out to be more important, the newly arrived immigrants came to the United States with good experience of self-organization. In the DP camps, some of which were as large as 3,000 to 5,000 people in early years, Ukrainians very promptly established self-government and developed institutions they deemed important: churches, kindergartens, Ukrainian schools and clubs, sports teams, and even women’s organizations.³¹ This experience allowed them to quickly take over the Ukrainian organizational community life in the United States. They have founded their own organizations, along the political divides they brought from Ukraine, and joined the existing ones often filling them with their

³¹ On Ukrainian women’s organizations in DP camps see Bohachevsky-Chomiak, Martha. 1992. “The Women’s Movement in the DP Camps.” In *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, edited by Wsevolod W. Isajiv, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus, 201–219. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press.

priorities and approaches. One of the articles that appeared in *Our Life* in 1952 mentions arguments between the Ukrainians of different waves, saying that the new immigrants were accusing the old ones in inefficiency and other vices. It should be remembered, the author states, that the previous immigrants came to the United States “from under a thatched roof” and had to learn the basics of community organizing from scratch. The recent immigrants, on the contrary, are equipped with education and experience of community organizing, and undoubtedly have a potential to contribute and extend the work of previous waves – that previous work should be respected, nevertheless (UNWLA 1952a, 2).

The thatched roof metaphor does not fully reflect the actual differences in the UNWLA – while it was true that the previous immigration waves were composed of people of peasant background, many of them, in particular those in community organizations, were well-established in their American homes by the time of arrival of the post-WWII wave. At least in the UNWLA, the difference through the eyes of a young post-WWII immigrant looked as follows: “When my mother was taking me to the [UNWLA] meetings I was still a kid. Those women were dressed like real ladies, they had gloves and hats and necklaces on. What did our mothers have? We didn’t have anything after the war, after the camps.”

But the new immigrants indeed came as a close-knit group with previous experience of organizing. “We arrived to America and the following day one would go to the church and meet their own [friends from the DP], and we would renew our organizations right away,” told me one of the UNWLA members who remembered her first days in New York. She did not recollect any major conflicts or tensions with the older members of the UNWLA, only that they held leadership roles on the Executive Board for quite some time and her branch lived its own life having little contact with the main office. But she wondered what happened to the children of the pre-war immigrants because she said “they just disappeared.” They had their choirs and theater groups, but once the generation of their parents passed away, it was

the post-WWII immigrants and their children who took over the community life almost entirely.

Other cities may have a different story but overall the second and third wave immigrants continued to work together in the UNWLA for some time. Recent immigrants often started with organizing Ukrainian pre-schools (*svitlychky*) some of which worked as full time day cares to allow mothers to take up employment. Thus the “takeover” was gradual, until 1965 the organization was headed by Olena Lotocky, one of the founders of the UNWLA. After that Stefania Pushkar seemed like a good transition figure since she studied in Pennsylvania in 1926-27 and upon her return to Lviv, Ukraine, continued to keep connections with the UNWLA members in her capacity of one of the leaders of the Ukrainian women’s movement in Galicia. In 1944 she left Ukraine and immigrated to the United States as a war refugee three years later. From the late 1960s onward, the organization’s leadership was taken over by the post-WWII immigrants, their presence and active position had been felt on the pages of *Our Life* in the early 1950s already.³²

2.2.2 Looking for new directions

The encounter between two immigration waves in the 1990s was largely dissimilar from the previous one. The political events in Ukraine, namely the proclamation of independence in 1991, reinvigorated the UNWLA and other Ukrainian organizations in the United States. The opportunity of direct cooperation with Ukraine led to creation of several new organizations, for example, for humanitarian assistance – the Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund (1990), for political cooperation and promotion of democracy – the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation (1991), for monetary transfers and shipment services between people and businesses – the Meest Corporation (1989 Canada, 1994 U.S.). New projects were launched by the UNWLA as well (see *Chapter Six*). However, the organization experienced a

³² The current UNWLA President is an American born Ukrainian.

continuous drop in membership as the new immigrants' zeal for community work was considerably lower than that of the political refugees of the previous wave. Between 2001 and 2012 membership count fell from 2,694 to 1,811 – largely due to the passing of the post-WWII generation, although some of the change may be attributed to the new and more precise record keeping that was introduced in the last few years. One or two new branches and a few members are added every year but it does not change the general perception that the recruitment goes uneasy and neither the third generation Ukrainian Americans nor recent immigrants hurry to join the UNWLA ranks.

Some people see the situation with pessimism, although I met a few with an optimistic attitude as well. Many of the post-WWII generation communicated that they thought the organization had seen its day: “You should understand me right, the UNWLA still has a lot of important projects, we are doing a lot, but it is not the same. Where are all the young women? I came to the UNWLA out of university – no, I was still at university when I joined. We all were young and active. Where are all the young women now?” (Larysa, post-WWII immigrant). Only once a similar discussion developed during a branch meeting among the 1.5 generation when one woman said she believed it used to be a lot of fun, “we didn’t have anything, but we gathered and somehow it was fun, and now it’s not like that anymore.” – “You think so because you are old,” was a cheerful reply from her friend, “Those who are young still come together and for them it’s like it used to be for you.” Despite the fact that the remark related to their own experience in the organization in this case, similar conversations in non-group settings usually lead to comments that young women were not joining the UNWLA actively and that there may be no one to continue the work once this post-WWII diaspora steps down from the scene.³³

³³ Recent immigrants criticized their co-wavers much more freely in conversations with me. The older members of the UNWLA had a more careful narrative – on the one hand, the UNWLA has been promoting an atmosphere of acceptance and encouraged the post-1991 immigrants and Ukrainian American members to welcome the

It was not only about joining the UNWLA, the recent immigrants were said to be passive in giving donations. One of the post-1991 members of the UNWLA Executive Board pointed out that the organization was not producing anything, it was a charity entirely dependent on donations. She continued, “These old immigrants, whatever we thought of them, they are really dedicated. They are so compassionate to Ukraine. So much money has been coming in, we sent so much to Ukraine. And I don’t think that this new immigration will dedicate themselves as much. They don’t give anything. And why would they give? If they are not in an organization, how will they know where the money goes and on what it is spent” (Tamara, 4th wave).

Political events in Ukraine, like the Orange Revolution of 2004 and the 2010 presidential elections, have shown to be able to mobilize post-1991 immigrants in the United States for some protest actions. The UNWLA, however, looks for ways to engage new members in the current context, without expectations of another major political crisis back in Ukraine that would help to “awaken” the fourth wave and Ukrainian Americans for diasporic action. The Executive Board has taken steps to somewhat modernize the work of the UNWLA, an organizational website was developed and a Facebook and LinkedIn pages created. After five years, the website started to gain some importance in the work of the organization as some branches learned to send announcements of planned events and short articles about them for publication there. Introduction of other social media as important channels of networking and communication has been slow, however, some of the older members of the organization do not use the Internet at all, others do not use it regularly, still others simply prefer to receive a printed copy of a magazine and a phone call about the following branch or National Board meeting, saying that nothing can match paper and ink and an in-person meeting. Since all the work of the Executive Board members is volunteer

recent immigrants and avoid conflicts; on the other, I was a post-Soviet Ukrainian, too, and they may not have wanted to sound too generalizing and critical in order not to offend me together with the rest of the group.

based, after all the phone calls that need to be done, there is little time left for the e-communication. Some help came from the new office manager in the UNWLA headquarters, which is a part-time hired position. However, her responsibilities so far included a reorganization of filing system and creation of a unified electronic database on the UNWLA membership with current contact details.

A new Membership Recruitment and Retention Campaign was launched after the 2008 Convention and in 2009 branches received a bilingual recruitment kit with advice and tips on the ways of attracting new members. In the recruitment kit personal contact is stressed as important and Branches are encouraged to approach their own family members, friends, and new people in their Ukrainian church or at Ukrainian events. They were provided with a brochure and flyers about the UNWLA, recruitment event ideas, a sample recruitment event invitation on UNWLA letterhead stationery, sample advertisement and PowerPoint presentation about the UNWLA for such an event. When presenting the Recruitment Kit at the National Board meeting in October 2009, the UNWLA vice president for membership stressed the need to use real marketing tools and approaches to recruitment and the kit that her committee developed applies a wide range of those strategies.³⁴ The main question remains, however, what is that product on the offer? In other words, what does the organization offer to its members?

The brochure enclosed with the recruitment kit states that the UNWLA creates opportunities for women to:

- know and experience their Ukrainian cultural heritage;
- make a difference for children, families and the elderly;

³⁴ During my fieldwork, I have not heard about any New York branch holding a recruitment event. The conversations about the need to add new members to the branch took place regularly during branch meetings as it was stressed that it would be easier to organize events if more people could share the work it involves.

- influence social, educational and charitable programs within communities through a leadership role. (UNWLA 2009)

It is also mentioned that apart from its charity work, the UNWLA “advocate[s] for women’s issues,” however, most of the stress is laid on the charity work for Ukraine and an opportunity to retain Ukrainian identity in the United States (i.e. in their own families). Whether that is the best direction and whether there can be new ways of doing that work today is an ongoing discussion in the UNWLA. The question “Where do we see our organization in five or ten years?” is raised as a separate issue for discussion at every National Board meeting and Convention. From the meetings I attended in 2009 and 2011, there seems to be a cross-generation consensus that the UNWLA members would want to do more “here in the diaspora,” that is to find issues that would speak to the Ukrainian and Ukrainian American women in the United States. One of the suggestions was to renew the Environment committee, which existed briefly in the 1990s but somehow did not gain much popularity despite the fact that it was supposed to deal with the questions that are relevant for every person and family. As much as everyone sounded excited when talking about refocusing on their own needs and interests – as women and as a community – there were not many concrete ideas voiced. The two new projects that were presented at those meetings were directed at Ukraine. They were a humanitarian aid project for ten geriatric homes in ten different regions of Ukraine and an endowment for lectureship in women studies at a university in Lviv. In the case of the former, it was reminded that branches should remember about their senior members, those that could not come to the meetings anymore and might be in geriatric homes themselves. And some branches do call to or visit their seniors but it does not have a status of a separate program and no financial assistance is provided.

Conclusion

“We are all Ukrainian women regardless of the language we speak, Ukrainian or English, and regardless of the “wave” with which we came here – let’s unite and work together to keep the UNWLA going,” (Zajac 2013, 15) was quoted Oksana Dats, President of the Regional Council of New Jersey, in the March 2013 issue of *Our Life*. In the following paragraph, UNWLA president Marianna Zajac adds that “Our goal is to be proactive and build on each of our strengths while understanding our differences – but always working together for the future of our organization” (ibid). The stress on the organization rather than on any particular unifying cause should not be surprising in the context where it is the survival of the organization itself that has been threatened by the political change in Ukraine and the internal generational shift in the UNWLA. Organizational loyalty is sometimes considered as the first step in creation of collective identities (Rupp and Taylor 1999). But what is that identity that is being created and what is believed to unite all those different Ukrainian women?

The answer is still in the making, that is why it is the organization that is constantly put at the center of the discussion and modernization. Looking at the experience of the Polish diaspora in the United States in the post-socialist period, Radzilowski (2005) reminds us that the Polish American communities had to overcome a similar crisis of orientation in the 1920s and 1930s, when their homeland gained a sovereign status after the First World War. Back then, he argues, the crisis led to a realization that the community could exist without Poland as their main point of reference. It allowed the ethnic Poles in the United States to refocus on their American ethnic communities and culture, claiming rights and creative space for their ethnic group in the United States (2005, 284). Today, the same process would have to take place, according to Radzilowski, however, the “closeness” of Poland due to the communication and travel opportunities may hinder this break with the homeland, he predicts. The Polish diaspora has been more successful in articulating new discourses of the

“threat” to the Polish national security than in discovering the new potential that the strong and EU-integrated homeland provides for the diasporic community.

Some of that experience must be shared by all diasporas whose homeland gains sovereignty that has been the diaspora’s *raison d’être*. For the Ukrainian diaspora, reorienting to their ethnic community and a unique Ukrainian American interpretation of culture and tradition may not be an immediate solution, however. First of all, the feeling of incompleteness of the post-Soviet transformation in Ukraine allows them to continuously put forward the needs of their homeland as priority. Second, the political change in their homeland coincided in time with a generational shift in the diasporic community, which was further complicated by the arrival of the new wave of immigrants. The turn to their own needs, so much discussed in the diaspora circles and in the UNWLA since the mid-1990s (see Markus 1998; Satzewich 2002, 221), has not been easy to take because it first required recognizing that those needs may be different within the community. Yet the move towards the internal needs and resources has entered discussions and became gradually noticeable in practice. How does the UNWLA define those needs and whose needs preoccupy the organization’s agenda? In the following chapter I argue that the UNWLA does not want to abandon their diasporic work and discuss the differentiated approach of the organization to the needs of women of Ukraine and Ukrainian women in the United States.

Chapter Three. A Mother and a Heroine: Defining the “Ukrainian woman” in Two Worlds

Introduction

Every February for over five decades already, Ukrainian women’s organizations in the Western diaspora are marking the Day of Heroines to commemorate the Ukrainian women of courage who lived and sometimes lost their lives for Ukraine. Originally introduced to pay tribute to five hundred women-political prisoners who perished in June 1954 during an appeasement of an uprising at the high-security labor camp in Kingir, Kazakhstan (USSR), the holiday is not linked to any particular women’s names. Instead, it offers an occasion to celebrate *the courage* of the Ukrainian woman who has faced countless adversities in the modern history of the Ukrainian nation but whose *will* could not be broken even by the omnipotent Soviet regime.

On the surface, the Day of Heroines mirrors the metonymic meaning that a monument to the Unknown Soldier carries in the general nationalist imagining (Anderson 1991, 9), only that the supreme sacrifice of one’s life in the name of the nation is an unusual role for women to try on. Dying on a battlefield or in prison does not make an easy part of their profile, for women’s roles in a nation are usually clearly defined, being often limited to those of the symbolic and biological reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis 1997). The celebration of heroism rather than victimization of women who despite the common expectations prove to be ready to die for their nation can manifest a rejection of the traditional understanding of the contribution women have been making to the national cause. At the same time, a classical concern lingers: do women have to be like men to become recognized as heroines? And does a female hero that is cast in the masculine mold not imply a mere acceptance of the supremacy of the men’s contribution into the nation-making?

Another question to consider is how the heroism of the woman of Ukraine is related to that of women in the diaspora. In her comprehensive research on women in the Ukrainian

Canadian organizations, Swyripa (1993) shows that it was in their role of mothers that women were addressed by the leaders of the diaspora. Raising the young generation who would be assimilated enough to be accepted by the Canadian majority but at the same time conscious of their roots and devoted to the cause of Ukraine's independence was defined as the primary duty of women in the ethnic community. Swyripa argues that women's groups and associations rarely managed to break away from that definition, often preferring charity work that was seen to be a natural extension of women's nurturing role but being reluctant to engage in other types of public work or political activism (1993, 131).

In this chapter I bring up examples of two celebrations that became a tradition for many of the UNWLA branches – the Day of Heroine and the Mother's Day – to examine the meanings that the holidays help to produce today and the discourses on women's role in community and nation behind them. I will argue that the former has always been linked to the particular imagining of the Ukrainian nation as modern and democratic but oppressed and in need of support. The latter is closer to personal experiences and needs of the women in the UNWLA and provides a link between generations.

3.1 "Mother's Day," and Other Stories of Motherhood

3.1.1 Second Sunday in May: Anna Jarvis and the Ukrainian "Mother's Day" celebration

"The Ukrainian National Women's League of America Branch 125 invites the public to a program celebrating Mother's Day featuring Victor Gribenko, M.D. Ph.D who will speak on "Women's Health." The talk will be followed by a concert. Refreshments will be served. Time: May 9, 2009, 5pm. Donation: \$10." The UNWLA office manager, Natalka Duma, handed me a small black and white flyer with this announcement on my second visit to the UNWLA's headquarters better known as "UNWLA's home." She added that the event was organized by one of the branches of recent immigrants and it could be a good occasion for me

to meet them. They used to organize Mother's Day almost every year, she explained, and now it was back as the branch recovered from losing half of their members who moved to New Jersey and decided to form a separate branch there. Both branches were now active, being very young by the contemporary UNWLA's definition. As I later found out, the majority of their members arrived to the United States in the early and mid-1990s, usually with families and very young children. Since then, most of the women went to a college in the U.S. to get a recognized degree and now had professional jobs, owned a home, and worried about their children's SAT exam preparation as those approached their final high school year.

When I arrived to the UNWLA Art Gallery³⁵ on the indicated day around five in the afternoon, it was already full (in my estimate there were about 50 people at the event, but that may be in no way precise). Men and teenage children in the audience suggested that the UNWLA members tried to involve their families into the events they organized, which I knew was common from the reports of other branches I had read earlier. But I also recognized a few older women, members of other UNWLA branches, whom I saw the previous day at the New York Regional Council meeting. When the guest speaker started his presentation on women's health, we all understood that the reception was a remote perspective. His didactic and serious tone somehow mismatched the more informal mood in the room. It did not take long before the audience resorted to jokes and laughter whenever the doctor tried to include any interactive elements into his presentation. After the fifty minute lecture on the damage that the sun, smoking and the make-up cause to the woman's skin, the

³⁵ The UNWLA headquarters/home shares a five-storey building with another Ukrainian American organization – the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. The UNWLA owns two upper floors having an art gallery on the fourth and the office on the fifth floor. They also use the rooms on the second floor for some meetings and events. The UNWLA art gallery does not have an official status, but the organization holds small exhibits of invited Ukrainian or Ukrainian American artists, sometimes their own members, there. Another example would be an exhibition of traditional Ukrainian Christmas tree decorations accompanied by a personal collection of nativity scenes from around the world owned by one of the UNWLA members that were displayed in the Gallery during Christmas holidays in 2009-2010.

program moved to the promised concert. It opened with a brief historical note that the Mother's Day was introduced by the U.S. Senate in 1914 in response to the efforts of Anna Jarvis who in the memory of her deceased mother campaigned for the recognition of the holiday. The holiday soon became popular in other countries and in 1929 it was celebrated for the first time in Ukraine being introduced by the *Soyuz Ukrainok* and becoming their annual tradition. Banned by the Soviet government in 1939, Mother's Day returned to Ukraine in the 1990s.

After this short introduction which connected American and Ukrainian Mother's Day traditions, the members of Branch 125, dressed in Ukrainian embroidered blouses, kept audience's attention with their singing, brief poem recitals and a few satirical poems about women, men and different turns life may take. In the hour that the concert lasted, many good and touching words were said about mothers as dearest people in our lives and at the program's closing, one of the performers said a few personal greetings and gave flowers to her mother who was in the audience. A UNWLA Honorary President and a few other women from the New York Regional Council who attended the celebration were also greeted with flowers as symbolic "mothers of our branch." In this circle of greetings the women who prepared the concert received flowers from their children as well. And then everyone moved to reception, which as later turned out was just a beginning of a long night that ended with dances and wine.

The following day I arrived to the same UNWLA Gallery for a lecture about Roksolana, one of prominent female figures in Ukrainian and Turkish history,³⁶ where one of UNWLA members, a post-WWII immigrant, asked me about my impression from the Mother's Day celebration which she also attended. She said that she liked it, too, but the

³⁶ Roksolana (c. 1500-1506 – 1558), born Anastasiya Lisovska, was a favorite wife of Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and a mother of the heir to the throne. She is believed to have been kidnapped from a Ukrainian town by Crimean Tatars and sold into the sultan's harem. She holds a prominent place in Turkish history as a woman who exerted an unprecedented influence on the politics of the empire.

“new Ukrainians have one somewhat negative trait,” she said, “the contemporary Ukrainian songs are very sentimental. They have always been lyrical, but now they are very sentimental,” complained she to me, adding that she cried through the whole concert.

3.1.2 “We are all mothers”: Lived experience and symbolic interpretations of motherhood

It should be clear from the description of the event that it carried a good deal of personal meaning and emotion and it proved to be an occasion for an outreach across generations. Branch 125 was fully aware of that effect. Almost a year later, when the Mother’s Day program for 2010 celebration was discussed, they explained to me that they turned it into an annual event because they knew that women of the older generation liked it. They all had children but sometimes those children lived far away, some of them lost their daughter or son, I was told. But then it was as much for the senior women in the organization as it was for the members of Branch 125 themselves. “Our mothers are far away,” said one of them as the discussion was going, “I called mine in the morning to greet her and I thought about her when we were singing.” To show their own children some Ukrainian traditions was also mentioned as important and then we moved to selecting songs for the concert which this time was planned to have a live, not recorded, instrumental accompaniment because one of the members could play the guitar and the Ukrainian string instrument bandura.

That many of UNWLA members are mothers and can relate to the meaning of the day on a personal level is only one point to consider. It is because of their children many of them came to the UNWLA in the first place. Women who formed Branch 125, for example, first met at a Saturday school of Ukrainian studies in the East Village, all finding it in a different way but for the same reason – to get their children into a Ukrainian speaking environment. One of them mentioned, “My Russian neighbors told me from the start that if I wanted my children not to lose the language, we had to speak only Ukrainian at home and we had to find them Ukrainian friends. Because English is everywhere and children, especially that young,

simply forget their language. And then I started to ask around. Someone told me there was a Ukrainian neighborhood in downtown Manhattan, and that's how I found the school and the Plast [youth organization], and we got him into Ukrainian dance classes. We spent the whole Saturday after the regular school-week there in the East Village" (Oksana, 4th wave). While children were learning Ukrainian language, history and traditions, their parents, usually mothers, formed their own Ukrainian circle as they waited to pick up their kids after school. When the UNWLA president approached them with an invitation to join the organization, she dealt with a close-knit group already, which decided, as they told me, that they did not mind turning their weekly meetings over the coffee into some productive work for the Ukrainian American community in New York and for Ukraine.

This experience is by far not unique to this particular branch. A considerable number of UNWLA branches in the previous periods were established by women who had young children and wanted to create an environment where the little ones could learn and practice their Ukrainian and socialize with other children from Ukrainian families. While the schools of Ukrainian studies have been mostly run by Ukrainian churches (with support from credit unions), the UNWLA took the initiative with pre-schools for children under five. Branch members had to support their *svitlychka* themselves, however, they could get practical advice and methodological materials developed and published by the UNWLA and its branches in other locations. A formal affiliation with the UNWLA, whose name is widely recognized in the network of Ukrainian American organizations, made it easier to negotiate support from Ukrainian churches or community centers whose premises were often used for *svitlychkas*. Once established, the Ukrainian pre-schools often continued to function even after the children of the branch members grew up. Some of them have been operating for over 40 years now, and new ones are still being created. For example, a new *svitlychka*, and with it a UNWLA branch, appeared in 2010-2011 in North Carolina, where recent immigrants were

primarily motivated by the opportunity to learn from the UNWLA's experience of running Ukrainian pre-schools. Another *svitlychka* was founded in Detroit in 2002 by American Ukrainians for children from non-Ukrainian speaking families. Detroit has two other Ukrainian pre-schools in town established back in the 1970s and 1980s but they are oriented towards children of recent immigrants or other families where Ukrainian is the primary language of communication, thus having a different approach and learning objective compared to the new pre-school. Few locations can afford to have more than one *svitlychka*, however, and children with different levels of language proficiency have to play and study together. In New York, Branch 83 has been supervising the only *svitlychka* in town since 1971. It only meets once a week now, like most Ukrainian pre-schools these days, even though they used to be full-time or part-time day cares serving in addition a practical purpose of helping the women to pursue paid employment.

After the presentation of the UNWLA's recruitment campaign which was mentioned earlier and a discussion about the needs of Ukrainian American and immigrant women that the UNWLA could address to look more appealing to new members, one of the long-standing members of the UNWLA mentioned her recent conversation with her sister-in-law, also a UNWLA member. "I asked her, 'Do you remember why we joined the UNWLA?' And she tells me, 'Because we were conscious Ukrainians and wanted to be active in our community and to help the Ukrainian cause.' – 'Are you sure? We came to the UNWLA because we had little kids and had to do something with them. We needed *svitlychka*!" (Natalka, post-WWII immigrant).

Although common, the pre-schools have not been the only entry to the organization. Moreover, as children grew up only one or two members of the branch would remain involved with *svitlychka*, working there as teachers. Gradually group's interests would evolve towards support of art projects or the Ukrainian Museum, charity for Ukraine or Ukrainians

in other countries or a little bit of everything. They would still be able to use the same fundraising skills they needed for getting funds for the pre-school, but the type of events they organize could change: “We all had little children, so our branch had a puppet show, published a book for children [...] Then we decided we needed to do something for ourselves. We started annual “pumpkin parties” (*harbuzivky*). They were funny and interesting. Back in those days we would hire a live band, prepare short performances. It was for our branch members and their husbands and our friends” (Mariya, post-WWII immigrant).

Apart from the Mother’s day and conversations about their own family, images of mothers and motherhood were rarely evoked directly or as a primary reference to talk about the UNWLA’s work or frame the organization’s projects. While motherhood has always been considered an important role for a woman coming with certain responsibilities, it was only one of her roles and one of the stages in her life. It has been more common to talk about *women* and *families* when the UNWLA discussed its aims. The nurturing role of a woman and the importance of language and culture retention in the family were never disputed; however, as will be seen in the following sections, the UNWLA took a particular care to avoid reducing their work and with that a woman’s image to those two functions.

At the same time, it is not uncommon to hear statements like “we should continue the work of our mothers and pass this organization to our daughters” these days. The statement is usually made by American born women who indeed joined the UNWLA because their mothers were in the organization and who often have their own daughters or daughters-in-law they would like to see there. Becoming a shared discourse among the Ukrainian American women, the mother-to-daughter metaphor has not been a universally accepted way of talking about the UNWLA membership. But on certain occasions, as an expression of respect for the work of the previous generations, the metaphor can be evoked by the recent immigrants as well, and the Mother’s Day was one of the most obvious examples. When a new branch is

launched, it is a part of the organizational tradition to invite one of the long-term UNWLA members to be a “god-mother” for the group.³⁷ These symbolic familial and kinship references help to create an idea of lineage and continuity in the community itself, to restate the idea of an ethno-national group as a family into which one can be born or adopted. In that family women can be mothers and daughters, mothers-in-law and god-mothers, but their role in the UNWLA is defined through their belonging to the Ukrainian ethnic group first and foremost, where a woman can make a difference as a mother but also as a public figure and a successful professional woman.

3.2 Defining their place in community: Historic and contemporary ties between Ukrainian women’s movement in Ukraine and abroad

To understand what place in community the UNWLA has been trying to take and how it differed from what was on the offer, a brief historic overview is needed. In the early writings of the UNWLA leaders, it is stated that the organization “does not provide a program for action to its chapters or member-groups, it only helps those associations do their work by disseminating their ideas in those corners where they are not known. It [UNWLA] carries out a sort of a conscription of women in America, having contacts with women in almost every town in the United States, thus the establishment of a women’s association in America is going faster and with more use” (Lotocky 1930b). The connection and unity of women’s organizations was deemed necessary to enable them to work with full capacity “in the educational and economic spheres, and to leave the legacy that our children will not be ashamed of.” (Lotocky 1930a, 3) To start on that road, continues Olena Lotocky, then a member of the UNWLA Executive Board, the UNWLA planned to hold series of public lectures “on different topics of interest to all of us.” First of them was a talk by Dr. Nenilia

³⁷ There is also a “god-father” – usually a husband of one of the UNWLA members.

Pelekhovych, first Ukrainian female doctor in New York, who was also one of active members of the UNWLA.

By 1930 when Lotocka wrote those lines, over 10,000 women were members of four largest Ukrainian American fraternal organizations. Founded as benevolent associations in the last decade of the 19th century they first aimed to provide life and health insurance to Ukrainian miners and factory workers but soon turned into main community building organizations that were publishing newspapers, supporting churches, and among other things, talking about the need to involve women into community life so that they become aware of the woman's highest duty of preventing full assimilation of her children (Myshuha 1934, 125–131). The male members of the fraternities were encouraged to “enlighten” their wives and daughters: “give them newspapers and books to read, get them interested in the community and political issues you yourself fight for,” writes *Svoboda* newspaper in 1912 (cited in Myshuha 1934, 129), and adds that no one can match women in their ability to instill love for their culture and duty to their people in children. It is also mentioned that Americans do not want to have illiterate and “dark” people in their midst, thus the acculturation of immigrant women of peasant background becomes one of important issues discussed by the leaders of the community. They highlight the need to “Americanize” the Ukrainian ethnic community in the United States in a positive way by eradicating illiteracy and engaging women into community work.

Now and then, leading figures of Ukrainian women's movement, who believed that Ukrainian women in America were far behind their sisters on Ukrainian lands in terms of organizational life and general community activism, would address them through Ukrainian American newspapers. They would stress the link to Ukraine and the duty of immigrants to help the people left behind rather than refer to the community building efforts of Ukrainians

in America (ibid, 126), but it is an expected perspective given the focus of their own work in Ukraine.³⁸

It was the immigrant women's own needs, however, that the first known Ukrainian women's associations in the United States tried to tackle. The Sisterhood of Saint Olha established in 1897 in Jersey City, New Jersey, was similar in its aim to fraternities trying to serve as a benevolent association paying small support benefits to women-workers in case of illness and death.³⁹ Apart from financial support, the sisterhood wanted to organize reading classes for its illiterate members and promote patriotic spirit among them (*Zhinocha Hromada* 1931, 78). It was not before the WWI that the women's organizations, like the rest of the Ukrainian American community, became mobilized around the idea of Ukraine's sovereignty and the need to help the people of Ukraine. When *Zhinocha Hromada* (Women's Community) – which later became Branch 1 of the UNWLA – was established in New York in 1921, its members clearly stated in their founding meeting that it was a duty of Ukrainians in the United States to help veterans of the WWI in Galicia and that women were best fit for such charity work. They started organizing community events and performances to collect money that they sent to Lviv for construction of a Home for Veterans. Soon, however, they came forward with a strong criticism of fraternal associations and the secondary roles that were assigned to women there. In the jubilee book published on the 10th anniversary of *Zhinocha Hromada*, they harshly disapprove of the fact that women have no actual representation in the fraternal organizations where they are formally declared to have equal membership rights. A few women had been elected to the executive board of the four major

³⁸ One of the first leaders of Ukrainian feminism Natalia Kobrynska addresses Ukrainian women in the United States through the *Svoboda* newspaper in 1904: "Where, but in America, can a woman emancipate herself? Where, if not in America, could she better make herself of service to the Ukrainian woman and culture, if only she would capture the interest the American public in the beautiful and artistic handiwork of our womenfolk? ... Do not forget your native land and the sisters you've left behind! Do not sever your ties with them. Help them as much as you can. Organize women's groups that can cultivate a profitable market for the handicrafts of our women in Ukraine!" (cited in Kichorowska Kebalo 2011, 143).

³⁹ In 1902 those benefits were \$2.50 per week in case of illness and \$100 in case of death while the members of the sisterhood contributed 25 cents per month for this insurance (*Zhinocha Hromada* 1931, 78).

fraternities which by 1930 united over 40,000 members combined, but as *Zhinocha Hromada* puts it, it was done “for decorative purposes” (ibid., 84). Most women belonged to the same associations and chapters as their husbands did and thus never had a chance to become delegates to the conventions or meetings of the benevolent associations because that role was reserved for their husbands and only a small percentage of women was organized in separate chapters which gave them an opportunity to have a say in the matters of the organizations’ work. We talk about 10,000 women who “have almost no influence on the work of their benevolent associations,” it was concluded (ibid., 87).⁴⁰

This became a platform for the UNWLA, which was established with a direct reference to Ukraine and its state-seeking efforts (see *Chapter Four*), yet firmly believed that women needed to have a strong and independent network of organizations that would represent their interests in their Ukrainian American community. The Ukrainian name of the UNWLA makes a direct reference to *Soyuz Ukrainok* (Union of Ukrainian Women) – the leading organization of the Ukrainian women’s movement in Galicia in the interwar period. The *Soyuz Ukrainok* was founded in 1921 with a center in Lviv and it is believed to have 100,000 members ten years later (Kichorowska Kebalo 2007, 46). It relied on a network of young peasant women who attended some basic vocational training courses organized by the *Soyuz Ukrainok* and could become community leaders for women in their villages. They organized reading classes and helped to establish cooperatives for women in order to improve their economic and social standing. While working together with other movements that had a similar aim of lifting the economic conditions of the often impoverished Ukrainian peasantry in Galicia (*Prosvita* Literacy Society, Co-operative movement, credit unions), the *Soyuz Ukrainok* insisted on having an autonomous status, becoming an organization of women for women. One of its leaders, Milena Rudnitska, who was twice elected representative from

⁴⁰ To compare with similar processes in Polish American community, see William J. Galush, 1990, “Purity and Power: Chicago Polish American Feminists, 1880-1914,” *Polish American Studies* 47 (1): 5–24.

East Galicia to the Polish Parliament and a recognized figure of Ukrainian feminism of that time, was a strong proponent of women's equality in public and political life. She bowed to the nationalist movement in some of her statements by saying that the Ukrainian women's movement was not an "egoistical movement, in pursuit of narrowly defined women's interests" (cited in Kichorowska Kebalo 2007, 49). However, she continuously championed women's civic participation and the *Soyuz Ukrainok* was one of the vehicles of raising women's consciousness and encouraging as well as creating opportunity for their public engagement (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1988, 151–236; Diadiuk 2011; Kichorowska Kebalo 2007, 44–50).

Creating a coalition of women's organizations in the United States in 1925, Ukrainian women in America adopted the name of *Soyuz Ukrainok Ameryky* that was translated as the Ukrainian National Women's League of America and to date is the official Ukrainian version of the UNWLA's name. Together with the name, several principles of the Ukrainian women's movement of that period were adopted. Despite the fact that the UNWLA fully accepted the duty to help Ukraine in its struggle for independence and placed a considerable stress on preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage in the United States, the organization jealously guarded its autonomous status and refused numerous invitations to join or merge with major organizations in the Ukrainian American community. That status gave them an opportunity to define the projects they wanted to undertake and reject the ones they were not interested in running, which did not please everyone in the community. Writing about one of such conflicts a UNWLA member says, "[the conflict] is only due to the fact that women's organizations are mature enough to have an independent place in community, while the public still wants to see them as an assisting factor, which collects money for the activities of other organizations" (Biliak 1957, 1). In that light, the UNWLA may have agreed to take charge of pre-schools, which was seen as appropriate work for women to do, but they

did not agree to be social workers in the community and take care of the elderly when that question was raised. The pre-schools in their initial form of day-cares helped women with young children to seek employment. The elderly had to become a responsibility of fraternities and Ukrainian credit union associations because that was a type of work that the UNWLA did not feel would benefit their members immediately.

It was a little victory, but it allowed the UNWLA to keep their organization engaged in political campaigns, remain flexible about the amount of work they wanted to put into a project, and schedule their events and meetings when branch members had more free time as opposed to when another community organization needed their engagement. The UNWLA also developed a particular position on language retention and preservation of cultural heritage, clearly stating it was the responsibility of families and the whole community, not of women alone (see Kotyk 1966; Rozhankovska 1966; Sawycka 1968). The UNWLA never opened a discussion that it was probably women who carried the main burden of that work in those families and community, yet its leaders rarely appealed to the UNWLA members with the reminders that as mothers they had to be vigilant in keeping the Ukrainian tradition alive in their homes. It may have been presumed, and probably rightly so, that UNWLA members did not need those reminders because they had come to the organization with a full recognition of the importance of that task.

Past issues of *Our Life* carry a number of articles related to the topic of child rearing. They were not limited to the questions of language or culture retention and often took a form of letters from mothers who raised some topics that were relevant to their everyday experience of raising children in an American city or town. The most prominent feature of those columns is that the issues change as the children of the post-WWII immigrants grow up. In the 1950s, the topics move from the challenges and successes of working mothers of young children to concerns about crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse among the American

youth and the need to stay connected with their teenage children in order to recognize first signs of trouble. In the 1960s, the question of intermarriages and raising children in mixed families takes the spotlight. In all those cases some very conservative views are published in the form of letters from readers who respond to more “liberal” views of the *Our Life* authors, but they usually raise further debate. For example, the one or two stories from women who argue that every woman should quit paid employment and devote herself entirely to raising her children in a real Ukrainian environment are dissolved among the stories of successful professional women and countered with an argument that not every Ukrainian family with a stay at home mother managed to raise children who were mindful of their Ukrainian roots.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the Ukrainian women’s movement in 1954, the UNWLA sent out a questionnaire to several Ukrainian American women who achieved success (in their professional life) asking them to reflect about the status of women in public life and personal challenges they may have faced in their careers. Mary Beck, the first woman in the Detroit City Council (in office 1950-1970), was featured in the January 1955 issue of *Our Life* (p. 7). Talking about her career in law and politics, she said that she had experienced discrimination and open opposition to a woman in politics when she decided to run to the city council. She was not always invited to debates and was placed last on the list of speakers when she did get an invitation. The following month, Sofia Parfanovych, one of the first female doctors in Galicia who now resided in Detroit as well recalled that it required her an extra effort to finish her studies and get practice because she was constantly reminded she was only a woman who needed to marry rather than to work. She concluded that “whatever the situation and events are, we are still far from that day when a woman could feel free and equal with a man in this world.” (Parfanovych 1955, 7)

In a somewhat literal way, people like Sofia Parfanovych remained the UNWLA’s most direct link to the *Soyuz Ukrainok* (which was closed by decision of Polish authorities in

1939) because she worked in its ranks back in Galicia before the Second World War giving lectures and publishing articles that related to health, nutrition and hygiene. Many of the post-WWII immigrants knew the *Soyuz Ukrainok* and were its members back in Ukraine. Two UNWLA presidents, Stefania Pushkar (1965-71) and Lydia Burachynska (1971-74), for example, had been co-founders and editors of *Nova Khata* (New Home, 1925-1939), one of the magazines that grew out of the work that the *Soyuz Ukrainok* carried out. And during a UNWLA meeting that I attended in 2010, a letter was read out from a son of a recently deceased UNWLA member. He said that he would like to maintain his mother's subscription to *Our Life* because some of his friends collected Ukrainian recipes that the magazine published. His mother, he continued, loved the organization since she joined it in 1936 in Terebovlia (now Ternopil region, Ukraine).

He clearly connected the *Soyuz Ukrainok* in Terebovlia and the *Soyuz Ukrainok* of America, i.e. the UNWLA, probably like his mother did. On the one hand, it could allow talking about actual continuities between the two organizations. On the other, the pronounced attention to Ukraine became the main distinction of the women's organization in the United States. For the *Soyuz Ukrainok*, it was their own women and their own country for whom the organization worked. For the UNWLA, the cause of their homeland and its people distracted much of their effort from their own members: "Women of Ukraine do not have an opportunity to express themselves in free organizations or to work for the good of their fatherland, and that task has been taken over by women's organizations in the immigration. We call all Ukrainian women, who do not belong to any organization yet, "Join us and fulfill your duty to your fatherland, to those sisters who gave their life for the freedom of their nation and those who, in the occupied Ukraine, are in jails or labor camps" (UNWLA 1974, 3).

Milestones of Ukrainian women's movement continued to be celebrated by the UNWLA raising more direct response than any developments in American women's movement and feminism (*Chapter Four*). Like with the series of articles on successful Ukrainian American women in 1955, anniversaries of the Ukrainian women's movement sometimes allowed to look at the achievements and problems of Ukrainian women in the United States. On more than one occasion, however, the *Ukrainian woman* celebrated and discussed by the UNWLA was the woman of Ukraine – from a woman-worker to a prisoner of consciousness – whose life story was used to mobilize women in the diaspora and set as an example to follow.

3.3 Between the Soviet and the Ukrainian woman

3.3.1 Anxiety over the death of the Ukrainian woman / Ukrainian nation under the Soviet oppression

Despite the fact that UNWLA members revoked a connection with the pre-WWII Ukraine and its women's activism and continue to do so today, they never knew how to connect to the Soviet Ukraine and its people. As early as 1952, a UNWLA member ponders what life looks like for women in Soviet Ukraine and how much the people who left Ukraine during the war grew to differ from their former compatriots. "Will they understand us, will we feel them, or will we be able to meet the requirements of the life over there?" (Gardetska 1952, 1), asks she on the pages of *Our Life* when talking about the aspired return of Ukrainian refugees to their homeland once the Soviet regime falls.

The following year, contemplating over the images of women caught by a camera during the Stalin's funeral, one of the editors of *Our Life* wonders what all those people could be thinking about and could it be true that they were all mourning:

They are deprived of the semblance of their personal identity. They are mute, staring in stupor, and all seem to look alike, the young and the old ones. Are they

really so similar, spiritually dead? [...] Are they really at the bottom of their hearts “despairing” over the death of the man who deprived them of everything human, who became the despot over their animal “to be or not to be”? Or may be [sic] they are lamenting and shedding their last tears for their own broken and frustrated lives, as well as of their children, husbands, brothers and parents? (N. P. 1953, 22)

The author confesses that the diaspora were “dumbfounded by the muteness” of the women and people of Ukraine in more general terms over the tragedies of their lives (ibid.). To dispel their fears or at least remain informed about the changes that were taking place in the Soviet Union, the diaspora tried to closely follow all official Soviet publications that were available in the West, *samvydav* (Ukrainian *samizdat*), oral accounts of newly arrived immigrants and Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian travelers who visited the USSR as tourists or as part of some delegation. The main problem, however, was that there was never complete trust in any of those sources. The conviction that the Soviet propaganda was strong and omnipresent made the Ukrainian Americans question even the observations from their personal visits to the Soviet Union. The UNWLA comments on the pages of *Our Life* that those members who traveled to Ukraine as tourists recognized that they saw Ukraine – its rivers, fields, cities, theaters, and people – but “they did not feel, nor hear the true life of Ukraine.” (J.W.P. 1961, 17)

Those few who managed to get the permission to leave the USSR and move to the West served as a primary source of updates on the life behind the Iron Curtain. They did not have to be prominent political activists back in Ukraine to expect an invitation to give a presentation for a local Ukrainian American community or write for a Ukrainian newspaper and answer questions about life back in Ukraine. The questions would reveal the diaspora’s anxiety about the physical, but even more so, spiritual survival of the Ukrainian nation. “Is it true that children are being raised without milk or prayer, that peasants live in worse conditions than they endured during the servitude, that Ukrainians cannot get residence

registration in cities; is it true that the Ukrainian youth uses only Russian in everyday communication?” (UNWLA 1965, 1)

Even when it came to the *samizdat*, it was said that the facts received from the publications had to be combined with some deeper analysis. The Ukrainians in the West had to remember that “the country is enslaved,” and the diaspora needs to take into account all available political, social, economic and other information before it could create an adequate perception of contemporary Ukraine (Strokata 1983, 22). Now and then someone would declare in Ukrainian American publications that Ukraine was on the verge of its “‘to be or not to be’ as a nation” (Hryshko 1975, 2). Sometimes estimates were made to see if there was still any hope for the future of the nation, for example, when the Soviet census data was published, the diaspora would try to see how many Ukrainian speakers there were among the population of Ukraine. In that particular case, women could be assigned an important place as those who pass the language and culture to the following generation: “The five and a half million Ukrainian women who speak their native language must be of great interest to us,” was stated in one such article in *Svoboda*, “because if at least one tenth among them are nationally conscious women (this assessment is extremely cautious), this alone would make 550,000 of real Ukrainian intelligent/educated women” (Orlovska 1975, 2).

3.3.2 Reflections over the everyday life of a woman in Soviet Ukraine

The UNWLA took an active part in following the developments in the USSR paying attention to the everyday life of women there:

We have to learn about life and actions of not just any woman, but of a Ukrainian woman in our motherland. Her appearance and thinking are undergoing considerable transformation. We do not have the right to miss the smallest trait that tells us anything about her, or else we will not be able to keep up with her on the path she’s walking and we will not be able to help her (UNWLA 1960, 1).

Pages of *Our Life* contained articles about difficult work conditions and poor access to health services of the Soviet women; commented on the women’s appearance devoid of femininity;

pointed out the lack of women in the party leadership; concerned with the poor living conditions of Soviet families and high divorce rates. In other words, the emancipation of the Soviet woman was mostly rejected, and where some of its achievements were recognized, they were often juxtaposed with the lack of freedom of expression and other rights and liberties or were assigned to the Ukrainian tradition and ingenuity of its women (see, e.g. Burachynska 1969; N. H. 1953, 21).

For example, one article from March 1955 comments that while Soviet women had been declared to be equal with man in every respect, they did not have equal opportunities in practice. The article provides statistic to show that women were more likely to be employed in positions of low responsibility and status and that their pay remained lower than that of men. It was further stated that the reform that determined the wage by piece-work rather than time-work introduced even more discriminatory terms for women workers (UNWLA 1955a, 21). This was juxtaposed with the situation in the United States (or other countries of the free world) as well as with the traditional, pre-Soviet Ukrainian life where according to the author women had better working conditions and fair compensation (UNWLA 1955b, 21).

That same year, the article “The appearance of a Soviet woman” (Logush 1955a, 8; 1955b, 10) shares observations of American journalist Julia Whiteney that were published in American newspapers. After her trip to the USSR, Julia Whiteney noted that women indeed might boast full participation in the job market having entered teaching, medical, and many other professions, including road-building and driving tractors. However, it comes at an expense of their appearance, which the journalist describes as unattractive and unsophisticated. Women do not pay attention to their hair or makeup, nor do they wear well-tailored and feminine clothes. The Ukrainian commentator on this article links this poor appearance directly to the circumstances of women’s lives in the USSR, noting that women simply do not make enough money to dress well, nor do they have time or energy after a

tiring day at work and then all the housework. In addition, the author mentions that the Bolsheviks discouraged expensive and sophisticated clothes from the start, labeling it bourgeois, so people may be afraid to stand out and prefer to dress like everyone around them.

A similar article appeared in 1957 commenting on observations of other American travellers that appeared in American newspapers and magazines. “Barely do you see the little gay accents women have used everywhere – ribbons, scarfs, colored handkerchiefs,” writes an editor of *Ladies’ Home Journal* (Burachynska 1957a, 15). The Ukrainian language commentary to the article singles out the observation that even though the travellers describe overcrowded and poor living conditions, they say that the small kitchen closets had clean, even if old, curtains, and there were a lot of home plants in the rooms. Thus, the author concludes that the internal drive and love to beauty and cozy home atmosphere lives in “our people” despite all the hardships of everyday life (Burachynska 1957b).

These types of articles, most frequently published in the 1950s and early 1960s but with the similar ideas reappearing in later decades as well regaining a more regular presence after 1985 are too close to the gender discourses that were used by the U.S. and Soviet propagandas in their effort to present superiority of their political and economic systems to the world (Belmonte 2008, 136–158; Osgood 2006, 253–287). It was about poor working conditions for women in the USSR (American propaganda) versus no access to work for married women or women with children in the United States (Soviet propaganda). But the American side could also add the “happy housewife” image to its pamphlets (and criticize poor living conditions in crammed apartment buildings in the USSR) while the Soviets had hard time displaying a good match for the happy woman-homemaker aided by her modern technical gadgets and having time for herself and for community work. In addition, the American propaganda was trying to keep a positive tone about women’s employment,

condemning only the exploitation of women in heavy industrial jobs and showing women's homemaking as their choice rather than the place where they belonged (Belmonte 2008, 154).

Belmonte (2008) describes one of the pamphlets published by the U.S. Information Agency, the main body of "public diplomacy" of the United States government; entitled *The Soviet Woman under Communism*, it depicted life of a "typical" Soviet woman named Nina and her everyday struggle to feed the family. Long lines to buy basic food, long hours of work at the factory, uncertainty about the future of her sons who now spend days in the care center – just a few of the snapshots of Nina's life, but the whole depth of her misery is probably expressed through her regret that she had started a family and had children at all (Belmonte 2008, 151–152).

Many of those Ninas lived on the pages of *Our Life* with the miseries of their personal life sometimes mentioned as well. Small overcrowded apartments were said to contribute to conflicts in the families which resulted in higher divorce rates. And women were said to have to work hard because they often found themselves divorced taking care of kids all alone. Some women preferred not to "burden" themselves with a husband at all because Soviet men, out of the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that the life in the USSR entailed, ended up drinking and beating their wives (see UNWLA 1980, 31).

Unlike the American propaganda, however, the UNWLA editors and writers did not compare the unhappy and exploited woman of the Soviet Ukraine to the American housewife.⁴¹ Apart from mere condemnation of the Soviet experiment, Ukrainian Americans were looking for the non-Soviet Ukrainian woman in those depictions and expressed worry about the future of the Ukrainian nation. In the midst of those women in Soviet Ukraine there

⁴¹ In the 1950s, the "happy housewife" was not a reality of the life of a Ukrainian immigrant woman. In 1957, the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO) received a questionnaire from the World Movement of Mothers (MMM) which attempted to collect information about status and needs of a mother in different countries. The WFUWO advised the MMM that many of the questions were not relevant to the situation of an immigrant mother and tried to adjust them and collect whatever information they could get that way. (Burachynska 1958, 15)

was a group – much smaller than 550,000, but not less significant – who reassured the diaspora in the persisting resistance of the Ukrainian people to the totalitarian state. They were the dissidents who became celebrated as heroines by Ukrainian women’s organizations abroad. Their example was used to encourage an active civic involvement of women in the diaspora and to vilify the Soviet state in the international forums.

3.3.3 Who is the Ukrainian Heroine

The Holiday of Heroines or the Day of Heroines⁴² was introduced in 1956 and up to these days a number of UNWLA branches mention in their three-year reports that “as always,” “we certainly did not miss,” “every year we did not forget” to mark the day. It was first a commemorative event in the memory of women who perished during a 42-day uprising in the Soviet labor camp in Kingir, Kazakhstan (May 15 – June 26, 1954), which is believed to be part of the series of mass unrests that started in the Norilsk camp (May 1953) and eventually forced the Soviet government to dismantle the system of GULAGs (Myzak 2004; Subtelny 1994, 502). The Ukrainian diaspora learned about the event two years after it took place from a brief note in the American press – a story told by a repatriated war prisoner that returned from the USSR. The few details provided highlighted that the uprising took lives of five hundred women who attempted to form a live border and stop the tanks that were used to suppress the unrest. No one believed that the tanks would run over women, but they did.

This news mobilized the diaspora and in particular women’s organizations, who on March 18, 1956, coordinated various commemorative events for the Kingir victims in their towns and cities. Those were church services and public observances and Ukrainian women’s organizations tried to invite local authorities to join their event in order to spread the

⁴² The Day of Heroines became a counterpart of the Day of Heroes which was a traditional commemoration of the memory of deceased soldiers of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, a Ukrainian military formation that fought as a unit of the Austro-Hungarian army in the WWI and afterwards became a foundation of the Ukrainian Galician army. The tradition to commemorate the deceased soldiers did not survive in Ukraine past the WWII, but it has been maintained by some organizations in the Ukrainian diaspora.

information about it. An organization committee of the UNWLA sent letters to the Red Cross, U.S. senators and congressmen about the Kingir uprising. Some senators replied to the UNWLA branches in their districts saying they would bring the information about the event to the attention of the Congress, Department of State and other state bodies. For instance, Senator Case of New Jersey replied, “The United States Government may not interfere in internal affairs of a foreign nation. [...] They believe, however, that the force of world opinion can be an important factor in efforts to change such policies.” He further promised that the U.S. government would follow up on this information and try to learn more on Kingir events, also pointing out that the inhumane conditions in the Soviet labor camps had been an issue that the U.S. government continuously raised in the United Nations and the International Labor Organization. (UNWLA 1956, 20)

In addition to this, women’s organizations set up the Fund 500 to collect money for the needs of Ukrainian political prisoners and their families. It was reasoned that while it would be impossible to offer any material assistance to people behind the Iron Curtain immediately, in the future some of them might be able to escape to the West and then the money would be needed to help them settle in the new country. The fund did not seem to have any instant applicability and functioned as an expression of the diaspora’s commitment to the cause. Many of the UNWLA branches reported about fundraising events for the Fund 500 in the following years. The UNWLA Executive also challenged its Regional Councils to draw five hundred new members each into the organization and consequently into the public and political work of Ukrainian community in order to substitute for the loss of the brave five hundred women who died in Kingir. The first reports summarizing success of the campaign had to admit that the success was very “insignificant” (UNWLA 1957a, 15) with some Regional Councils drawing 40 members in the first six months after the start of the campaign (UNWLA 1957b, 25).

Over the years, the Day of Heroines as marked in the UNWLA lost its direct reference to Kingir and its five hundred victims. It became filled with names of particular women – members of the Ukrainian resistance movements of the interwar and WWII periods, political prisoners of the Stalin era, dissidents of the 1960s and the 1970s. Having fought for the idea of Ukraine’s independence or been persecuted for their political views, these women could fit the most restrictive definition of a national hero; yet outside of women’s organizations in the Ukrainian diaspora and in Ukraine, these female figures received little attention in the mainstream historic accounts. This has been one of the most significant features that distinguishes the discourses within the UNWLA from the mainstream interpretations of the role of women in the history of Ukraine. It is not uncommon for the works on the history of Ukraine to mention that women were granted economic and political rights already by the first comprehensive collection of laws in the Kievan Rus’ from the 11th and 12th centuries and that the formal equality of economic participation was later restated during the Cossack times, while the sovereign but short-lived Ukrainian People’s Republic (1917-1921) granted women voting rights (Hrushevskyi 1970; Magocsi 1996; Subtelny 1994). In most cases, however, it is not the women, their lives or contribution to the historical processes in Ukraine that are meant to be discussed. The Ukrainian historiography focuses on the story of the people and nation of Ukraine that is revealed through the presence of women in it, rather than on the story of women in that nation. As several researchers have pointed out, the statement about the traditionally high level of gender equality in the Ukrainian society is often harmful for the current development of women’s movement and promotion of women’s rights in the country (Kis 2008; Rubchak 2009). It is used to support the idea that women have never been deprived of the opportunities to fully participate in the political and economic life but rather chose to withdraw from the public sphere and seek fulfillment in the private domain.

Similarly to the mainstream interpretations, the UNWLA has relied on the history of Ukrainian women to support the idea of progressive foundations of the Ukrainian state; however, it was the active role that the women played in that history and their actual achievements rather than the nominal rights that became a central point of their argument. The UNWLA continued to return to the history of Ukrainian women's movement of the late 19th and early 20th century which is often missing from history books. The life stories and ideas of the first wave feminists that appeared in *Our Life* on a regular basis were a reminder that there was a need for a separate women's movement in Ukraine. This did not undermine the claims to the progressiveness and modernity of the Ukrainian culture and society because in every Western nation there was place for emancipatory movements and for recognition of women's discrimination in the past and present. Thus to have their own history of women's activism for their political rights was an example of maturity of Ukrainian people and was used to encourage further civic engagement of UNWLA members.

It was never easy to balance the call to support the national cause and the need to challenge the status of women's organizations within the Ukrainian American community or later in independent Ukraine. Reiteration of the statement that women always participated in public and even political life of their communities at times of Ukraine's sovereignty helped to claim recognition for women's political work but at the same time connected women's activism to the well-being of the community and the nation. In the following chapters, it will be pointed out that the attention to Ukraine and its women also did not allow the UNWLA (or allowed them not to) address women's issues in their own midst. Yet women's status in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine remained to be an entry to critical discussion of the state.

In 2010 many of the UNWLA branches decided to dedicate the Day of Heroines to the memory of Iryna Senyk who had passed away only a few months earlier. This poet and dissident whose political beliefs earned her the total of 25 years in Soviet prisons was

commemorated by one of New York branches as well. Branch 83, whose membership today is composed of post-WWII immigrants (including the 1.5 generation) and the new-comers, was joined by the Women's Association for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine,⁴³ for what was a half a day event attended by over one hundred people (in my estimate).

A mourning liturgy in the church was followed by the gathering in the Ukrainian National Home where the guests could hear a brief recount of Iryna Senyk's life, listen to her poetry recited, and meet a person whose path had crossed with hers. Many in the audience had met Iryna Senyk in person because she was one of the dissidents whom the diaspora invited with presentations to the United States and Canada in the 1990s. Many more knew the history of her imprisonment well – back in the 1970s, the fate of Ukrainian dissidents was the primary focus of political activism of the diaspora. It was then that the diaspora started to use the language of the human rights most consistently and the Ukrainian women's organizations in the diaspora took the question to international women's forums. While the majority of the diasporic organizations campaigned for the release of Valentyn Moroz and other male prisoners, the UNWLA and other women's organizations had an "exclusive" oversight of the question of female prisoners of consciousness and of the persecutions of wives and families of male dissidents. They petitioned the U.S. government and international organizations, helped to translate and make public the letters from dissidents that managed to slip to the West and addressed the international community. Some of that work succeeded in that in 1979 the USSR exchanged Valentyn Moroz together with four other Soviet dissidents for two KGB agents that were arrested in the United States and seeking some closure for the negative

⁴³ The Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine was founded in 1946 in New York, NY, to support the struggle (including military resistance if needed) for independent Ukraine. The name of the organization alludes to the *Four Freedoms Address* of President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1941 that laid out the principles of the strategic relationship between the United States and Great Britain. The four freedoms that according to President Roosevelt should become foundational for modern societies were the freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom from fear, and freedom from want. The Women's Association for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine is a women's section of the organization. It is one of better known formally organized Ukrainian women's associations in the United States.

publicity that the topic of Soviet prisoners of consciousness created in the world, the Soviet government exiled several other dissidents.

In February 2010, the life of Iryna Senyk was not depicted as a tragic story. It was a story of a difficult but inspiring path of a woman who went through the hardships of the labor camp showing great strength that was expressed through her creative works. Yet there was a certain anxiety in the air. The Day of Heroines that year was marked just one week after presidential elections in Ukraine and the victory of Viktor Yanukovich known for his favorable views on Ukraine's close partnership with Russia became a reason for concern for the diaspora. By the summer of that year, the organizations of the diaspora, including the UNWLA, had to revise their skills of writing open letter to condemn violation of freedoms of speech and assembly in Ukraine and to talk about new political persecutions in their country of origin. February was still the time of an uneasy anticipation, but the speech that reverberated with the audience most was the one that put the life and achievements of Iryna Senyk and all other women who deserved to be called Heroines, into the context of recent events in Ukraine. "We don't know what awaits Ukraine tomorrow, but all they were fighting for can be lost," (Anna, 4th wave) said one of the speakers, holding back the tears.

Conclusion

In 2004, the Ukrainian World Congress – the largest umbrella organization of the Ukrainian organizations and communities abroad – issued a call to its members to officially mark the 50th anniversary of the Kingir uprising which was discussed to be part of the history of Ukrainian resistance to the Soviet power. Member-organizations were advised to hold "liturgies to commemorate the victims, academic conferences which would analyze the event in its historic context, and to mark the heroic deed of Ukrainian women" (Lozynsky and Pedenko 2004, 14). The event was seen as a good example of honest and sacrificial life for

younger generations, and that example had been set by women who became the main heroes of that uprising.

For the UNWLA members, the Day of Heroines provides a link to Ukraine and to their own role in supporting its national liberation. Having been filled with particular names and life stories, it helps to restate women's presence in the political life of the nation. At the same time, it reminds of the continuous focus on the threats to their country of origin which remains to have a mobilizing power for the diaspora. As will be shown in the following chapter, the women whose deeds were recognized as heroic within the UNWLA were presented as victims of the Soviet regime to the international audience by the organization in order to challenge the positive reporting of Soviet delegations about the achievements of women's emancipation in its republics.

But the images of heroines and victims have their most gripping power at a time of a political crisis, providing poor reference for the UNWLA members' experience with their women's organization. If the Soviet woman could be glorified for her resistance to the state, the woman in the diaspora had to resist the forces of assimilation in her family. The women I met during my research would sometimes praise one or two families of their friends or some senior UNWLA member if all of their children spoke Ukrainian and even some of the grandchildren were engaged in Ukrainian American youth organizations. Women also took pride in pointing out that their own children and grandchildren knew Ukrainian. One of recent immigrants told me: "He [my son] doesn't speak Ukrainian as well as his peers in Ukraine do, but he can communicate with his cousins easily when we go to Ukraine for a summer vacation. And he told me recently that his friends in Ukrainian school here are his best friends. [...] And for me and my husband it's very important" (Khrystyna, 4th wave). That fact had a particular weight because it was recognized for an outstanding achievement that required an effort and determination. But there was little indication that women saw

themselves solely responsible or concerned about that outcome. For many of them it was a family commitment and many mentioned that they had to engage their husbands when organizing UNWLA events or fulfilling other obligations related to their UNWLA's work: they could help to type some reports, do grocery shopping for a planned reception, set decorations, drive to New Jersey to pick up their wives after a convention.

The UNWLA never explicitly challenged the nurturing role of women in families and communities or their role in the cultural reproduction; however, it tried to stress that there was more that women could do. The organization sometimes worked to help women cope with those roles and to engage other community members to support them in cultural, educational, and charity projects. Those projects could be seen as proper for a woman's organization to undertake and yet they were understood (or presented) in political terms by the UNWLA members. In the following chapter I discuss the organization's participation in international women's movement and the niche they chose to take there to be able to contribute to the Ukrainian national cause which they saw was a responsibility of every Ukrainian at home or abroad. The entry of women's organizations from Ukraine into the international arena after 1991 challenged the UNWLA's position and tasks; nevertheless, instead of withdrawing from the participation, the UNWLA started to rethink the meaning and aims of its international connections looking for ways to remain engaged with the international women's rights activism.

Chapter Four. UNWLA in the International Women's Movement

“UNWLA is a member of the National Council of Women/USA and of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and is using its connections with the American women in order to inform them, at various meetings and conventions, about the history, culture, and fight for independence of the Ukrainian people.” (UNWLA 1974, 3)

Introduction

In the very first interview with a UNWLA member that I took in the summer 2008 while still developing my research project, I was corrected by the interviewee about my use of the term feminism in relation to the organization. I did not refer to it as feminist, only mentioning I was interested to look at the development of the organization in relation to international women's movement and American feminism. This was met with an assertive answer that there was nothing feminist about the UNWLA. A women's organization they were, interested in Ukrainian cultural heritage – primarily in order to keep their identity in the United States and to pass it to their children and prevent complete assimilation; but also active in supporting the cause of Ukraine's independence before it became a reality, and trying to use their experience for promoting U.S.-Ukraine relations today. A successful professional woman, American born Ukrainian who was coming of age at the time of the second wave feminism and is speaking favorably of the achievements for women that the movement brought about, my interviewee was in fact “the relation” to feminism I was talking about. But being well-acquainted with the work of the UNWLA since the raise of feminist movement in the 1960s, she was also right to identify the UNWLA as a non-feminist association.

Later during my fieldwork, practically every American born and many of the post-WWII Ukrainians in the UNWLA self-identified as feminists or had no reservations about the liberal feminist maxim of women's equal access to public and political life. A few of the Ukrainian Americans had experience of attending feminist rallies in their student years but

they would tend to indicate it was quite rebellious of them and would state, as assertively as the first interviewee did, that the UNWLA did not join the feminist struggle or respond to it in any consistent manner. Their assessment resonates with the conclusion of Kichorowska Kebalo (2011; 2013), who analyzed the development of Ukrainian women's movement in North America in the 20th century⁴⁴ and determined in her research that Ukrainian women's organizations appeared unwilling to consistently incorporate a feminist stance into their work. The pronounced Marxist grounding of the radical feminism of the 1960s and 1970s could not appeal to the overtly anti-communist Ukrainian community in the United States; and if the liberal feminist ideas were supported by many in the diaspora, the particular issues it raised seemed irrelevant to the work of the women's associations which was carried out with Ukraine's liberation in mind. The publications of Ukrainian women's associations informed the readers about the advancement of women's equality struggle and a few women in the Ukrainian diaspora circles tried to start a discussion about feminism and about the patriarchy in the World Congress of Free Ukrainians and other major umbrella organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora, however, it never felt like the diaspora women's groups were a part of or in dialogue with feminist ideas of the time (2011, 141–187). The lack of an “independent and self-aware women's platform” in the diaspora is noticeable to date despite the several decade long tradition of organized diaspora women's activism and their involvement with the U.N.-led women's rights movement (2013, 12).

Much of the conclusion is generalizable to the case of the UNWLA. Yet the position of the organization *vis a vis* feminist cause and international women's movement (and their identity in that movement) remains to be anything but unambiguous today. In this chapter I

⁴⁴ Kichorowska Kebalo (2011; 2013) draws primarily on the example of the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO) and its member-organizations in the United States and Canada. The UNWLA was among the founders of the Federation in 1948 and have continued to be one of its most active members in the U.S.A. Being an autonomous women's organization, however, the UNWLA differs from many of the Federation members which tend to represent women's chapters or subdivisions of political and/or religious associations of the Ukrainian diaspora.

provide historic background for understanding the UNWLA's involvement in international women's movement and its representative work in the name of Ukraine. I examine the UNWLA's membership in the National Council of Women of the United States and their participation in four U.N. conferences on the status of women to trace evolution of the organization's approaches to their representative work. The chapter highlights how the generational change and political events in their country of origin continued to shape the UNWLA's place in international women's forums.

4.1 Representing Ukraine and its women in the international women's movement

4.1.1 The importance of representation: Ukrainian women in the International Council of Women

The history and work of the UNWLA can undoubtedly be considered within the context of the development of the Ukrainian women's movement of the early 20th century or within the history of the Ukrainian diasporic community; however, was it not for the Washington Congress of the International Council of Women (ICW) in 1925, Ukrainian women's groups in the United States may have never come together to form the umbrella women's organization that the Ukrainian National Women's League of America was at its start. The Ukrainian women's activism in the United States precedes the ICW convention and would have probably developed in the diaspora communities further regardless of the event, but in many ways the disaffiliation of the National Council of Women of Ukraine from the ICW membership on the grounds that it did not represent a sovereign state "having a responsible Government" (Rupp 1997, 113) shaped the UNWLA and its commitment to the cause of the Ukrainian sovereignty for decades to come.

The establishment of the UNWLA was encouraged by Hanna Chykalenko-Keller, one of leading figures of the Ukrainian feminism of the interwar period. Her residency in

Switzerland at that time allowed her to be actively involved in the network of international women's organizations, in particular of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In the aftermath of the First World War, leaders of Ukrainian feminist movement sought membership in the major international women's organizations as a part of the state-seeking effort of the Ukrainian national elites (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1988, 261–280). They saw it to be a good arena to bring up the questions of cruelty of the Polish and Soviet governments toward ethnic Ukrainians in order to ask for assistance for the affected population and for condemnation of the governments' actions.⁴⁵ Their presence in the international women's forums challenged the position of the Polish women, for example, who insisted that Ukrainians or rather Ruthenians in the Polish state regard themselves as a part of the Polish nation and that Ukrainian women of Galicia should not be separately represented in international organizations. They insisted that it was the Polish women and their associations who could be the only legitimate representative of the state and its minorities (see, e.g. Wolff 2010, 392–394).⁴⁶ This position won in 1925 when first the Polish government refused to issue a visa for Maria Bachynska-Dontsova, the Ukrainian delegate from Lviv to the ICW Congress in Washington; and then the Polish

⁴⁵ From the memories of Hanna Chykalenko-Keller, the exclusion of the National Council of Women of Ukraine from the ICW was triggered by a direct conflict between the Ukrainian and Polish delegates when the former brought up the question of death of Olha Basarab in a Polish prison in February 1925. Olha Basarab was arrested by the Polish police as a member of the Ukrainian Military Organization which positioned itself as a resistance movement that was prepared for armed struggle for the independence of Galicia from Poland. Accused of espionage on behalf of the Bolshevik Ukraine and Weimar Republic, Olha Basarab is believed to have been tortured in prison for three days before she took her life. This episode drew a notable response from the Ukrainian public and politicians, with the Ukrainian and Jewish delegates in the Polish Parliament insisting on the investigation (the latter called for a general investigation of the treatment of prisoners in Polish jails).

Ukrainian delegates in the ICW insisted that the International Council of Women should interfere and officially request the Polish government to conduct a proper investigation of the case. The ICW appointed Ms. Cadbury, Head of the Peace and Arbitration Committee, to follow up on the request and she reached out to the Polish ambassador in London who promised to take the issue to his government; however, the precedent triggered an open confrontation between Polish and Ukrainian delegates in the ICW, which lead to the suspension of the ICW membership of the National Council of Women of Ukraine (Chykalenko-Keller 1952).

⁴⁶ For more on the challenge that women of the state seeking nations posed for the international women's organizations before 1918, causing a careful negotiation over the definition of political recognition in international politics, see Susan Zimmermann, 2005, "The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics," *Journal of Women's History* 17 (2): 87–117.

National Council of Women put forward the question of the suspension of Ukrainian membership in the ICW.⁴⁷ The resolution of the ICW Congress from that year stated that the National Council of Women (NCW) of Ukraine would retain its membership until the following convention in 1928; however, it was a temporary victory and later that year the NCW of Ukraine received the decision of the International Council of Women about suspension of their membership there (Lototsky 1960, 16).

Ukrainian women in the United States and Canada did not become involved into the work of international women's organizations as early as the Ukrainian émigré women in Europe. Before the ICW Congress they were asked to sponsor a ticket of one delegate from Ukraine (which they did); and later two women from the Ukrainian American community joined Hanna Chykalenko-Keller at the ICW Congress – Olena Lotocky to replace the missing delegate and Julia Jarema in a role of a guest. After the congress, Hanna Chykalenko-Keller suggested that the Ukrainian émigré and immigrant women in North America should form women's associations and join national councils of women in the countries of their settlement. That membership, it was decided, could allow sending Ukrainian women residing in North America to the ICW conferences and committees and maintaining their international presence before Ukraine was recognized for an independent state and before the National Council of Women of Ukraine regained its official status with the ICW (which did not happen until 2000). Following that suggestion, five women's organizations that had already worked for some time in New York area formed the Ukrainian National Women's League of America that same year.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The collection of essays on the History of the International Council of Women lists Ukraine and Finland as examples of National Councils whose membership application to the ICW was rejected on the grounds of the lack of "responsible government" behind them (Rupp 1997, 113). Yet in the UNWLA documents it is always presented as disaffiliation from membership or suspension of membership which had been successfully gained in 1920.

⁴⁸ They were Zhinocha Hromada (Women's Community), Ukrainka zhinocha pomich (Ukrainian women's self-reliance), a women's chapter of the Ukrainian Democratic Club, and two women's chapters of "Sich."

From its very foundation, then, the UNWLA was created to continue the representative work that the women of Ukraine could not do before they had a sovereign nation-state of their own. Established with that aim in mind, the UNWLA gradually chose the issues it wanted to address within the context of their immigrant community. However, the rhetoric of responsibility to represent those women of Ukraine, who were deprived of their own “voice” in the international milieu, stayed with the UNWLA and other Ukrainian women’s associations abroad until the 1990s. The idea of suppressed voice of the Ukrainian women and nation reaffirmed itself even further against the growing presence of the socialist women’s associations on the international scene after the WWII, which were not recognized for independent actors by the western women’s movement (this time it was the independence of the women’s organizations from their own governments, not the independence of the governments themselves, that were named as the reason for exclusion (see Gubin and Molle 2005).

4.1.2 Re-entering the Scene: UNWLA and the National Council of Women of the U.S.A.

It took the UNWLA some time to gain membership in the National Council of Women of the United States (NCW/USA). To be more precise, twenty-seven years passed before that aim was achieved in 1952. The UNWLA archives show that certain correspondence with the NCW/USA was maintained in earlier decades and there were personal and informal connections with some of the leading figures in the organization. The question of official membership could only be raised after the onset of the Cold War, however, because the position of the NCW/USA towards the Soviet Union had been previously assessed by the UNWLA as overly friendly. Before the Cold War, there was little support among the American political elites for active involvement with anti-Bolshevik or anti-communist stance unless it related to the threat of direct promotion of the world communist revolution within the United States (Bennett 1970; Killen 1988).

It has been previously pointed out in the scholarly literature on the history of international women's movement that major women's organizations in Western countries often upheld political causes of their governments. The collection of essays on the history of the International Council of Women, for example, recognizes that despite all the organizations' efforts to remain apolitical, it was clearly aligning its work and policies with the position of Western governments during the Cold War (Jacques and Lefebvre 2005a, 194).⁴⁹ The National Council of Women of the United States followed a similar path. Retaining their right to criticize their own government on some of the national policies within the country (raising the issue of persistent racism in the 1950s, for example), the organization was ready to promote a positive image of the United States in the international arena, in particular responding to the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for the hearts and minds of the developing countries. Upon her return from the ICW annual meeting in 1954, NCW/USA President Charlotte Leyden summarized:

One is impressed with the responsibility placed upon the United States Council as a result of this meeting – not only as the founder-member of the International Council of Women, but as citizens of a country which must take leadership in an ever-shrinking world (Leyden 1954).

The language of the duty to set an example of adherence to democratic values was blended into many of the reports and communiqués related to the international forum that were sent by the NCW/USA to its members.

There may have been a few other factors that are difficult to account for today which did not allow the UNWLA to successfully seek the NCW/USA membership before the early 1950s, for instance, the overall standing of ethnic associations in the American public life or

⁴⁹ Not only the organizations in question, but also Western scholarship on the history of women's movement has often remained non-reflective about the strong political bias in the work of the major Western international women's organizations like the ICW which declared themselves to be apolitical. For more on the topic, see Francisca de Haan, 2010 "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* 19 (4): 547–573.

the priorities defined for the organization by each UNWLA president.⁵⁰ Judging from the correspondence that the UNWLA started to receive as one of the members of the National Council of Women of the United States right after it was granted an affiliation, the two organizations matched in their defamation of communism and felt they made good partners in that respect. Participating in the biennial meeting of the NCW/USA in October 1952, UNWLA president Olena Lotocky proposed a resolution to express compassion and sympathy with the women under the Soviet oppression and to convey hope that their liberation would come before long. The resolution was said to have passed unanimously (UNWLA 1952b, 17).

For the UNWLA, their membership in the NCW/USA met their expectations about access to international forum of women's movement. Already in June 1954, Olena Lotocky became a delegate of the NCW/USA to the annual meeting of the International Council of Women in Helsinki. The delegation included fifteen representatives and Lotocky offered to serve as a NCW/USA representative to the ICW Migration Committee which focused on the needs, status and rights of refugee women and children in the post-war Europe. In addition, the Committee put forward broader requirements, including fair treatment of the disabled (and allocation of specific immigration quotas for them), provision of language training and other services to resettled people to help their integration in the new country, facilitation of family reunification (Jacques and Lefebvre 2005a, 205). Having their own first-hand experience with organizing support for Ukrainian refugee women in the DP camps, the

⁵⁰ In 1951, the UNWLA's application to the NCW/USA was said to present a problem, since previously, according to the NCW/USA, it had not granted membership to any nationality women's groups. The UNWLA insisted, however, that two Ukrainian women's organizations belonged to the NCW of Canada which probably meant that national groups did not contradict the by-laws of the organizations even if it was something new for the NCW/USA. "I am sure that both Ukrainian women's organizations in Canada belong to the National Council of Women of Canada as Canadians of Ukrainian descent, and the same case prevails here. Our organization, the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Inc., is an American association, its members are American by nationality, only racially, by extraction, they are Ukrainian, just as is National Council of Jewish Women, which is affiliated to National Council of Women of the United States." (Lotocky 1951). This explanation was deemed satisfactory. In 1952 the NCW/USA membership was also granted to an association of Czech women of the United States.

UNWLA declared its interest in the work of the Migration Committee from the start considering it to be their priority among the NCW/USA issues.

Over years, the UNWLA continued to send its representatives to the ICW conventions, but it is the international women's conferences and the ICW's work in the United Nations that became the main focus of the UNWLA leaders. Previously, the Ukrainian American women addressed international organizations with letters and petitions but this work was taken to a new level once New York became a home-base of the United Nations in 1946 and the UNWLA secured an affiliation with an internationally recognized women's organization. Unlike with the League of Nations where non-governmental actors did not have a direct access to the policy development and needed a proxy of a government representative to "insert" their suggestions, the work of the United Nations, from the very foundation, presupposed certain official mechanisms of cooperation between international organizations and NGOs, on the one hand, and the state missions to the U.N., on the other.

The International Council of Women focused its work on the U.N. and its committees early on trying to secure a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Already in 1947, the ICW received the consultative status B, and in 1968 – the highest consultative status that allowed it to be among the organizations that the ECOSOC could go to for information or expert advice in questions related to women's rights and status (Jacques and Lefebvre 2005b, 131).⁵¹ Due to its proximity to the main venues of the U.N. work, the National Council of Women of the U.S.A. could not but get involved in that work. The NCW/USA established a United Nations Committee, which was supposed to serve a twofold purpose of informing the NCW/USA member-organizations about the structure and work of the U.N. and opening "a two-way channel between the United Nations and the general public via the membership of [the] National Council organizations."

⁵¹ ICW sought and received consultative status with other U.N.-related agencies: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, since 1947), UNESCO (1948), UNICEF (1952), WHO (1981) (Jacques and Lefebvre 2005b, 131).

(NCW/USA 1955). To that end, the NCW/USA decided to publish the *United Nations Digest* to be distributed among its member-organizations, encouraged its members to establish U.N. study groups with a possibility of engaging other organizations and community into this work and to publish information about the U.N. activities in their local newspapers. The NCW/USA planned to provide literature and offer consultations and experts for the study groups or public presentations that would deal with the U.N. as well as to facilitate visits to the United Nations by member organizations.

The UNWLA President replied with pronounced enthusiasm to the call to join the U.N. Committee's work, saying that "[w]e note from the activities of the United Nations Committee that our cooperation with it might be of great use" (Lotocky 1955). The UNWLA requested ten copies of the *Digest* and literature on the U.N. work and structure and appointed a contact person for the committee. The organization did not embark on any official knowledge dissemination about the U.N. in the form of workshops and study groups as suggested; however, over time more and more publications on the developments in the women's movement and the issues discussed there started to appear in *Our Life* and in the Ukrainian newspapers where the UNWLA published its news.

In addition to the participation in the NGO Committees of the ECOSOC, the membership in the NCW/USA ensured that the UNWLA was receiving invitations to formal and informal meetings with international diplomats (or their wives), organized by the National Council of Women, such as an invitation to a tea with President of the International Council of Women, an off-the-record luncheon with Anna Kéthly who represented the "free Hungarian Government" in the West as its only member in exile after the 1956 Revolution, a presentation of newly established United States Information Agency.

The formal conferences and less formal events around them helped UNWLA to cultivate the network and understanding of the international diplomacy. More than a place to

represent Ukraine, these international forums became a site of developing and expressing a relationship to their country of origin and their Ukrainian identity. The work of representation itself was carried out on several levels with the main task to put Ukraine on the cultural and political maps of the world, to maintain presence and inform the world community about the existence of the Ukrainian nation.

4.2 U.N. Conferences on the Status of Women

4.2.1 From Mexico City to Nairobi: On the international market of ideas

The National Council of Women of the United States has not been the only contact that the UNWLA has had with American and international women's movements. The UNWLA gained an affiliation with the General Federation of Women's Clubs (1948) and sent delegates to the national and some international meetings of the organization. As an active member of the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations (1948), the UNWLA also benefited from the affiliation of the former with the World Movement of Mothers (MMM) and its consultative status with the U.N. (since 1949). As a result, the UNWLA had an opportunity to delegate a member or two to all the four U.N. International Conferences on Women starting from Mexico City in 1975. Together with members of Ukrainian women's organizations from other countries who managed to gain representation in their national women's organizations or attended the conferences as accredited press, Ukrainian diaspora women – coordinated by the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations – were said to have a "Ukrainian delegation" at those conferences, which in Mexico City amounted to about 30 women, 22 (or 21) in Copenhagen, 10 in Nairobi and 7 in Beijing. The change in numbers can be accounted for by internal changes in the Ukrainian diaspora women's activism as well as by the evolving strategies of representation and understanding of the work of the international women's forum. In fact, out of the three dozen

representatives in Mexico City, only two women of the “Ukrainian delegation” – Halyna Hnatyshyn and Olena Prociuk – had access to the official part of the conference as accredited representatives of the ICW and the MMM respectively, while others participated in the Women’s Tribune organized as an alternative or complementary forum by women’s NGOs from around the world. All the seven members of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations at the conference in Beijing had full accreditation via various organizations with a consultative relationship to the Economic and Social Council of the U.N.⁵²

The conferences always left the UNWLA representatives with mixed feelings. After the first two forums, the Ukrainian American women remarked the high politicization of the NGO Tribune and the pronounced conflict between the developing and developed nations:

When population control in the form of family planning and abortion was discussed, the majority of nations seemed to feel that if the United States did not use the food they produced, there would be no need for family planning. In most instances, we were presented as a selfish consumerist society which exploited the poor countries of the world. I was proud, as a member of the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America, to present a different picture that of an organization that arranged scholarships for students in these same countries and contributed a heavy share to the maintenance of orphanages and the poor. (Smorodsky 1975a, 20)

Here Smorodsky refers to the UNWLA’s assistance to Ukrainians in Latin America and to the Scholarship Program for students of Ukrainian origin in Brazil that had its start in 1967 and became one of the main programs of the UNWLA from the mid-1970s.⁵³ The slippage

⁵² The World Federation of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations received the consultative status with the ECOSOC of its own in 1993.

⁵³ The scholarship program started after a visit of Nadia Shulhan, one of the founders of the Institute of the Catechists of the Sacred Heart in Prudentópolis, Brazil, to the U.S.A. and her meeting with UNWLA members in Philadelphia in 1967. She told them about the school that the Institute ran which had dormitories for girls from Ukrainian families. That same year, the UNWLA sent the first stipend for one of orphaned girls and started to look for funds to develop the program. Gradually, it was extended to other countries and by 1990 the UNWLA had stipend recipients in 17 countries. Knowledge of the Ukrainian language, whatever basic, has always been one of the main requirements of the individual sponsors whom the UNWLA links with school children and some college students. From its early years the sponsorship was extended to boys as well. Today the Scholarship Fund continues to sponsor what is the fifth generation of ethnic Ukrainians in Brazil who come to study to seminaries and boarding schools maintained by Ukrainian churches in the country. In 2000, the

between the American and Ukrainian identities of the organization at the conferences have always been interesting to observe because in their internal documents and publications, it was the Ukrainian cause that was usually discussed, which they felt was their main aim and their way to support American values of democracy and human rights. The “frustrating and ticklish predicament” (Kushnir 1980, 25) of the American position in this international forum if mentioned, would be usually discussed as an example of a successful Soviet propaganda. The Ukrainian women expressed their regret that while the Latin American and African women were attacking the U.S.A., no major actors confronted the Soviet Union allowing it to report on its achievements in terms of emancipation without having to face any criticism. By bringing up the examples of women-prisoners of consciousness in the USSR at the conferences in Mexico and Copenhagen, the Ukrainian delegates tried to contribute to the dismantling of the myth of the communist paradise.

This name-calling and high politicization were seen as detrimental to the discussions of women’s rights; however, it was concluded in the reports on the first two conferences that women inherited rather than created that situation from the international politics. Referring to the Copenhagen forum as a “monumental failure of sorts” (Kushnir 1980, 25), due to its overriding anti-American stance, Motria Kushnir maintained that the Ukrainian women, “like our American sisters, could not afford to stay away” (ibid.) because it would only strengthen the opponents.

In the question of equality versus economic development, the Ukrainian American women (at least those representing the organization in the international forum) supported the view of the Western feminists that the equality should come first, siding with the position that there would always be people and nations who were poorer than others, but those nations could not develop without giving education to their women, and women could not be left

UNWLA initiated an establishment of the UNWLA Scholarship Alumni Association in Brazil in order to involve former stipend recipients in the program of the Fund.

behind in development (Prociuk 1975). Overall, however, their position on the status of women remained unarticulated, since the main goal of their conference participation was initially defined as “to tell the truth about Ukraine, defend the women-prisoners of conscience, inform about our work in immigration” (Rozhankovska 1980, 5).

To that end, the Women’s Committee in Defense of Political Prisoners (a member of the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations) held hunger strikes at the 1975 and 1980 NGO Tribunals in order to draw attention of the conference participants and the media. They called for amnesty for Ukrainian women political prisoners and for the abolition of the practice of persecution against family members of all prisoners of conscience in the Soviet Union, who at that time could be denied access to education or lose their job after their relatives had been sentenced. At the time of the hunger strike in Mexico City, the UNWLA members, being a less militant group among Ukrainian women’s organizations in the diaspora, were responsible for an information booth where they displayed Ukrainian folk crafts along with leaflets about the Ukrainian women imprisoned for their political views. A 20-page English language brochure *Women Political Prisoners in the USSR* published by the UNWLA placed the issue into the context of the U.N. International Women’s Year and raising it as a question of human rights. It argued that along with discussions about successful and oppressed women, the world community should take a stand on the fate of “hidden women” imprisoned for their political beliefs (UNWLA 1975, 3). The brochure lists names of Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish, Baptist and other female prisoners of conscience in the USSR and mentions in the introduction that according to the reports of Amnesty International, persecutions of women for their political beliefs was a lived reality for women in at least 25 countries. Members of the Ukrainian delegation to the conference pinpointed that after they raised the question of general amnesty to women-prisoners of conscience during some of the panels at the NGO Tribunal, they were approached by

otherwise unlikely allies: delegates from Bolivia and Chile who supported that position (Smorodsky 1975a, 20).

In Copenhagen, an information booth and a hunger strike were complemented by a separate panel on the topic of prisoners of consciousness at the NGO Forum. Former political prisoner Nina Strokata-Karavanska who now lived in exile in the United States joined the delegation of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and could talk about political persecution in the USSR from her personal experience of four years in prison. Notably, the presentation of Nina Strokata-Karavanska was interrupted by a group of several dozen women, including representatives of the Soviet Ukraine, who came to distribute a brochure about achievements of women's emancipation in the Soviet Union entitled *In the Country where Dreams Came True* (Rozhankovska 1980, 5).

For the following conference, a new approach was developed and instead of talking exclusively about the plight of the Ukrainian women behind the Iron Curtain, the question of tradition of the Ukrainian women's activism was brought to the attention of the conference participants in Nairobi (1985). Having Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak among themselves, who at that time was working on her book on the history of Ukrainian women's movement *Feminists Despite Themselves* (1988), delegation of the Ukrainian diaspora talked about Ukrainian feminism as an example of "grassroots" feminism or "feminism of action," pointing out that women's organizations in interwar Ukraine worked to modernize the agricultural production and to involve women into every aspect of public life. That way they contributed to the wellbeing of the whole community rather than fought for particular legal rights. This approach allowed the Ukrainian delegates to introduce the discussion about the (non-Soviet) Ukrainian women's activism at various sessions dealing with theoretical feminism and women studies in general. It was recognized that the audience at those panels

was larger and more diverse than the one attending the specific presentations on Ukraine. As Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak described it:

The session chaired by Betty Friedan was attended by over 150 people, and the proceedings were translated simultaneously into Russian, French, Arabic, Swahili and English. B. Friedan, by the way, considered the approach of the women's movement in Ukraine "brilliant." Thus, in the realm of women, Nairobi helped us integrate Ukrainian women's organizations into the overall women's picture, where they belong, and not to an ethnic-specific ghetto. The Soviet women, willingly or unwillingly, were interested in our approach, and since they do not know their own history, found rebuttal difficult (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1985a).

Instead of the hunger strike, there was a sit-in in front of the site of the official U.N. Conference held by the members of the women's section of the Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine, who continued to seek attention for the cases of violations of human rights in Soviet Ukraine. To talk about the examples of women's activism proved more fruitful for inspiring interest in Ukraine and stressing its unique history, however, allowing to conclude that "[i]n Nairobi, where we, Ukrainian women, were competing with 150 nations, it was clear that on the international market of ideas and experiences our product finds its willing buyers" (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1985b).

4.2.2 Informing the world about Ukraine: Political and cultural diplomacy of the UNWLA

The Ukrainian American women entered the international forum with understanding that *information* could be their best currency and the task to counter Soviet propaganda motivated much of the UNWLA's work before 1991. The dissemination of information and interventions on the international level were called "the mightiest weapon" (Pushkar 1968, 2) that could be used "to harass the Soviet regime" (ibid.). Specifying the UNWLA's mission, one of its presidents said that "[r]equests and interpellations, supported by solid arguments, will find a sympathetic listener among the Western leaders. And even if they do not result in any decision, they will pave a road, build an opinion in support of our cause" (ibid.). If one

reads this statement along definitions of propaganda,⁵⁴ it leaves little doubt that the UNWLA realized the importance of opinion-making and consciously sought opportunities to tell the world about the plight of Ukrainian people behind the Iron Curtain.

The task to inform the world about the events in the USSR was formally defined to be the priority for the UNWLA members and the Ukrainian American community and the reminders to “follow what is being written in the free world about the life in the USSR and respond to it as needed” (Logush 1955b, 10) regularly reappeared in Ukrainian American newspapers through the Cold War years. At the core of that activity was the concern that the Soviet government monopolized communication of information to the West (and the rest of the world) and the two options for the American public and officials were to accept some of the Soviet propaganda for the truth or to reject everything they heard altogether, in both cases risking to remain ignorant about the life of people on the Soviet territories. The Ukrainian diaspora considered itself to be well-positioned to serve as an alternative source of information. The experience of living in the Soviet Ukraine that the post-WWII immigrants had helped to identify points for criticism and reinterpret the facts and figures from Soviet sources in order to challenge the “empty phrases and fables about the “happy life” of Soviet citizens.” (Logush 1955b, 10)

One of the most prominent earlier examples of the UNWLA’s direct “anti-propaganda” work was the meeting the organization arranged with Eleanor Roosevelt after her trip to the USSR in 1957. The observations on the Soviet life that Mrs. Roosevelt shared in her newspaper column “My Day” appeared not critical enough to the Ukrainian diaspora who noted that while recognizing that her route and meetings had been meticulously prepared for her to show only what the Soviet government did not mind showing, Eleanor Roosevelt presented the achievements and conveniences of the Soviet life in an “exaggerated way”

⁵⁴ Propaganda is “any organized attempt by an individual, group, or government verbally, visually, or symbolically to persuade a population to adopt its views and repudiate the views of an opposing group.” (Clayton D. Laurie 1996, 6 cited in Belmonte 2008, 7).

(Ischuk 1957, 3). The UNWLA could not accept the depiction of a smooth organization of a working mother's life which stated that children were taken care of in nurseries and kindergartens from the age of two months and that women did all their shopping by phone – to have groceries delivered directly to their home when they return from work. That description was offered to Mrs. Roosevelt by members of the Women's Committee of the USSR with whom she met during the trip and was rendered as such in her column without additional commentary. To leave the story at that without asking what percentage of the Soviet women had access to all those services was not the right approach for the diaspora. Similarly, the UNWLA members were unhappy with the favorable description of the Soviet medical system and the observation that churches in Moscow were not well-attended, which was explained through the secular anti-religious attitudes promoted by the communist party. Was Mrs. Roosevelt even aware that this "promotion" meant a direct persecution of people who wanted to practice their religion, wondered Ukrainian American women on the pages of *Our Life* (Ischuk 1957, 3).

The UNWLA took the initiative to write to Mrs. Roosevelt herself and offer her some materials about various aspects of social and economic life in the USSR that would counter or complement the picture that was shown to her on her visit to the country. In response, they were invited by Eleanor Roosevelt to meet with her in her apartment in Manhattan on March 18, 1958. During the meeting, which according to an article in *Our Life* lasted an hour and a half, the UNWLA representatives (four members and two male experts invited by the UNWLA) talked about the difficult conditions of work and challenges in the life of a working mother (a UNWLA member shared her own experience), problems with medical system in the USSR, ideological component of education, suppression of national and ethnic cultures as well as religion, and failures of the agricultural system. The UNWLA prepared extensive written reports on those issues for Mrs. Roosevelt. Overall the feedback on that meeting in

the Ukrainian newspapers was positive stating that Mrs. Roosevelt undoubtedly saw more than she depicted in her column about her trip, but to support the idea of peace between the two world powers and sometimes for the lack of concrete evidence for her observations, the former First Lady did not talk about certain issues publicly (UNWLA 1958, 10).

The UNWLA took particular pride for this “intervention.” In her essay about this episode, one of the organization members referred to it as the most prominent and “sensational” event in political life of the Ukrainian community that year (Ruty 1958, 7). Their participation in the international women’s conferences carried a similar aim of challenging the Soviet narrative, which resulted in several direct confrontations between the diaspora Ukrainians and the official Soviet delegates at the conferences.⁵⁵

International women’s conferences and events that the UNWLA members attended provided space for another type of representation that the Ukrainian diaspora was engaged in – more subtle representation of one’s culture and tradition that focused on creating positive image for Ukraine (as a distinct nation) rather than producing a negative information field about the Soviet Union. If the International Council of Women insisted that the member-organizations leave their divisive political issues back at home, to bring history and tradition to their representative work was not discouraged. Traditional song and dance performances of the conference host country were a part of ICW conventions. On more than one occasion the UNWLA delegates marked the national outfit that many of the non-Western women wore to official and unofficial parts of the conferences and conventions, saying that it showed the women’s pride in their own culture and suggesting that Ukrainian American women should follow the suit.

Talking about her experience of representing the UNWLA in the National Council of Women of the USA in one of our interviews Iryna Kurowyckyj said that for every event that

⁵⁵ In Mexico City, a male representative of the Soviet delegation told one of the UNWLA delegates that in the USSR the work that she was doing at the conference would be considered anti-Soviet propaganda and was punishable by imprisonment (Smorodsky 1975b, 24).

she organized as the NCW/USA Board member, vice-president and later president, she always wanted to have something Ukrainian in it. It could mean inviting a Ukrainian American caterer to organize official reception after an NCW/USA award ceremony for American women who made an outstanding contribution to the eradication of illiteracy in their state. Ukrainian American musicians who made a name for themselves in the United States could be asked to perform at another banquet. For some time in the 1980s, Mrs. Kurowyckyj served on the International Welcoming Committee of the NCW/USA, which organized special events and tours for “women of the U.N.” – female delegates, international consultants, wives of the U.N. representatives. They were taken to the places that were not easily accessible to tourists, for instance, dressed rehearsals at established theaters or restoration rooms of museums. Whenever possible, those tours had some reference to Ukraine as well. In one of them, guests were taken to the East Village: “There are five churches on the 7th Street within a walking distance,” explained to me Iryna Kurowyckyj, “they all have something peculiar about them. [...] The Ukrainian church – St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church – was built without a mortgage. Ukrainians of New York collected money to pay for the construction ‘in cash.’”

Guests of the Welcoming Committee were also invited to see the Ukrainian museum of New York founded by the UNWLA. What went unnoticed, it was the achievements and traditions of the Ukrainian American community that became the primary reference for representation of Ukraine and its culture in those cases. Ukrainian folk art and culture have been an important tool for the UNWLA for representing the Ukrainian American community and expressing a sense of belonging within it, however, over time it stopped to be the only heritage of the Ukrainian Americans and its use was adjusted to match the image that ethnic Ukrainians in the United States wanted to produce. The UNWLA delegates to the international conferences could admire the national outfits worn by women of developing

countries, but they never took that step themselves, adding elements of traditional embroidery or bead-work to their evening dresses but preferring more formal clothes for official parts of conferences and meetings.

In early decades of its work, the UNWLA relied heavily on artifacts of folk art that their members brought from Ukraine when it wanted to tell a broader American audience about Ukraine and about Ukrainian ethnic community in America. It was the case with preparing for the Women's Arts and Crafts Exhibit in New York in 1926 when Ukrainian women's organizations put together their group's exhibition using embroidered clothes and home decorations from their members' homes.⁵⁶ When preparing for the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, the UNWLA purchased a collection of Ukrainian folk art from the Ukrainian Folk Art Cooperative in Lviv and that collection laid foundation for the UNWLA's future museum. "Scores of exhibits" were held by the UNWLA branches in the first two decades which were seen as a good way to acquaint the American public with Ukrainian culture. "And they also exert an educational influence on American-born people of Ukrainian background by showing them the high artistic achievements of their (peasant) forefathers," was stated in the UNWLA Jubilee book from 1941. "In many instances Ukrainian-American girls are so moved by the beauty of the exhibits that they take to Ukrainian embroidering." (UNWLA 1941, 242)

With the arrival of the post-WWII immigrants, the use of Ukrainian folk culture and art to represent Ukraine gradually started to provoke ambivalent reactions in the diaspora circles. The heightened attention to folk art and crafts drew some criticism from the people

⁵⁶ The Women's Arts and Crafts Exhibit which later became known as the International Women's Fair was organized in New York in pre-Christmas season. Women from various ethnic groups had a chance to show elements of their culture to their new compatriots – by displaying and selling crafts and holding folk dance and other performances. Ukrainian women's organizations in New York area were said to have invested a considerable effort into planning the themes for their pavilion and preparing the exhibits themselves. It became their annual commitment between 1926 and 1944, and then again in 1952-1961 until the event was discontinued because its founders and patronesses passed away and the new generation of women decided there could be better ways of promoting women's arts and with that women's emancipation.

who believed that time and effort should be applied to publishing existing manuscripts on Ukrainian history and culture which would inform the world about Ukraine better and present it as a mature nation. If Ukraine's independence could be embroidered or achieved through a dance – we would have had a large and handsome country by now, remarked sarcastically some women in the diaspora (see, e.g. Keivan 1961, 2). The post-WWII generation did create a layer of “non-peasant” Ukrainian American culture. Countless were the instances when “our famous Ukrainian” artist, poetess, play writer or performer that people referred to in conversations with me were a part of Ukrainian American heritage and sometimes better known in the United States than in Ukraine. It was assumed I was familiar with their artistic and intellectual heritage, usually causing some embarrassment when I had to acknowledge I had never heard those names before. Many of them started their artistic careers still in Ukraine before the Second World War and continued them in exile. Needless to say their work did not become a part of the canon in Soviet Ukraine. Some names have been reclaimed in the years of Ukraine's independence, but that process is slow and quite often “Ukrainian artists/writers abroad” appear in the last sections of published anthologies, losing competition to Ukrainian dissidents and the artists and writers of the “Executed Renaissance” who perished in Stalin's purges in the 1920s and early 1930s.

The UNWLA did not reject the Ukrainian heritage in the form of the folk art, but it came to combine it with promotion of works of Ukrainian American artists. In the Ukrainian Museum in New York, one has to go through a small display of the museum's collection of the Ukrainian Easter eggs or some other folk art acquisitions before getting to the lobby with a ticket counter. Once there, however, the chances to see Ukrainian American art in permanent or thematic exhibitions of the museum are very high. The museum also runs “Folk art courses and workshops,” for instance, embroidery and bead-strung necklaces classes and demonstrations in the making of Ukrainian Easter Eggs. The instructors in those courses, all

of whom are UNWLA members, told me they were particularly happy with the fact that the classes were often attended by non-Ukrainians who are interested in different crafts. This way the UNWLA and the diaspora can continue their own type of People-to-People campaign creating positive image of its culture abroad and simply getting people familiar with the name of Ukraine.

The work of informing the international and American audience about Ukraine as a separate nation aspiring for statehood was perceived to be a personal duty of every Ukrainian American during the Soviet period. In their accounts, Ukrainian Americans told me they persistently corrected their teachers if Kyiv or Odesa were named as cities in Russia. The Ukrainian diaspora would also write individual and collective letters to local and national newspapers if they spotted a similar mistake in print. The UNWLA has always participated in this type of the diasporic activism. More than stressing the status of Ukrainian women, the organization relied on the works of women to promote knowledge about Ukraine – from exhibitions of folk crafts and artwork of female artists to publication of research of female historians.

This work continued after 1991, and in addition to seeing through the construction of a new modern building for the Ukrainian Museum in New York which became one of the two landmarks of Ukrainian cultural life in the city,⁵⁷ the UNWLA has started to fund scholarly publications related to the history of Ukraine or Ukrainian women's history, namely Ukrainian translation of the book by Bohachevsky-Chomiak *Feminists Despite Themselves* (*Bilym po bilomu* in Ukrainian version) in 1995; a collection of archival documents and

⁵⁷ The other one is the Ukrainian Institute of America (1948-) which holds exhibits and Ukrainian cultural events (concerts, film screenings) following its mission to “showcase, cultivate, and promote the history and culture of Ukraine and Ukrainians” (UIA information flyer, 2011). Located on the Museum Mile near the New York Metropolitan Museum, the Institute attracts many curious tourists who never planned to visit a Ukrainian exhibition. It also has an advantage of owning a large 19th century mansion which makes it into an eye-catching landmark. Before 1976, the UNWLA kept its fine arts collection in the building of the Ukrainian Institute of America, however, unable to reach agreement about the future of the artifacts, the UNWLA decided to establish its own museum, which today is known as the Ukrainian Museum and functions as an independent organization.

correspondence of Milena Rudnytska in 1998; and the second edition of one of the first Ukrainian language scholarly works on women in traditional Ukrainian culture by Oksana Kis (2012 [2008]).⁵⁸

Along with this new focus, which tries to bring information about Ukrainian women in history to Ukrainian audience, the UNWLA continues its mission of making information about Soviet atrocities in Ukraine available to the foreign reader and attract their attention to the country's current problems. In 2011, it funded translation and publication of English version of the book *A Candle in Remembrance* by Valentyna Borysenko, a scholar from Ukraine, who carried out oral history research among survivors of the man-made famine Holodomor of 1932-1933. The UNWLA also co-sponsored a production of the documentary film about people who returned to live in the 30 km Chornobyl alienation zone "Life in the Dead Zone" by Irene Zabytko. Talking about the latter at a conference dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Chornobyl nuclear meltdown that was organized in the United Nations by the World Information Transfer and co-sponsored by the Government of Ukraine and the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the U.N., the UNWLA president Marianna Zajac explained: "The focus of the documentary is to further educate, impact, and chronicle the legacy of Chornobyl and the amazing spirit of these elderly survivors whose remarkable stories will reach a global audience so that the world will not forget the lessons of Chornobyl for the next twenty-five years and beyond" (Zajac 2011, 16).

Having as many directions for its work as there are generations in the organization, since 1991 the UNWLA had to adjust its work in the international forums to the presence of recognized representatives of the Ukrainian state. To quote the head of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, Marika Szkambara, "Our work [in the U.N.] was very easy at the beginning. At the first conference in Mexico in 1975 people did not know where

⁵⁸ The book is entitled *Zhinka v Tradytsiinii Ukrains'kii Kul'turi (druha polovyna 19 - pochatok 20 stolittia)* [*Woman in Traditional Ukrainian Culture (Second half of the 19th - Beginning of the 20th Century)*]. 2nd ed. Lviv: Instytut narodoznavstva NANU. 2012 [2008].

Ukraine was and told us it was part of Russia. [...] After Ukraine became independent and sent legitimate representatives to the U.N., it complicated the work of our U.N. committee. But the committee found issues that were worth supporting – we talk about life of Ukrainian woman and about Ukraine” (Interview with author, May 2009).

4.2.3 At the International Women’s Conference in Beijing

“These relationships strengthen our position on the international terrain and pave the way for the future representatives of free Ukraine, who will take a full membership among women of other nations” (Pavlykovska 1957, 13–14).

At the 4th International Women’s Conference in Beijing, 1995, women of the Ukrainian diaspora finally met the “representatives of free Ukraine” whose place they had been taking since 1925. It was at that conference that Iryna Kurowyckyj said she felt she was “a woman without a state.” And in her report about the Beijing forum, Anna Krawchuk, President of the UNWLA of that time, summarized the new vision for the diaspora’s role in the context of Ukraine’s independence: “We should remember our past and write it into the history, but let’s not live in that past. Our task is to preserve our identity here, in the U.S.A., and to leave the cultural heritage for our descendants” (Krawczuk 1995, 4).

It would take a few more years before the UNWLA realized that neither relinquishing the responsibility to represent Ukraine nor turning inward to the needs of their diasporic communities were easy tasks. At the time of the Beijing conference, however, the sense of an inevitable change of the diaspora’s role was very acute. Trying to shift from *representation* of Ukraine to *facilitation* of its entry into the international arena, women’s organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora offered NGO representatives from Ukraine informal advice on the formal procedures and strategies for successful promotion of their causes at events like this U.N.

conference. This exchange of experience carried an ad-hoc nature and representatives of the diaspora held separate from the official Ukrainian delegation presentations and events. One of them was a panel on nuclear disasters and their consequence for women and children. It was organized by the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations. In their statement officially submitted at the conference, the WFUWO called on the U.N. and the developed nations to ensure that women were included into decision making about use of nuclear and other energy as well as to take measures that would help to overcome the consequences of the Chornobyl disaster and to deal with nuclear, chemical and biological waste.

It was the knowledge on how to present one's cause using proper technical language and procedures that could be of importance for the delegates from Ukraine, in particular for representatives of non-governmental women's organizations. In her report on Ukraine's participation in the Women's Conference in Beijing that was published in *Our Life*, Olha Kobets, President of the Olena Teliha Ukrainian Women's Association, mentioned that the Ukrainian NGOs acted in a somewhat disorganized way and members from different organizations often did not know the schedule of other Ukrainian panels and could not attend (Kobets 1995, 6). She noted that advice from the Ukrainian diaspora on the ins-and-outs of the conference had been extremely helpful and marked that the panel organized by the WFUWO was a real success, especially in comparison to the panels of the Ukrainian-based NGOs (ibid). The "analysis of mistakes" in this report sounded too similar to the discussions that the UNWLA had on the pages of *Our Life* after the conference in Mexico City. It was once again only the first step of Ukrainian women on the international arena, treated as useful learning experience.

Previous experience that women in the diaspora acquired from their participation in international forums taught them how to talk about Ukraine as part of international

community and identify its problems as examples of global phenomena rather than narrow national challenges. This allowed them to gradually realize that they did not need the mandate of an alternative voice of a “captive nation” to represent Ukraine because they could do it as concerned global citizens. And if in the past the main effort was invested into attracting attention of the Western world to developments behind the Iron Curtain, the same venues and strategies could also become a platform for bringing up issues for closer consideration of the Ukrainian government – issues that were believed to be an outcome of state policies or represented systematic inequalities or discrimination in the country. Since the late 1990s, Iryna Kurowyckyj and other UNWLA representatives to the international organizations began to talk about trafficking in women in Eastern Europe and Ukraine in particular.⁵⁹ Having secured its own consultative status with the ECOSOC, the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations started to organize panels in the NGO sector of the annual Session of the U.N. Committee on the Status of Women. The panels dealt with topics of HIV/AIDS (2002, 2003), women and girls in science and technology (2011), rural women (2012), violence against women (2013).⁶⁰ While some of UNWLA members have been involved in this work, these issues were not always brought back to the organization for a more general discussion. And when they were, the discussion could take some unexpected turns. Some of those examples will be examined in the following two chapters.

⁵⁹ Kichorowska-Kebalo (2013, 11) notes that the problem of trafficking in women was noticed by the diaspora only after the New York Times published an editorial by Michael Specter in 1998 in which he raised the question of post-Soviet women becoming a popular commodity on the sex trade market.

⁶⁰ The titles of the panels were “AIDS on Two Continents: Europe and Africa” (2002, panel co-sponsored by the WFUWO, the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, the National Council of Women and World Information Transfer); “Getting the Message: Evolving Responsibility of Men and Boys in HIV-AIDS Prevention” (2003, the WFUWO, World Information Transfer and the U.N. NGO Committee on Health and Communications); “Women and Girls in Science and Technology: Obstacles Overcome, Goals Achieved” (2011, the WFUWO and the U.N. NGO Committee on the Family); “Rural Women: Realities and Initiatives toward Empowerment” (2012, the WFUWO and the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the U.N.); and “Mobilizing Outrage: Joining Forces Against VAW in Ukraine” (2013, the WFUWO and the UN NGO Committee on the Family).

Conclusion

“It is very sobering to come to the realization that violence against women is still a very real problem in this modern world of 2013. We would all agree that this is an uncomfortable topic, but in my opinion, the UNWLA, as a women’s organization and a defender of human rights, should not shy away from addressing it openly” (Zajac 2013, 16).

The cited passage comes from this year’s April issue of *Our Life*. In her regular column, UNWLA President Marianna Zajac provides brief summary of the panels that UNWLA Executive Board members attended at the 57th Session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. The session that was held on March 4-15, 2013, went under the general topic “Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls,” and the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations prepared a panel entitled “When Will Violence against Women and Girls End?” that discussed how Ukrainian government and NGOs define and try to solve the problem of gender based violence. The rather careful suggestion of the UNWLA president that “in her opinion” the organization should address this problem openly tells us the question of violence against women has not been previously discussed within the organization. It remains unclear whether the suggestion promotes addressing the issue in the context of Ukraine (like the WFUWO did in its panel) or in the context of the diaspora; however, given the diverse background of the UNWLA membership, an introduction of a new issue has always been linked to a risk of criticism and rejection.

Some attempts to bring issues related to women’s rights to the UNWLA’s agenda have been previously made after international women’s conferences. Summarizing the achievements of the Decade of Women, a WFUWO representative argues that Ukrainian women’s organizations in the diaspora should start paying attention to the questions of women’s health and unequal wages, for example, if they want to remain relevant to the lives

of younger generation of Ukrainian American women and have a future (Hladka 1985, 22–23). However, those questions never generated a large-scale discussion or motivated any UNWLA projects before. In the following chapters I will discuss the ways in which the international women’s rights discourses have been seeping into the work of the organization and how they were received by the membership. *Chapter Five* talks about one of the failures of such introduction while *Chapter Six* examines the continuing attempts of the UNWLA leadership to use the international frameworks for defining the UNWLA’s future projects in Ukraine.

Chapter Five. What is wrong with March 8? Overcoming Differences

Introduction

When in March 2009 the UNWLA President Marianna Zajac decided to greet members of the organization on the occasion of the upcoming International Women's Day, she reminded that on that day, "Divided by language, culture, political differences, and national boundaries, women come together to celebrate their predecessors' struggle for equality and justice, peace and development" (Zajac 2009, 25). Closely resembling the United Nations official interpretation of the holiday, this statement attempted to bring a new and more positive meaning to the Women's day, which had been previously discarded by the Ukrainian diaspora for its relation to the socialist movement. At the same time, it was also a token of recognition of some traditions brought by the post-Soviet immigrants. Meant as a call to unity, the president's greetings ignited some criticism instead. Both, the post-WWII immigrants and the recent ones, found the language of "equality and justice" that was used by the president irrelevant for the Ukrainian context, only a few among them agreeing that the International Women's Day could have a positive and productive meaning for their organization.

If the diaspora Ukrainians considered it unacceptable that two decades after acquiring independence, Ukraine still marked the Women's Day as an official state holiday preserving the tradition from the Soviet times; the recent immigrants felt uncomfortable with any official greetings and mandated celebrations, as those were the most tedious part of the holiday back in Ukraine. They could not reject it entirely, however, because in their personal memories, March 8 was linked to positive experience from the days of their youth. And so, a year later, I found myself on a way to a Korean spa, where members of Branch 125 (whom we met in *Chapter Three* celebrating Mother's Day) decided to hold their monthly meeting turning it into a small retreat on occasion of the Women's Day. Having a group of women relaxing in a

sauna, splashing in aroma pools, and brainstorming potential investment solutions for their UNWLA projects escapes both the tradition of the open protest or awareness raising campaigns organized by some women's groups on that day around the world, and the practice of putting a woman on a pedestal of compliments, praises, and gifts to make her into an object of celebration that is dominating the March 8 tradition in Ukraine. The statement "I don't care for Clara Zetkin" and the exchange about the personal history and experience of living with a scar from a C-section that I witnessed during this informal branch meeting complicated the meaning of the retreat and its connection to the International Women's Day, women's movement, and the UNWLA. On this sunny March day in College Point in New York, these recent immigrants were negotiating space for their personal memories of growing up in Soviet Ukraine in the context of largely anti-Soviet sentiment that still defines the established Ukrainian diaspora in North America.

In this chapter, I examine how the recent immigrants adjust to the new context of their Ukrainian American life incorporating the traditions brought from home into the otherwise diasporic activism they carry out in the UNWLA. The example of the International Women's Day shows that while refusing to reject their personal past in order to fit with the majority opinion within the diaspora organization in this case, the post-Soviet immigrants used the occasion to promote the overall purpose of the UNWLA's work. That way they continued to create solidarity across different generations of ethnic Ukrainians in the United States through shared action, relinquishing the idea they should, or could, strive for a shared Ukrainian identity. Before a more detailed discussion on the reinterpretation of the Women's Day by the post-Soviet immigrants, I offer an overview of the previous experience that the UNWLA had with the International Women's Day.

5.1 The International Women's Day and the Ukrainian diaspora

5.1.1 The WWII immigrants and their International Women's Day activism

“It could be worth discussing the history of March 8. However, it is irrelevant here.” (WFUWO 1960, 13)

“My mother didn’t even know it was a Mother’s Day today, but of course she was glad to get my greetings,” shared one of my companions, a young woman from Crimea who had recently moved to Washington, D.C. “When do you usually greet your mothers, then?” asked Lesia, who was driving us to a Ukrainian church on that Sunday morning. “On March 8th,” replied the young woman, understanding this answer must upset Lesia, like it would upset any other post-WWII immigrant. “We don’t have a Mother’s Day tradition,” she added somewhat apologetically, without realizing it made a bad excuse because, in fact, Mother’s Day did exist in Ukraine as an official holiday (re)introduced by a president’s decree in 1999. It has gained an unquestioned popularity only in the western part of the country, however, where some people still had the memory of celebrating it before the WWII. As one moves eastward into mainland Ukraine, the popularity of the holiday dwindles, losing in prominence to the Women’s Day with whom it shares the imperative to celebrate mothers and motherhood as one of the primary role of a woman.

Our ensuing conversation about the regional differences in perception of women and mothers or rather the days dedicated to them by the state in Ukraine closed with Lesia’s conclusion, “Probably another generation needs to pass before this memory of Soviet times fades and Ukraine becomes Ukrainian again” (Lesia, post-WWII immigrant). Surprisingly, I did not hear resentment or judgment behind the words, which sounded more like a factual statement one needs to accept. Like some other women in the Ukrainian diaspora that I met, Lesia seemed to have reconciled with the fact that her country of origin did not reject its Soviet past completely, making an effort to learn about Ukraine and Ukrainians as they were

rather than condemn the whole nation. She had been renting a room in her house to researchers and other young professionals from Ukraine who were coming to the United States on different exchange programs. This became one of her ways of staying in touch with and even being useful for Ukraine and its people through a mutually beneficial arrangement. Accepting Ukrainians did not mean accepting legitimacy of their choices, however, and the friendship that Lesia developed with many Ukrainians from the post-Soviet country did not stop her from hoping that in another generation, or century, the nation would clean itself from the Soviet traditions and “Ukraine becomes Ukrainian” again.

March 8 was one of those traditions that would have to disappear in that Ukraine. As one of my interviewees explained, the WWII immigrants were “extremely outraged that Ukraine, 20 years after declaring its independence, was still celebrating communist holidays, including March 8” (Kateryna, 4th wave). The diaspora members were aware of the fact that the holiday was given a new life by international women’s organizations. They could see it appropriate to have their vice-president attend a special International Women’s Day event at the White House on March 11, 1998, which was organized to demonstrate the commitment of the U.S. government to the principles of the Beijing Declaration. When placed in the context of Ukraine’s relation to the holiday, however, March 8 triggered only negative associations.

First of all, for diaspora women the International Women’s Day was not the right kind of holiday because they did not believe the USSR gave its women many reasons to celebrate anything. Second, women in the Ukrainian diaspora and in the UNWLA in particular have had their own history with the International Women’s Day (IWD) that was related to the decades of their anti-Soviet activism. That history lies at the intersection of the Soviet tradition and the one promoted by international women’s rights movement and the United Nations since the mid-1970s – the “intersection” being complicated by the fact that the perception of the International Women’s Day in the international community was itself

closely related to the holiday's socialist past and Soviet present. As Kaplan (1985) argues in her article "On the Socialist Origins of International Women's Day," before the day could be adopted by Western women's movement and upheld by the United Nations, it needed a new history, so uncomfortable its socialist roots and the Soviet recognition felt to European and American women. We may never know who authored the myth about the 1857 demonstration of the New York City garment workers which created a new reference for the pro-women's rights day, she says, but the legend was so welcomed that the first academic publication to state the story about the protest was not fact-based was met with utter disbelief (Kaplan 1985, 161).

There is a more recent reassertion that American women do not have to prove that the mid-19th century rallies of women-workers actually took place to claim that they stood at the origin of the day because in 1908 women of the American socialist movement were the first to hold a rally in defense of the rights of female workers (Ruthchild 2012, 2). Regardless of these facts, neither American women nor the international community seem to be interested in the further search for the day's origins today – having marked a centenarian anniversary of the IWD in 2011, they seem to have reconciled with the idea that among all the milestones and instances of women-workers' protests, it was the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen in August of 1910 and the February and March rallies in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland the following year that started the history of the holiday.

For the post-WWII immigrants from Ukraine, the holiday came to their attention at the level of their engagement with international women's organizations where for quite some time representatives of socialist countries were using the occasion to report about the completion of women's emancipation in the socialist bloc. The International Women's Day, in the Soviet interpretation, had two different meanings – for the West it was still about the

fight for women's rights while in the socialist states it already celebrated the achievements of women's emancipation.⁶¹ Later the rightfulness of that definition was openly questioned even by some socialist feminists, who stated they could also have had slogans and issues to bring up if they had been championing the women's cause rather than feeling obliged to endorse socialism on every occasion (Haug 1992). For a long time, however, the emancipation achieved under the communism and socialism was applauded by some, which allowed socialist states to talk about moral superiority of their countries over the rest of the world in building a just and fair society for all.

Anything that could give positive publicity to the Soviet policies fell under critical scrutiny of the Ukrainian diaspora. That is why when the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) initiated a large-scale celebration of the 50th anniversary of the International Women's Day in 1960, Ukrainian women's organizations in the diaspora could not remain bystanders. The UNWLA heard and shared the concern expressed by the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations that the WIDF "will use the 50th anniversary of the 8th of March to announce to the whole world about the achievements of women's equality in the USSR. By inviting all the international organizations of the Free world, it will display for them a colorful picture of the women's life and work in a communist society. This way, the 50th anniversary of this once worthwhile initiative will become a demonstration of maybe the greatest fraud in the modern history" (WFUWO 1960, 13).

Ukrainian women in the diaspora were called to prepare information that would present the other side of the story, but it was not a call to all UNWLA members or all women of the Ukrainian diaspora. Like the WIDF celebration would not reach every household and

⁶¹ As the Great Soviet Encyclopedia put it: "In the USSR and other socialist states, the IWD is the day of the mobilization of women, who have been emancipated from the social exploitation and received equal with men rights to actively participate in all the spheres of economic, social, political, and cultural life. On that day, women of socialist countries review their participation in the building of communism and socialism. In the non-socialist countries, the International Women's Day is marked as a day of the struggle for women's rights and for social progress under slogans that are relevant to every particular context." (Balakhovskaya 1969, translation mine)

local community, the Ukrainian women did not have to organize a campaign in every town. In this case, it was sufficient to target the same audience as the WIFD did, which could have been called “the whole world” in the statement above, but in this particular context was limited to the leadership of international women’s and other organizations and the diplomatic corpus. Only a few UNWLA members had access to that audience and thus could be actively involved in preparing a “counteraction,” usually they were the Executive Board members of the organization, leaving the rest of the UNWLA uninvolved into the discussions around the event.⁶²

5.1.2 The Year of the Ukrainian Woman: Reassuring loyalties

The awareness of the International Women’s Day had a chance to reach a broader membership of the organization in 1975 when sanctioned by the United Nations and in the context of the International Women’s Year the date took a prominent place on the calendars of women’s organizations in many countries. Rallies in support of the women’s equality took place in the United States. That day, however, the UNWLA did not join the American and international women’s organizations and at the time when, according to *The New York Times*, “[c]hilled by brisk March winds, hundreds of women from a coalition of 50 women’s groups marched down Fifth Avenue under sunny skies [...] in celebration of International Women’s Day” (Klemesrud 1975, 1), women of the Ukrainian community in New York held their own demonstration to draw public attention to the political persecutions and violations of basic human rights and freedoms in the USSR. This event was supposed to open with a special church service at the St. Patrick’s Cathedral, for the health and well-being of the

⁶² In 1960, a representative from the UNWLA in the NCW/USA delegation to the International Council of Women’s annual congress was assigned the task to prepare a presentation about the March 8th celebrations in the Soviet Union. Women’s organizations of the Western world shared the concern of the Ukrainian women in America that those types of events were the “small vents in the public opinion through which more and more pro-Soviet information will be penetrating and paving the road for a larger stream of sympathy or relationships” (WFUWO 1960, 13).

Ukrainian women-political prisoners who were serving their terms at that time and in memory of those who had perished in the Soviet labor camps. After the service, its participants who represented various Ukrainian organizations of New York were to march fifty blocks uptown to a Russian Orthodox Church to protest the official delegation from Russia headed by Patriarch Filaret that was visiting the country on the invitation of the National Council of Churches of the United States.

These two protests – against the violations of human rights of women imprisoned for their political views and against the suppression of the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic churches and religious freedoms in the Soviet Union – fell on the same date accidentally, even if they shared the underlying anti-Soviet sentiment and pro-universal human rights and freedoms rhetoric. The month-long visit of the Russian Orthodox Church delegation to the United States was accompanied by public protests organized by Ukrainian communities along its route, and the turn of the Ukrainian New Yorkers depended on the Patriarch's schedule. Already the following day, March 9, 1975, he was off to another Russian Orthodox community in Passaic, New Jersey, being received by a crowd of 2,500 protesters from local Ukrainian parishes.

Accidental as it was, the joint rally for the freedom of religious practice on March 8 had an undeniable impact on the IWD plans of the Ukrainian women's organizations. The service at the St. Patrick's Cathedral never took place because right before the event, the administration of the cathedral revoked the permission to hold the prayer-service that was previously granted to the Ukrainian Church. As a consequence, the Ukrainian women-prisoners were briefly commemorated with a prayer and a church hymn performed by a group of Ukrainian Americans who gathered at the St. Patrick's Cathedral and the remaining part of the afternoon of the International Women's Day was marked by a more general anti-Soviet manifestation, which gathered 700 people and was said to have featured five black coffins

carried by the protesters as a symbol of death of the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic Churches under communism. The Ukrainian demonstration was stopped a few blocks from the church where the religious leaders from the USSR were holding a service, but some individual people, like a nun wearing chains in a symbolic protest against the bondage of the Soviet people, could come closer and even promenade in front of the church during the liturgy (“Manifestatsiya v Niu Yorku [Manifestation in New York]” 1975, 1). Without an occasional reminder that the March 8 demonstration was organized by the Coalition of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations in New York together with the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, the connection between the International Women’s Day and this particular event as reported in Ukrainian newspapers would have been beyond vague. Probably the only theme those reports shared with the New York Times article on the general IWD rally organized by American women was the freezing wind that all city dwellers had to endure on that early spring day.

There were several reasons why the UNWLA chose to join efforts with other Ukrainian organizations rather than American women’s groups on that day. Providing a summary of the March 8 rally of American women in New York, the article “Fighting for the Rights and Fighting for Existence,” published in the April issue of *Our Life* from that year, notes that some of the slogans of the IWD demonstration touched upon the question of the differences in the status and circumstances that women in the West as opposed to women in developing world experienced, with the latter believed to be fighting for their own survival rather than worrying about careers. “This invites the question to which of the worlds do women in Ukraine belong?” (Ischuk 1957, 2) deliberates the article, arguing that while enjoying the formal equality, women in Soviet Ukraine were worrying about their personal, their family’s and their nation’s physical and spiritual survival. Having failed to find a proper fit between the issues raised by women’s movement in the United States and the situation of

the women in Ukraine, the UNWLA decided that their task should be “to draw the world’s attention to them [women of Ukraine], their fate, circumstances, to encourage those who call themselves human rights advocates to look at those women and realistically assess their situation” (ibid).

The feeling that the Soviet and post-Soviet women were left out of the international discussion never left UNWLA representatives to international organizations in 1975. Recollecting her participation in the World Summit for Social Development, organized by the U.N. in Copenhagen in March 1995, Honorary President of the UNWLA Iryna Kurowycky shared, “What was interesting, at that conference they were talking about the third world, they were talking about the first world, and no one mentioned the world that had just broken to pieces. We were like in limbo, no one was talking about that part of the Soviet Union.” (Interview with author, 12 May 2009).

Apart from the opinion that their agenda was outside of the American or international women’s movement, the UNWLA had an additional incentive to join efforts with other Ukrainian organizations within their community. Following the United Nation’s declaration of the Decade of Women which started with the International Women’s Year in 1975, the World Congress of Free Ukrainians initiated the Year of the Ukrainian Woman to be marked in Ukrainian communities across the world under the main theme of attracting the world’s attention to the plight of the woman-political prisoner in the USSR. In addition to that theme, the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women’s Organizations developed a parallel calendar of events for the Year of the Ukrainian Woman for its member-organizations. The calendar encouraged women to dedicate every month of the year to a certain question related to lives of Ukrainian women in the diaspora. April was suggested as a month to discuss the topic of women’s wages and the existing pay gaps in different countries; May, as a month of the family, was to highlight the challenges that married women face in contemporary world

(specified as the issues of high divorce rates, division of housework and child care between parents, and the topical in the diaspora question of intermarriages); by June the attention shifted to the “women and religion” with the reflections about the role of religious principles in the woman’s life and the role and achievements of women in their churches. The idea to examine their own needs and achievements and to give awards of the Year of the Ukrainian Woman to the Woman-Professional and the Mother reflected the complexity of the “women’s question” and multiple ways of approaching it that existed within diasporic organizations. Rather than arguing for new opportunities for women, the WFUWO and the UNWLA, in its turn, decided to examine the existing roles that women play, their needs and challenges within those roles. These reflections were supposed to help strengthen the women’s organizations themselves, systematize their work and mobilize more women.

Summarizing the accomplishments of the Year of the Ukrainian Woman in *Our Life*, an unnamed author admits that the Ukrainian American community gave it a “lukewarm” reception (UNWLA 1976, 2). The issue of political prisoners in the USSR was said to be important to the UNWLA irrespective of the year of women but “regardless of the fact that the problems that are painful for women of the world are of secondary importance to us because we are concerned more with those issues that are connected to our political situation, we still need to know about them,” (ibid.) writes the author. She criticizes Ukrainian newspapers in the United States for having published only a few articles that were written mostly by women themselves and mentions that the work of the UNWLA and other women’s organizations usually receives little recognition in the community. In addition to that, she also criticizes women’s organizations for little attention to the problems of everyday life of Soviet Ukrainian women and for lack of unity and coordinated work which is in part responsible for the lack of visibility of women’s work. In other words, problems of the Ukrainian women in the diaspora are mentioned in the context of their organizations and missing recognition of

their work in the community while the Soviet Ukrainian woman faces many challenges in everyday life as an individual.

Neither the Year of the Ukrainian Woman nor the International Women's Day became occasions for considering the needs of the Ukrainian woman in the United States. The March 8 rally was designed to be the first step of a three-tier campaign by Ukrainians in the diaspora for that year, the other two being a protest – in the streets or mass media – on the Mother's Day in May “to remind to the women in the free world that there are mothers who are in prisons”(WFUWO 1975, 22), and the Day of a Woman-Prisoner, planned for early September as a mass demonstration “in the capital of every country” (ibid.), followed by a petition to the United Nations that would ask the international community to exert pressure on the USSR to stop the political persecutions in the country. The dates were chosen to have a certain meaning for American and international audiences, and that status of the International Women's Day – of a holiday that is somebody else's – stayed with the large part of the post-WWII generation of the UNWLA members. It could be either used for promoting the Ukrainian cause on the international arena or for expressing opposition to communism and its appropriation of the holiday, but regardless of the mobilization the International Women's Day sometimes required, the attention that the women in the diaspora were giving to it was neither annual nor celebratory.

5.2 Where personal is not political: fourth wave immigrants and their definition of “women's empowerment”

5.2.1 The holiday of spring and beauty

Eighth of March has come, my friend,
I am cooking without end:
Peeling, slicing, carving, chopping,
Running errands, doing shopping –

As my spouse, after repose,
Will present me with a rose!

(Author unknown)⁶³

The idea to do something more relaxing and leisurely for one of the following monthly meetings had been in the air for some time and even a particular thermal spa was selected based on one of the branch members' personal recommendation before it occurred to someone that March 8 was around the corner and could make a perfect occasion for "doing something for ourselves." The suggestion was instantly and unanimously supported, although the discussion it triggered showed everyone was aware of the controversial reputation that the International Women's Day had as a remnant of the Soviet calendar in today's Ukraine. "America celebrates the Labor day – it's the worker's solidarity day and everyone is celebrating, happy that they have an extra day off. But when we celebrate it, we are communists," said one of the branch members and everyone further agreed that the more holidays, the better and that taking into account the fact that not every woman is a mother, it is inappropriate to cross out the Woman's Day from the calendar simply because there are other holidays for women during the year.

It may be a wrong holiday to celebrate, from the point of view of its history, was the general conclusion, but the socialism and Klara Zetkin aside, March 8 was associated with endearing personal memories for everyone. They loved to pick or buy snowdrops for their mothers on that day and to receive greeting card and presents from their classmates at school. There was no special date designated for the Mother's Day in the USSR, neither was there a Valentine's Day in the calendar before the 1990s, and March 8 was charged with all those meanings and beyond. "It's a positive holiday – a day of spring and beauty, there doesn't have to be politics in it," agreed the women and proceeded with sharing memories from their school years and childhood.

⁶³ Translated from Ukrainian by Halyna Koshulap.

It is hard to give a short answer to the question how one can go from the International Women's Day that aims to give women visibility and voice in their demand for economic, social, and political rights to the holiday of spring and beauty believed to be embodied by women and girls, but in the Soviet Union it was done by shifting the focus of the celebration from women's equality to the glorification of women's sacrifice and gradually to women themselves. The first step on that path was taken when the International Women's Day was declared a state holiday in 1921 in recognition of women's contribution to the February Revolution in 1917, which was believed to have grown out of the women's rally on the IWD that year. What was seen as one of the greatest successes of the women's cause eventually undermined and effaced the women's movement as such, transforming the meaning of the day to the occasion for the state to mobilize women for the building of socialism (see Chatterjee 2002). In 1965, when the day became a public holiday, the official context for granting a day-off to the country's citizens was the marking of the 20th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War and the recognition of the "outstanding services that women rendered to the cause of the building of communism, protection of Homeland during the Great War, for their heroism and selflessness on the battlefield and on the home front, and in order to acknowledge their great contribution into the strengthening of friendship among the people and promoting peace" (Balakhovskaya 1969, translation mine). When the more revolutionary fervor of the socialist building gave way to the routine of the Soviet lives, the state greetings would still praise the woman-worker and the mother-heroine issuing statements, giving out awards and promotions, and encouraging people to greet all the women in their lives (see Kis 2012).

Very few of my interviewees knew about the long evolution of the holiday's meaning under communism or found it of relevance. There was little difference between formal greetings and speeches from state officials whether they were about women's beauty or

women's contribution to the wartime industrial production – all of them were just that – empty speeches. The women I interviewed shared the opinion that the IWD “was the only day in the year when a woman was really respected – given flowers, presents – and given attention, because all other days in the year, she was, in fact, a slave” (Vika, 4th wave). But they preferred to claim at least that one day for themselves rather than focus on the overall context and join the more radical camp which renounces March 8 altogether or condemns the treatment that women receive the rest of the year. This claim to the IWD was made at the level of personal meanings and memories with most of the formal traditions and practices that could link it to the past Soviet celebrations being dismissed.

In their recollections about the Women's Day celebration, members of Branch 125 kept on slipping to a discussion about the Red Army Day, which used to be marked just two weeks earlier on February 23 and served as a counterpart for March 8 being the men's turn to receive presents and greetings from their country and women for being the former or future defenders of the fatherland. Unlike the IWD, however, the Red Army Day, which was first entirely dismissed after Ukraine's independence and later reintroduced as the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland in 1999, never regained its former popularity.

Listening to the recollections about the exchange of presents between boys and girls for the Red Army and Women's Days and the different strategies the teachers or schoolchildren had to apply to make sure everyone gets an equal value gift regardless of the boys-to-girls ratio in the class or the popularity of a particular student, I could only admit that this kind of tradition did not survive past my elementary school years. By mid-1990s my classmates exchanged only “you haven't served in the army yet” and “it's Women's Day, nothing about girls there” (or less polite remarks that brought up the issue of sexuality to embarrass the girls and discourage them from claiming their right to be celebrated). There were other ways to justify our unwillingness to prepare presents and parties for each other on

the days whose sanctity was being questioned by adults at that time, and as our teachers and parents did not insist on school celebrations of the Women's Day, I did not grow up with experience of a group celebration to the holiday.

Initially, the most common criticism in society was like the one expressed by the diaspora – March 8 was a remnant of the Soviet times. This Soviet tail of the day can account for the more dramatic drop in the popularity of the holiday in the Western parts of Ukraine compared to the East of the country, where the approval of the Soviet legacies by the population tend to be higher.⁶⁴ But even in western regions of Ukraine, it is not uncommon to hear casual greetings on occasion of the Women's Day, although no one will be surprised or offended to hear back that “it is a communist holiday and I don't celebrate it, but thank you” in reply, after which both sides will agree it is still good to have this extra day off in a year, and will move on to a new topic. With the growing strength of the women's movement and feminism in Ukraine, it became possible to see more direct criticism of the tradition to issue official state greetings on the IWD that pathetically admire women's beauty and fragility as their highest purpose and achievement (see Kis 2012), but these attempts to reclaim the original meaning of the International Women's Day by some feminist organizations in Ukraine are quite recent and still remain on the margins of the popular discourses. It is really the fact that March 8 lost its immunity against public criticism that signifies the main post-1991 transformation for the IWD tradition in Ukraine, with several different groups using this opportunity to point out the problematic nature of the holiday while flower shops continue to report their highest sales on that day compared to any other single holiday during the year.

Despite the fact that the majority of the branch members finished high school before 1991 and emigrated from Ukraine early enough to miss most of the feminist and nationalist

⁶⁴ Oksana Kis cites sociological statistics on the popularity of the holiday across Ukraine which shows that in 2008 over 86 percent of respondents in Donetsk (eastern Ukraine) and 53 percent of people in Lviv (western Ukraine) indicated they celebrated the holiday. In both cases, the numbers were lower compared to similar studies conducted in 2004 (Kis 2012b, n. 2, p. 230).

discourse against the holiday, they were aware of the overt and background criticism it faced, witnessing the fading of the tradition in their families as well. Two of the women mentioned that when reminded about the approaching IWD, their husbands resort to jokes, “March 8 is the *International* Women’s Day. If you are an international woman, not mine, I will treat you like an international one.” The other one just hints that with the Valentine’s and Mother’s Day that their family celebrates, it may be too many chocolates if they keep the March 8, too. Both men eventually greet their wives on March 8 because it is difficult to refuse from a tradition that involves presents, but as the members of Branch 125 showed, they did not want to sit and wait to be greeted, after all. Unwilling to turn this holiday into a day of protests and demands, the idea that they should be objects of celebrations is equally alien to them. As I mentioned, even in their references to the school years celebrations of the Women’s Day, they spent more time talking about the cards and tokens of attention they prepared for the boys in February than about actual memories and expectations of being celebrated on their day. In 2009, the International Women’s Day just happened to be around the corner when something different and more common for the UNWLA members of all generations was in the planning.

For the members of Branch 125, the International Women’s Day became one of the occasions to strengthen their group through a shared reference to their past, while strengthening their bond with the UNWLA through reproduction of the patterns and ideas which underlie the organization’s work. Having the liberty to choose for themselves what they do within their branch, the women of the recent immigration wave preferred to keep March 8 within the walls of their group to avoid possible conflict with the UNWLA members whose view on the holiday was strongly politicized.

5.2.2 “But we had fun, hadn’t we?”

The practice to hold retreats or combine organization-related work with informal and relaxing socializing is anything but new for the UNWLA. It does not take the form known to employees of the corporate world of a regular annual retreat, rather implying that the branch meetings and fundraising events should be first and foremost “fun” for the women who organize them. In fact, one of the recommendations of the recent Membership Recruitment and Retention campaign was to make sure that branch meetings were more “exciting,” although this side of the UNWLA’s work is rarely mentioned in any official reports or documents and is encouraged at the informal level. Laughter and friendship were the best indicators of the strength of a branch. Those groups who lost it looked somewhat bogged in the formalities and the report-writing side of the UNWLA membership, but even the least unified of the branches held anniversary dinners and parties to celebrate some occasions together and tried to close their meetings with a “social minute” when the women would share some funny anecdotes from their lives. Looking through jubilee books and programs of different events from different periods, one cannot fail to notice the joyful and creative atmosphere which found its way even into seemingly bureaucratic meetings.

As one of the recent immigrants explained, “When you are in the UNWLA it does not mean that you have to work for the benefit of some cause and do nothing for yourself.” That “doing something for yourself” could have very different meanings, however, and only occasionally the “self” was identified as a woman first and foremost. Following that rule, the same year that Branch 125 had a half a day spa retreat, they planned a couple of other events that they said they would be excited to do. One of them was a Viennese ball to mark the 10th anniversary of the Branch. One of their members had been dreaming about the ball for quite some time. I had to miss that event, but judging from the email exchange it proved to be a

real success with evening dresses and Waltz dancing classes for the branch members and their husbands as a part of the preparation to the ball.⁶⁵

In the UNWLA all these events usually serve as fundraising occasions, which means they require a lot of work as women prepare most of the food themselves to cut the expenses and maximize the revenue. In that sense the spa retreat may appear to belong to a different category of “fun” events, done just for the women themselves, but such a division would be extremely illusionary in the context of the UNWLA. While the March 8 retreat was meant to be an enjoyable experience, it did not lose its status of a UNWLA branch meeting, even if an extravagant one. The specific agenda that was planned for the meeting may have never been fully covered, yet over the lunch the women brainstormed ideas about various ways to diversify their fundraising efforts, discussing whether they could use experience of the post-WWII immigrants who set up self-reliance unions and pulled considerable funds through different investment operations. The women knew they could experiment with the meetings and events because there were no strict rules on their form defined by the UNWLA headquarters, but they also made sure their efforts benefited the organization and, potentially, Ukrainians back at home because “that’s what we are here for,” their head would remind if anyone started to complain about the length of the formal parts of their meetings and report writing. While the organization provided an opportunity to meet with friends or to find new ones, its members often stressed that they took seriously the objective to help some people in need in Ukraine, be it through sending humanitarian aid to an orphanage or geriatric home or providing allowances to senior women in rural parts of Ukraine.

Occasionally, the need to do something for themselves as women within the UNWLA outgrew the space of branch meetings, family picnics, and fundraising events. In several

⁶⁵ The ball could have been a new idea for the recent immigrants, but it was borrowed no further than from the diaspora Ukrainians, who have a tradition of organizing Debutant Balls in several East Coast communities. Some of the older UNWLA branches also prefer to have “upscale parties” on marking their anniversaries, although this tradition is waning.

cases special retreats and workshops, dealing with the topics that women deemed personally important, were organized. One such event was held on June 20-22, 1997, by Detroit Regional Council. The brochure for their “Ukrainian Woman’s Retreat” explained the purpose of the three-day gathering as follows: “Ukrainian woman works hard for her family, Church and community. This retreat is an opportunity to do something for yourself; to promote personal, spiritual *growth*, to *bond* and have *fun!*” (Original highlights) This opening sentence reflected the general understanding of the UNWLA’s context – the work for the family, church and community was not questioned as the primary aim of women in community organizations. Women were coming to these organizations because the latter helped them do this work by providing networks, amplifying their impact, and allowing to make friends and sometimes develop creative or professional skills through getting involved in different UNWLA projects. Thus a formally organized woman’s retreat stood out among the UNWLA events because in addition to the campfire sing-along evening and a picnic, which could make a part of any of UNWLA meetings or conventions, the retreat included workshops and seminars on such topics as menopause, stress vs. depression, separation and loss, healthy living, and a spiritual workshop on discovering beauty “within and in the world around us.” Other sessions provided information about elder law and discussed the needs of aging parents as well as offered advice on financial and career planning.

The sessions of the retreat were held in English or English and Ukrainian indicating that the initiative came from the American-born Ukrainian women, similarly to the “Ukrainian Woman in Two Worlds” series of conferences that took place in 1982, 1986 and 1991. While also aiming at the second generation Ukrainian women, these latter conferences tried to combine the workshops on professional development and life crisis counseling with an exploration of the questions related to Ukrainian American identity and community life. The Detroit retreat did not omit the community issues, but it was one of those rare occasions

when that topic was not dominating the schedule being limited to two sessions – one on the meaning of Ukrainian American identity and the other on the life of women, children and elderly in Ukraine.

Trying to be enjoyable and useful for each of the organization's members, the UNWLA has also received criticism for failing to cater to women's needs and yet it was always able to resist that type of criticism. While it was possible to hear that some women would like to see the UNWLA encourage projects or activities that would help their members get through a life crisis, be it a divorce or personal loss, the general opinion appeared to be that it was outside of the scope of the organization's work as it was outside of the question of the "Ukrainian cultural heritage" and charity work for Ukraine and thus the solutions should be worked out at the level of branches on a case by case basis. This is not to say that the pre-schools organized by branches, for example, were not providing solutions on a personal level for working mothers with young children, but even at the times and places where women could rely on the pre-school services several days a week instead of just on Saturdays or Sundays, the official reason for their existence was formulated as culture-retention among the young generation rather than day-care that their mothers needed.

A lot of women understood the UNWLA's work the same way taking their personal needs and feminist ideas to other American organizations they could belong to or relying on their Ukrainian American networks rather than organizations for help and advice. It is probably their members' creativity that the UNWLA managed to support in the most consistent way. Events that branches organized involved scenarios and prompts to be prepared and women often chose to perform something for the public. In the 1960s, the UNWLA had a competition for the best short story or dramatic work award and since 2009 the cover of *Our Life* features a painting or other work of art of a Ukrainian American female artist, although the net is cast outside of the UNWLA as well.

It was the possibility to enjoy the time spent together while developing a program for some event or preparing meals that counted. As the head of a branch that united young American-born women shared, the main factor that helped her branch to formally organize and commit to the UNWLA's work was the fact that they turned their monthly meetings into a "Friday night" get-together. They are more likely to get into someone's house than to actually go out but they bring their husbands along and while the latter are having their beer or watch sports on TV, the women discuss their UNWLA business in the kitchen over coffees or margaritas.

Conclusion

On my way home from the Korean spa, I found myself waiting for the train with Olena, one of the members of Branch 125, who all of a sudden said she should not have gone to the spa with the rest of us. She enjoyed it, she explained when I asked, it was a good time and she felt very relaxed – too relaxed to think about all the cooking she still needed to do that night for the family dinner, however. And then there were lunches to pack for her two sons and her husband for Monday. "I have three men to feed, the boys are in high school, they are growing and eat a lot," said Olena. It reminded me that another Branch member had to miss this get-together because on Sundays the kindergarten was closed and she had no one who would stay with her little daughter for the day, her husband being an unlikely volunteer.

It brought back the question of the complicated identity of the UNWLA which positions itself as an heiress of the women's movement that developed in Ukraine between the two World Wars. Like that movement, the UNWLA works to create opportunities and spaces for women's self-realization and personal growth, yet it has always stopped short of discussing the rights of individual women in the diaspora unless that could be related to the needs of the state, nation and community. This framing allows UNWLA members to justify

the attendance of meetings and events where they spend time doing something they deem important while maintaining their female friendships, but it also creates a triple burden on their time, adding the charity work for the extended community of Ukrainians to their responsibility. It does not free them from the daily work of their family life; yet creates a space for escape from the daily routine, a place for exchange of ideas, emotions and skills. For some of them it has been a truly empowering experience, for instance, one post-WWII immigrant told me:

You know, I had a difficult life. My husband was not a very good person and I worked in a low-prestige job. The UNWLA gave me second life. First, somehow I was elected a committee chair in my branch, then – a committee chair in the main UNWLA office. I was entrusted with a responsibility and I learned how to do my tasks, I learned how to make reports, I was in contact with women – professional women – who trusted me to do my work. Here I felt I could do something and be good at it.

Some feel that it is not enough to have women's empowerment as a by-product of the organization's work and want to see more attention to the needs of women on the official agenda. But even then, it is the needs of women in Ukraine that would be named as examples. In the following chapter I examine how the assessment of the needs of Ukraine and its women has changed over the past twenty years. With more people agreeing that the charity work of the UNWLA may have to take a backstage soon, the organization faces yet another challenge of having to seek new projects that would allow it to continue their diasporic work.

Chapter Six. Make it or Break it: Women's Empowerment and the Diaspora's Relationship with the State of Ukraine

Introduction

On September 3, 2012, the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, Ukraine, held an inaugural opening of their new Lectureship Program in Women Studies. The program includes a permanent position of a coordinator, a three-credit course in Women Studies offered each semester, a monthly seminar or colloquium for students and faculty given by invited speakers from within the Ukrainian academic circles, annual guest-lecture series by a professor from a European or American university, and a special Women Studies library collection at the UCU. It became possible to put the lectureship program to life through a \$100,000 endowment provided by the Ukrainian National Women's League of America.

Amidst the more humanitarian projects that the UNWLA carried out in Ukraine since 1991 – offering aid for geriatric homes and orphanages, purchasing equipment for a children's burn unit, awarding stipends for elementary to high school children and college students from economically disadvantaged families, giving small allowances for senior women in need – this endowment fund stood out as a more direct involvement with social transformation in the country. In its aim and intended impact, as discussed within the organization, it fell between the political protests against the actions of the Ukrainian government expressed in open letters and rallies in front of the Ukrainian embassies, and the humanitarian aid to the least protected categories of the population of Ukraine. In other words, between the attempts to call on the state of Ukraine to do its work of efficient governing that would be oriented toward people's and nation's needs and the projects aiming at reducing the negative impact of the post-Soviet economy, the decision to establish an innovative lectureship program is a qualitatively different way of engaging with the transformation in Ukraine to enable change.

Yet, this endowment fund was not an entirely new or unexpected type of a project for the UNWLA, who relied on the previously developed approaches, methods, and discourses, defining the overall aim of the initiative in terms of its benefits for the Ukrainian nation-building. It went in line with the vision of the current UNWLA President to look for initiatives that could have a broad and lasting effect, enabling change rather than feeding individual people, who are too many to be helped in any case, as she noted on many occasions when the outlooks for the future of the organization was discussed. It also correlated with the present discussions within the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations about the need to promote a more active women's participation in the public life in Ukraine.⁶⁶ At the same time, this project would have been impossible without the interest of the university in having a Women Studies program on their curriculum; it is also likely that it would have found less support in Ukraine and in the diaspora would the overt sexism not have entered the public statements of Ukraine's highest officials since 2010, meeting criticism of women's rights activists within the country.

This chapter will examine the increasing interest of the UNWLA in the questions of women's empowerment and discrimination against women in Ukraine, the interest that became more prominent as the dissatisfaction of the diaspora with the political elites that came to power in Ukraine in 2010 was growing. I will argue that the UNWLA's decision to invest into the change of the gender regime has been influenced not only by their

⁶⁶ This discussion can be exemplified by the World Forum of Ukrainian Women's Organizations that was organized in August 2011 by the International Institute for Education, Culture and Diaspora Relations at the Lviv Polytechnic University (Ukraine). Initiated by the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO), the Forum brought together representatives of Ukrainian women's organizations from 18 countries and focused on various topics dealing with women – from impoverishment of women in rural Ukraine to the role of women in the nation-building. Several speakers, particularly from the WFUWO, brought up the question of the limited participation of women in Ukraine in public life and discussed the need of consolidation of the women's organizations in Ukraine and worldwide in order to protect the rights and freedoms of Ukrainian women (see Humnytska 2011). In one of our informal discussions, Maria Szkambara, President of the WFUWO, said that the lack of women in public and political life in Ukraine was the most unfortunate tendency in Ukraine, especially if one takes into account that the numbers of successful professional women and women-entrepreneurs were high. In her opinion, women were not willing to engage in public work because they saw the return of such work to be minimal and often did not know how they could make any difference.

participation in the international women's organizations, discussed in the previous chapter, but also by the diaspora's search for efficient ways to challenge the Ukrainian government and to contribute to the state-building in Ukraine. Having set its goal at promoting Ukrainian national interests in the West and supporting the country in its state-building effort, the Ukrainian diaspora have had an uneasy relationship with the elected state representatives in Ukraine, maneuvering between cooperation with and dissociation from them. The partnerships that the UNWLA has developed in Ukraine and the local actors whom they chose to rely on in advancing their projects reflect the persistent dichotomy of the state and nation or government and people in the diaspora's vision of Ukraine, complicating the accepted usage of the notion of "homeland" as a single and homogenous unit in the analysis of the diasporas relationship to their countries of origin.

Funding the women studies lectureship became a new way for the UNWLA to articulate its aspired vision of Ukraine's post-Soviet development and to state its intention to remain engaged with the processes in their country of origin. The chapter will start with an overview of the often strained relationship between the diaspora and the Ukrainian state officials in the last two decades. It will be followed by a more specific analysis of the cooperation between the UNWLA and the Ukrainian diplomats in their shared work of representing Ukraine in the international arena. Finally, I will examine the shift from humanitarian work to educational project and from defining Ukraine as in need of economic support to seeking ways of contributing to the development of Ukraine's civil society.

6.1 Developing Cooperation with the State of Ukraine in the International arena

6.1.1 Diaspora and democratization

In her attempt to theorize the involvement of diaspora with democratization, Koinova (2009; 2010) brings up Ukrainian American community as an example of rare diasporic engagement

not only with democratic discourses and minimal procedures, but also with liberal democratic values in their cooperation with homeland. Comparing several diasporas of the post-communist world (namely Serbian, Albanian, Ukrainian and Armenian), Koinova concludes that all of them actively use the discourse of democratization to frame their homeland's sovereignty as correlating with universal democratic principles. They also support minimal democratic procedures, for instance, fair elections and rotation of power in their country of origin. This is done in order to achieve certain particularistic nationalist goals, like filtering the pressures of the international community on their homeland and engaging support of Western governments in the country's state-building and development. Liberal democratic values, which would include freedom of speech and assembly, ethnic minority rights, or gender equality are much rarer on diasporic agendas, concludes Koinova, appearing there only once the homeland does not face serious challenges to its internal and external sovereignty (2009, 53–59).

Instead of looking at the instrumental uses of the universal liberal creed by diasporas exclusively as the ways of expressing loyalty and receiving recognition and support for their cause from their host-country, I will argue that the UNWLA's recent involvement with the discourses of democratization, universal freedoms, and gender equality was directed at generating relations with the state and non-state actors in Ukraine. After 1991, the government of Ukraine built a very limited relationship with Ukraine's Western diaspora, opening some space for partnership on the international level through cooperation with embassies, consulates, and Ukraine's diplomatic missions in the diaspora's countries of residence, but showing little interest in engaging the overseas Ukrainians into the nation and state building in Ukraine. The unusually low, compared to other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, involvement of the representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora into the political world in Ukraine after independence has been already mentioned in literature (see

Andriychuk 2005; Satzewich 2002), being most convincingly explained by the peculiarities of the political processes in Ukraine itself. Unlike the Baltic states, Ukraine did not see the rise of new national democratic elites to power in the early 1990s, observing rather a conversion of the old communist party nomenclature, who embraced (quasi-)socio-democratic values and continued to lead the country through the transition and beyond (see Dawisha and Parrott 1997; Harasymiw 2002; Wilson 1997). This leadership did not share strong nationalist sentiments with the Ukrainian diaspora and preferred a less radical break with the Soviet legacies and the political influence of Russia. It could dismiss the diaspora's vision of Ukraine's national revival – which the latter saw to be key to the state-building – on the grounds that the diaspora represented only one part of Ukraine, former East Galicia, while the country needed a more moderate and compromised approach to the national idea.

While the observation that Ukraine did not see a foreign-born or Western-educated president or other high official in an elected office fully reflects the reality,⁶⁷ and even the appointment of the country's ambassadors from the ranks of non-Soviet-born Ukrainians has not become an accepted practice, the Ukrainian diaspora tried to remain involved with the socio-political developments in Ukraine through other channels. Ukrainians in America established several funds and organizations that promoted relations between Ukraine and the United States, facilitated humanitarian aid for Ukraine or helped maintain connections between the Ukrainians abroad and in Ukraine. A number of the foreign-born Ukrainians returned to the country of their parents' origin seeking business opportunities, though few

⁶⁷ To compare, all three Baltic countries in their post-1990 history elected presidents who were born or raised in North America in families of the post-WWII political refugees: Valdas Adamkus in Lithuania (1998-2003, 2004-2009, born in Lithuania, raised and educated in the USA), Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga in Latvia (1999-2007, born in Latvia, raised and educated in Canada), and Toomas Hendrik Ilves in Estonia (2006-, born in Sweden, raised and educated in the USA). Ukraine has had only one diaspora returnee appointed to a government position – Roman Zvarych, Minister of Justice (Feb-Oct 2005; Aug-Oct 2006). One of the First Ladies of Ukraine Kateryna Yushchenko was herself an American-born Ukrainian, but while her role and influence on the Ukrainian politics should not be dismissed, the overall low visibility of First Ladies in Ukraine do not allow comparing her role to that of the politicians in elected and appointed offices. The discourses around her Western loyalties during Viktor Yushchenko's presidential campaign reflected the existing perception of the Ukraine's Western diaspora as being not entirely Ukrainian in terms of their belonging to the Ukrainian nation, even if their ethnic roots were never questioned.

eventually succeeded. Until 2010, the World Congress of Ukrainians held its annual Convention in Ukraine, communicating their view on the social and political development of the country through official resolutions addressed to the president and the government of Ukraine.⁶⁸

Using the humanitarian and charity work (along with cultural exchange) as an outlet for their involvement with Ukraine in the last twenty years, the diaspora was rarely willing or able to stay away from politics, assigning particular meaning to charity work and looking for other ways of contributing to the state-building in Ukraine. I was at first surprised to hear from some UNWLA members that they personally sent more donations to different charities in Ukraine in a month than their UNWLA branch did in a year. Later I was made aware that the individual financial or in-kind assistance to one's friends or relatives had always had a different meaning than any collective aid from Ukrainian Americans and could get across the Iron Curtain even during the Soviet times when any financial aid from a group or organization was completely unthinkable. The UNWLA was reminded about that distinction as recently as in the early 2010 when a director of a geriatric home in Ukraine that was about to start receiving humanitarian aid from the UNWLA withdrew from the cooperation. In his explanation he mentioned that, in fact, the institution received adequate funding from the state and did not need any additional aid from the diaspora women's organization. Since this statement came at the final stage of the planning of this cooperation and right after the change of the political vector of the Ukrainian government toward a closer relation with Russia combined with the stalled European integration, the UNWLA interpreted it to be an example of having their collective action assessed through the prism of political ideology. Ironically enough, this particular initiative – “Assistance and Care for the Elderly” – that was supposed

⁶⁸ In 2010, for the first time since independence, the WCU annual meeting was convened outside of Ukraine, in Poland. With this move the biggest diaspora umbrella organization expressed their extreme disapproval of the newly elected president Viktor Yanukovich and his policies of forging closer connections with Russia and establishing a more authoritarian mode of governance in Ukraine.

to match ten geriatric homes from across Ukraine with ten UNWLA Regional Councils for continuous humanitarian aid project – was designed to enhance a sense of shared purpose within the UNWLA through coordinated work on the regional and national levels. Instead it enhanced the understanding of the political repercussions of the diaspora's activities.

The actual impact of the organizations of Ukrainian Americans on the U.S.-Ukraine relations or on the country's standing in the international arena has been considerably outweighed by that of the official diplomacy or business networks.⁶⁹ However, the potential political influence that the diaspora could have in the countries of its settlement has often been understood by the Ukrainian government who never wanted to alienate the diaspora entirely but lacked tools for keeping their support on every issue. Unlike opposition governments in exile, for example, diasporic organizations often have the benefit of Western citizenship along with the legitimacy to act on behalf of the Ukrainian people that the group identity claims give them. In the last two decades, the Ukrainian diaspora had experience of lobbying (and helping the Ukrainian government to lobby) the U.S. Congress for lifting the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which had introduced trade sanctions against the USSR in 1974 in response to violation of human rights and freedom of movement in the Soviet Union and was not removed until 2005.⁷⁰ They have also been putting an effort into lobbying the U.S. Congress for passing new sanctions – this time against particular Ukrainian state officials and their family members, who have been responsible for political persecution of opposition

⁶⁹ In their article "A Guide to Who's Who in D.C.'s Ukraine-related Activities" from August 2005, Taras Kuzio and Orest Deychakiwsky list the governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as Washington-based experts who shape the Ukraine-U.S. relations, mentioning that apart from the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora have failed to make themselves relevant in the political realm. They insist, however, that Ukrainians in America should strive to change this situation and to engage in this process more actively. See Taras Kuzio and Orest Deychakiwsky, 2005, "A guide to who's who in D.C.'s Ukraine-related activities." *The Ukrainian Weekly*, <http://eng.maidanua.org/node/380/print> (Accessed August 14, 2012).

⁷⁰ The Jackson-Vanik's Amendment remains in place for other post-Soviet countries to date, except for Russia and Moldova, whose case successfully stood the U.S. Senate vote on December 06, 2012, yet coming seven years after the sanctions were lifted against Ukraine.

leaders in Ukraine. The equivalent of the Magnitsky Act⁷¹ for Ukraine would result in restrictions on travels to the United States and other countries that would support it and in a limited access to bank assets for particular Ukrainian officials. In other words, the Ukrainian diaspora have shown the ability to work both with and against the Ukrainian government, while making the case that it is done in the interest of the Ukrainian people and the cause of the state-building, which is their primary concern.

It was in the name of the Ukrainian cause that the diaspora cooperated with the representatives of the Ukrainian government in the international arena, while being largely frustrated with all Ukrainian leadership so far, except for the short period of approval and new expectations they put on President Yushchenko (2005-2010). Only after the election of the fourth president of the post-Soviet Ukraine, or rather after the ensuing pressure on the opposition in the country, which culminated with the arrest and a prison sentence for former prime-minister Yulia Tymoshenko and several officials of her government, did the diaspora take the risk of supporting the idea of sanctions against the Ukrainian officials. The most negative response of the Ukrainians abroad was triggered by the change of the international vector of Ukraine's political orientation towards Russia, the persecution of the opposition leaders being just one of the signs of the country's withdrawal from democratic transformations. Other examples included the rebound pressure on mass media, multiple court decisions to ban public demonstrations announced by the opposition, prolongation of the stay of the Russian navy base in Crimea by 25 years, extension of the use of the Russian language in the public communication and education. In their internal communication, leaders of the diaspora's umbrella organizations stressed the task to spread the message that Western governments should take action against the state officials of Ukraine, not its people.

⁷¹ Magnitsky Act is a bill that was passed by the U.S. Congress in December 2012. It is directed against the Russian officials who are believed to have been involved in the persecution and death of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who had been arrested and died in prison after he pointed at local tax officials that were responsible for a massive financial fraud. The officials included onto the Magnitsky list are banned from entering the United States and cannot keep assets in the country.

At the same time, the open lobbying of sanctions against the Ukrainian officials showed the diaspora had a particular vision of what constitutes a *threat* to Ukraine's sovereignty, the oppression of the home-based opposition being a part of it.

For the UNWLA as a non-partisan organization the main task before and after 2010 has been to remain involved with their homeland without providing support to any particular political power. Since charity projects was not the only type of work through which the UNWLA would want to make a difference, engaging with civil society to promote democratic values was one of the options; offering support to Ukrainian diplomatic missions abroad, who represented *Ukraine* rather than a particular party, was another. The following sections will discuss the use of gender equality discourse to develop these types of partnerships and promote change. Understanding their distance from the contemporary political life in Ukraine, the women I came in touch with took care to criticize issues and patterns rather than personalities in the Ukrainian politics – and until recently, they tried to make sure their criticism of the Ukrainian officials in the international forums did not work to discredit the state by proxy.⁷² Gender equality, and the particular use of the discourse by the UNWLA, provided a good fit for these diaspora politics in and for Ukraine.

6.1.2 Support or challenge? Cooperation of the UNWLA and the Permanent Mission of Ukraine in the United Nations

On March 1, 2012, the UNWLA President was invited to moderate the panel “Rural Women: Realities and Initiatives toward Empowerment” that was on the program of NGOs events within the 56th Session of the U.N. Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The panel was planned by the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations and co-sponsored by the International Council of Women and the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to

⁷² As one of the UNWLA members explained to me in our email correspondence, “I think there was a lack of initiative to confront Ukraine's early state officials during the Kravchuk years [1991-94], then this wore off a bit with the frustration with Kuchma [1994-2005], then less eagerness to criticize Yushchenko [2005-2010] of course, and now the stops are off.”

the United Nations. Cooperating with the Permanent Mission, the WFUWO put together a panel consisting of presenters from Ukraine and the United States, all of whom were of the Ukrainian origin, even if the topics of their papers covered a broader geography, including rural East Africa.⁷³

After the panel, about 30 women – members of the UNWLA and other Ukrainian women’s organizations affiliated with the WFUWO who came to participate in the CSW, representatives of the official delegation of Ukraine to the CSW Convention, and invited guests, including myself – gathered at the offices of Ukraine’s Permanent Mission to the U.N. to meet and continue the discussion about the status of women in Ukraine with Olena Suslova, Ukraine’s nominee to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It was the first time that Ukraine had ever nominated a candidate to this 23-member U.N. committee that monitors the implementation of the CEDAW Convention (1979). While the nomination was not successful at this time, during Ms. Suslova’s visit to New York before the election of the CEDAW committee members, the Permanent Mission of Ukraine invited the UNWLA to organize this informal meeting with the candidate from Ukraine on the Mission’s premises. Having been an active member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union in the late 1980s and a prominent personality of the Ukrainian women’s movement after 1991, Ms. Suslova was well-known in the diaspora circles, maintaining friendship and/or professional relationship with leaders of Ukrainian women’s organizations abroad. The Permanent Mission of Ukraine, however, wanted to have a formal introduction of Ukraine’s CEDAW candidate to the representatives of those women’s organizations of the

⁷³ The panelists were: Olena Suslova (Gender Activity Coordinator for the Parliamentary Development Program of Ukraine, Founder and Chair of the Women’s Information Consultative Center, Ukraine), Irina Klyuchkovska (Director of the International Institute of Education, Culture and Communications, Lviv Polytechnic University, Ukraine) whose paper “The Struggle of Rural Women Against Poverty in Contemporary Ukraine” was presented in absentee by Dr. Martha Kichorowska Kebalo; and Dr. Kathryn Vasilaky (Vice President of Research and Strategy, TroopSwap, Washington, D.C.), who presented her research “Developing Female Entrepreneurs in East Africa: An overview of female skills and competitiveness and the social norms that shape them.”

Ukrainian diaspora that had been most active in developing and maintaining their presence in the U.N.

Ms. Suslova credited the UNWLA with grooming her for the CEDAW opportunity, acknowledging the circumstances of her introduction to the UNWLA through *Our Life* and later through her engagement with the *Soyuz Ukrainok* with whom the UNWLA renewed close connections after the organization was reestablished in 1991. The founder and Chair of the Women's Information Consultative Center and the Gender Activity Coordinator for the Parliamentary Development Program of Ukraine, Ms. Suslova said her first steps in this work started with a collection of issues of *Our Life* that came to her possession in the early 1990s. They felt particularly precious because they were so difficult to come by in Ukraine and could probably get its owner in trouble at some periods of the Soviet rule.

She noted that her activism in the Ukrainian Helsinki Union helped her understand the status of women in society better, which she compared to the Ukraine's right to sovereignty that was formally declared and protected by the Soviet Constitution, but legal mechanisms to allow its realization in practice were missing. UNWLA Honorary President Anna Krawczuk, who was present at the meeting, shared her recollections of her first trip to Ukraine in 1993 to attend a meeting of the recently revived *Soyuz Ukrainok* where she met Olena Suslova and some other women who today work in the government and NGOs standing for women's rights and gender equality. She remembered the anxiety that she felt during the flight, trying to decide what to say in her speech and wondering how their cooperation with Ukrainian women's organizations would develop in the future. It was truly encouraging to see where they all were now, she reckoned, concluding that the Ukrainian American women were proud to have been there when it all started, offering their support along the way. That this had been a fruitful and useful cooperation – something the diaspora have not been able to take for granted in their involvement with Ukraine and Ukrainian partners – was confirmed by the

panel on rural women, agreed the women around the table, expressing hope that this work would continue.

The Ukrainian American women were somewhat surprised that the current Ukrainian government, having a dismal record of gender-conscious approaches to policy-making, used the opportunity to promote its candidate to the U.N. body dealing with women's rights, although it was generally understood that representatives in the key international organizations bring prestige to the country and signal its democratic orientation or aspirations. In promoting their candidate, the Permanent Mission of Ukraine sought any support they could secure for the elections and the future work of the expert. The Ukrainian-American women could not help with lobbying the U.S. representatives to the CEDAW committee for the reason that the United States had not ratified the CEDAW Convention and as a result did not have a voting member on the committee. However, the diaspora offered assistance with organizing a reception at the Mission of Ukraine for official presentation of Ukraine's nominee to the representatives of the Missions of other countries if that reception was to take place.

Sharing the turf of the international representation of Ukraine, the diaspora and the Permanent Mission, as well as the embassy of Ukraine in Washington, DC, and the consulate in New York regularly sought each other's assistance when a question needed a joint effort. For example, the diaspora and the UNWLA in particular, relied on the embassy's legal support when a humanitarian aid was prepared for shipment to Ukraine or when a transportation of children from Ukraine to the United States for urgent medical treatment was organized. The diaspora's experience and the network they cultivated for lobbying Ukraine's interests in the U.S. Congress and Senate did not allow the Embassy of Ukraine to ignore diasporic social capital. The Ukrainian Museum and the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York were also recognized for valuable assets that helped to maintain visibility of the

name of Ukraine in the city, and official delegations from Ukraine would often be invited to receptions or meetings organized by the diaspora there. The diaspora's network of Ukrainian businesses and cultural institutions became of good use for the Embassy and the U.N. Mission when they had to organize official celebrations of Ukrainian state holidays and open house days.

On concluding his term as Ambassador of Ukraine in 2005, Mykhailo Reznik wrote an official address to the Ukrainian Americans that he submitted to *Svoboda* newspaper. Opening it with the phrase "Dear Friends!", the ambassador expressed gratitude for the support and understanding the diaspora offered in helping to develop a dialogue and cooperation between the two nations. This cooperation needs to develop further for the benefit of both countries, he concludes, closing the letter with the words "[a] lot here depends on us," (*Bahato tut zalezhyt' vid vas z namy*) (Reznik 2005, 5), where the Ukrainian form chosen for "us" unmistakably stands for "the Ukrainian Americans and the embassy." For their contribution to developing bilateral relationships between Ukraine and the United States, most of the leaders of the diaspora organizations, including two of the UNWLA Presidents, have received recognition from the Ukrainian government in the form of letters of gratitude and state decorations. The diaspora also acknowledges the work of Ukraine's diplomatic missions, inviting their representatives to all community events and important anniversary celebrations of particular organizations. This does not mean that these same members of the diaspora or recent immigrants (these latter having a considerably weaker and more formal access to the official diplomatic missions of Ukraine in the United States) hesitate to hold a rally in front of the Embassy and Mission when they want to express disagreement with certain moves of the government of Ukraine back in their country of origin, but such protests never precipitated a complete break of cooperation with the Mission in the projects that had Ukraine's interests on the international level in mind.

With respect to the prospect of having a representative of Ukraine among the CEDAW experts, the women of the diaspora were more than ready to work on the same team with the Mission of Ukraine. Potentially, a successful nomination could expand their network in the U.N., but they did not see themselves as a part of the group that would benefit from this success, the main focus being on the advantages this would bring to Ukraine in terms of prestige and the democratic change it could promote in the future. Experience of such international work would enhance Ms. Suslova's authority and expertise that she could apply in promoting women's equality and related democratic values in Ukraine afterwards. In other words, the support of the Ukrainian government's action and its candidate on the international level did not exclude an intent of challenging some of the government's policies and values on a domestic level. Even this meeting under the roof of the Permanent Mission heard some critical discussion about the reversal of democratic transformations in Ukraine, exemplified by the exclusion of women from the Cabinet of Ministers and by open discriminative remarks of the highest state officials towards women and their "place in the kitchen," to rephrase Ukraine's Prime Minister Mykola Azarov.⁷⁴

In their work with the Permanent Mission of Ukraine, the UNWLA rarely raised specific aspects of women's rights before 2012. It has been more common to see them join forces to organize a commemorative event on occasion of a Chernobyl anniversary or that of the man-made famine Holodomor of 1932-33 – both having high symbolic importance for the

⁷⁴ Some of the examples of such statements, which were followed by open letters and protests from gender equality activists and academics but bore no consequences for the authors of the sexist remarks, include the invitation of President Viktor Yanukovich to the business leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2011 to come to Ukraine and see its potential, which in his words is represented by the beautiful women whose outfits tend to become lighter and more revealing as the summer approaches, "In order to switch on Ukraine, it's enough to see it with one's own eyes, when the chestnut trees start to blossom, when it gets warmer and women in the cities of Ukraine start undressing. To see such beauty is marvelous!" A year earlier, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov declared that "conducting reforms is not women's business" when answering a question about the male-only composition of his Cabinet.

For a more exhaustive list of similar statements from Ukrainian officials see Luke Harding, "Ukrainian women berate 'Neanderthal' PM for sexist remarks," *The Guardian*, March 24, 2010, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/24/ukraine-mykola-azarov-women>; Tamara Martsenyuk "Ukraine's Other Half," March 27, 2012 <http://postsovietpost.stanford.edu/analysis/>.

Ukrainian diaspora and being routinely included on the calendars of events of Ukraine's foreign missions. As could be seen in the previous chapters, during the Soviet times even the occasions seemingly dedicated to women's rights, like the International Women's Year and the parallel Year of the Ukrainian Woman in 1975, were not exclusively about women, being used to bring attention to violations of human rights under communism as well as to the aspirations for independence of the Ukrainian people. When the UNWLA and its representatives in the international forums were highlighting the impact of particular events and policies on women and children, their primary attention was focused on the state-woman/state-citizen/state-family relation, making any discussion of women's issues into an implicit or explicit criticism of the Soviet government.

Helping Ukrainian people in their state-building after 1991 implied bringing attention to the social and humanitarian issues that the country could not cope with on its own without challenging the authority of the state. Ukrainian women's organizations abroad have been internally concerned about the impoverishment of a large part of Ukraine's population, increasing income gap between the top rich and the poor, rampant corruption, growing female emigration from Ukraine and the related problems with trafficking in women and social orphans, however, for some time they have been careful about taking those questions outside of the Ukrainian community, raising them almost exclusively in the direct communication with the representatives of the Ukrainian state or at the meetings of Ukrainian women's organizations in Ukraine and abroad. Ukrainian American women, or at least the leadership of women's organizations, did not fail to see the political implications of raising the question of the status of women, trying to do it on the invitation of the representatives of Ukraine or in the appropriate context like international women's forums.

6.2 State-building from below?

6.2.1 Money matters: helping the people, not the state

With its long record of political activism, the UNWLA is known as a charity organization. It has always responded promptly to humanitarian crises in Ukraine and runs several permanent funds for helping children and elderly people in need. Established as an “ideological organization,” that is an organization that did not have or intend to have assets or funds for charity work, already in 1927 the UNWLA undertook its first aid project collecting money and clothes for victims of a large flooding in Galicia. The Social Welfare Committee that the organization established back then exists to date. In 1930, the UNWLA and its Medical Aid Fund worked to help victims of “pacification”⁷⁵ conducted by the Polish government in villages of Galicia. The UNWLA collected money to buy medicine and necessary medical supplies for the victims because the Polish government refused to provide treatment for the people who were injured during the campaign. In 1933 it was the turn of the Soviet part of Ukraine to be receiving some aid when Ukrainians abroad found out about severe famine on its territory, however, sending humanitarian aid in that case proved difficult because the Soviet government denied the fact of mass starvation and refused to accept any help from the West.⁷⁶ Not before 1990 did it become possible for the UNWLA and other organizations of the diaspora to send any type of humanitarian assistance to Soviet Ukraine. Only individual

⁷⁵ “Pacification” of the Ukrainian population of Galicia was a crackdown of the Polish government on Ukrainian villages in response to the acts of sabotage and attacks on Polish estates in the province. In September 1930, the Polish police and armed forces entered into about 800 villages, arresting young men, demolishing libraries and community centers, appropriating harvest and property (Subtelny 1994, 430). A number of people were injured during the campaign and it is for their treatment that the UNWLA was collecting money.

⁷⁶ Asking for donations during the years of the American Great Depression was a challenging task in itself; Ukrainian newspapers in the United States from those days attest that several aid projects were under way within the Ukrainian American community, collecting old clothes, canned food, and money for wood and gasoline for the families who lost employment and had little means to last on through the winters. The UNWLA placed tin boxes in churches and organized a raffle with prizes donated by members of the Ukrainian community to collect money for the famine victims. The yields of the campaign were quite meagre, and only a fraction of that money was sent to Ukraine before the packages stopped reaching the destination and the intermediary Soviet agency refused to return the money. By the spring of 1936, it became clear that the remaining funds would be more and more difficult to get to the Soviet Ukraine, thus when the major flooding occurred in the Northeast, Middle Atlantic, and Ohio Valley, damaging 10,000 buildings in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, alone, the UNWLA redirected 200 dollars from the fund for the victims of that flooding.

packages and small money transfers sent to family members or to personal addresses were allowed and the diaspora used that channel sometimes, however, most of the UNWLA charity work was directed to other Ukrainian diasporic communities in the world: the resettlement of the post-WWII refugees and the Scholarship Fund that were discussed earlier became their largest projects during the years of the diaspora's stateless status. By 1950 the UNWLA's charity and community-related sponsorship was said to have totaled to \$250,000, and by the time of its 50th anniversary it reached one million dollars (UNWLA 1974, 3), which speaks for the organization's ability to hold successful donation drives in their Ukrainian American communities and the latter's willingness to respond to the UNWLA's projects.⁷⁷

After Ukraine gained independence, the UNWLA redirected most of its funds to their country of origin. A particular care was taken to ensure that the offered financial help is distributed across all regions of the country instead of concentrating in the western part of Ukraine where the majority of the UNWLA members have their roots. UNWLA Regional Councils and branches were assigned particular regions they were to cover and this system is still in place today. While eager to help, the UNWLA approached any and every spending on their projects in Ukraine with caution – the main concern being that the money or in-kind assistance was not used to benefit the state, state workers or anyone else apart from the intended group or person. And a couple of cases when the money sent for purchasing basic medical equipment, for example, could not be later traced only contributed to that worry. The prospect of feeding the chain of corruption in Ukraine was as unattractive as having the money appropriated by the Soviet state before.

More than corruption, some diaspora members were afraid that their projects could benefit people who just a few years or decades ago believed in the promise of the

⁷⁷ Some of the money was used for the needs of the organization itself, for instance, for purchasing their "home" in Philadelphia in 1953 and later in New York.

communism and contributed to the building of the Soviet machine. While maintaining that the people of Soviet Ukraine were ruled by the occupying power of Moscow, the Ukrainian diaspora shared an understanding that as time passed, more and more Ukrainians accepted the legitimacy of the communist party choosing to work with rather than against the central government. Since there was no lustration in Ukraine after independence, the old party cadres often remained in their seats on the local and state levels or gained them back in the succession government and administration having resigned from their Communist Party membership. Beyond public officers and politicians, people of any profession and background could have supported the socialist ideology – from teachers and doctors to factory workers and bus drivers – making the most suspicious among the diaspora distrust anyone born in the USSR. One of my interviewees mentioned that when she came to the United States in 1993, her own father, who stayed in Europe after the WWII while her mother and she remained in Ukraine, accused her of being a KGB agent and it took him some time to start to believe that despite the continuities and legacies of the Soviet regime in Ukraine, things changed considerably enough to allow “ordinary people” travel to the West.

The UNWLA had to find ways of overcoming those fears if it was to develop any charity projects in Ukraine at all. Choosing to focus on orphans, school children, and senior women – who became the main recipients of the UNWLA aid through the 1990s – the organization partly protected itself from the possibility that their work would benefit the former communist activists. If the children could not have been blamed for the situation the country found itself in, the women who were receiving the small UNWLA allowance belonged to the most impoverished and unprotected category of the population; often living in rural areas and lacking by now any family support that could attest to their belonging to a more affluent network of kin, they were the unlikely candidates to have been entrusted with much power by the Soviet state. The desire to help also proved stronger than the fear of

misappropriation of the humanitarian aid; as one UNWLA member explained, “When we send a package, we also understand that some part of it will be taken by the personnel, right? That’s how it is. But still some of it will go to those people [the seniors or orphans]. How much can be taken?” (Inna, 4th wave).

To identify people who needed help and to distribute the money, the UNWLA tried to exclude any state bodies and representatives from the process choosing to rely on their network of women’s organizations, in particular, on the *Soyuz Ukrainok*. As a non-profit organization that attested its allegiance to the national revival of Ukraine and had branches across the country, in cities and small towns, the *Soyuz Ukrainok* was among the best candidates for mediating and monitoring the UNWLA’s projects in Ukraine. The cooperation did not resemble the usual donor-NGO relationship because the UNWLA did not provide money for the project ideas developed by the *Soyuz Ukrainok*. The Ukrainian American women remained the primary and only project managers. They asked their Ukrainian contacts to help them get in touch with an orphanage or a geriatric home or to submit candidates for scholarships for children from families in dire economic need, but it was the UNWLA who decided where to channel their charity work in the first place, or so they tend to believe. In some cases it is difficult to judge who initiated a particular project because as one UNWLA member explained to me, she would call to the contact person in the *Soyuz Ukrainok* in the region where her branch was assigned to work and ask how they could be of help. Sometimes her branch would propose some form of assistance, but it was not always accepted as relevant or of use. Thus many of the projects were developed in cooperation, although the UNWLA indeed defined the type and scale of the work they were willing to consider.⁷⁸ This

⁷⁸ The *Soyuz Ukrainok* dedicates their effort to a number of different causes, depending on the needs of their particular region and the resources – human and otherwise – at their disposal. Lacking funding most of the time, they prefer to focus on “cultural” events, organizing or participating in festivals related to Ukrainian folk culture, for example. In the eastern and southern parts of the country, which have a sizable Russian-speaking population, branches of the *Soyuz Ukrainok* have organized Ukrainian literary readings in public libraries and Ukrainian language essay competitions among school children. In Western Ukraine, they have been trying to set

cooperation offered some benefits to the *Soyuz Ukrainok* in the form of authority and prestige in their local community, which was seen as important in particular in those regions of the country where the *Soyuz Ukrainok* had never had its branches before. The charity work they mediated for the local orphanages or economically disadvantaged families could be featured in local newspapers or appear on local TV.

Another network the UNWLA has been using were the personal connections and extended family members of the diaspora and the fourth-wave immigrants. A number of recent immigrants in the UNWLA said that their main motivation for joining the organization was the desire to help it find the right connections in Ukraine for its charity work. They felt they had the knowledge and understanding of the needs of people back in Ukraine which could facilitate the UNWLA's work there and make it more efficient. Some of them were the contact persons to keep connection with the *Soyuz Ukrainok* or the administration of orphanages or geriatric homes which received humanitarian aid from the UNWLA. The new immigrants I met tended to be as mistrustful of the Ukrainian state and public officials as the post-WWII generation, even if their mistrust had a less "ideological" coloring being based on experience with corruption and bribery in various spheres of public relations in their homeland.

Until now the question of transparency and accountability of the administration of funds (on the Ukrainian side) remains the key question to be answered before any Ukraine-bound UNWLA project is approved, somewhat indicating the never recovered trust in their country of origin and its people. When the UNWLA Executive Board members take a trip to Ukraine, even for personal reasons, they make sure to visit some of the institutions and organizations the UNWLA has been sponsoring to stay in touch and learn about the changing needs of the place and people and to have the first-hand confirmation of their aid's use.

up mobile "call centers" that would bring cheap internet call connection to the villages and allow children to communicate with their mothers who are working abroad.

Refusing to work via local councils and state authorities did not mean a complete unwillingness to cooperate with them. After all, the UNWLA was bringing the aid to the organizations and people whose wellbeing was supposed to be provided by the central or local state administration and kindling partnership was the only way to ensure legitimacy and sustainability of their projects. When bringing some relief funds, for example, to the areas affected by flooding (most recent being in 2008 in three western regions of Ukraine) or when visiting hospitals which were able to purchase new equipment with the UNWLA's help, representatives of the organization would often meet with the heads of the village or town council or city mayors. In one of the recent projects, where the UNWLA facilitated a development of a long-term cooperation between a pediatric burn unit at a regional hospital in Lviv and the International Shriners' Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, Ukrainian American women were pleasantly surprised by the fact that their contribution was met by the Lviv City Council and the burn unit received funding for renovation after the local authorities learned that the foreign organizations were investing into the medical personnel training and new medical equipment.

The UNWLA has had experience of having their efforts complemented by other organizations or institutions in the United States – for example, they secured a \$36,000 grant from the International Rotary Club for the same Burn Unit that matched the \$6,000 donation that the UNWLA made to the local Boston Rotary Club for this purpose – but these practices are still new for Ukraine. Yet, among the diaspora, there is a growing conviction that the Ukrainian state and private philanthropists should start taking over the responsibility for the least protected categories of the population as the country's economy has recovered, compared to the 1990s, and as the Ukrainian diaspora is getting older and less able to help. Announcing in 2012 about the dissolution of the Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund that had been established in 1990 in the United States and contributed \$

63 million worth of medical aid to sustain and develop neonatology, perinatology, infant cardiac surgery, and pediatric oncology in Ukraine, its country director explained, “a charity exists to aid, not sustain. ... It’s time for Ukraine to do it itself and there’s absolutely more than enough philanthropy (here) to take our place in Ukraine” (Rachkevych 2012). The Ukrainian Catholic University, which previously relied heavily on donations of the Ukrainian diaspora, has started to hold fundraising events in Ukraine in recent years, too, reporting very promising proceeds and talking about an emergence of the culture of philanthropy among the high-income Ukrainians.

Unlike some other charities, designed to address a specific emergency or welfare gap, the UNWLA has been basing its work around a broader purpose of helping Ukraine, whatever that would mean at a given time. The appeal of the elites from Galicia at the turn of the 20th century to the Ukrainian immigrants in North America about the need to help the less privileged and often impoverished compatriots in their homeland did not have to be reiterated later – the Ukrainian diaspora in the Western have considered itself having more opportunities and being better-off compared to an “average” Ukrainian. Recent immigrants, after settling in the United States, also do not deny they have resources to share with the less and least privileged Ukrainians back in the home country and many of UNWLA members joined the organization because it gave them an opportunity to help Ukraine beyond their families.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ In her book *Ukrainian Immigrants in New York*, Kateryna Lemekh (2010) points out that a number of the fourth-wave immigrants turn the fact of their ability to overcome the challenges of immigration and establish themselves in a new country into an object of personal pride, sometimes expressing pity or scorn toward the people they knew back in Ukraine, considering them weak and unable of action, and thus deserving their lot. I believe it is safe to assume that people with this attitude will not seek membership in a charity organization, which is why it should not be surprising I did not meet such examples among the UNWLA members. On the contrary, it reverberates with the multiple statements of my interviewees from among recent immigrants about the “uniqueness” of the women they met in their UNWLA branches compared to all other circles of Ukrainian friends that they had in New York. Those other friends would be happy to join a party or hang out with their fellow-Ukrainians in New York over the weekend, but would never consider donating for a charity project for Ukraine, finding various excuses.

When relevance or urgency of some work became questioned, instead of folding its presence in Ukraine, the UNWLA would start to look for new projects to develop. For example, once the schools started to receive state funding for school lunches, the UNWLA closed its “Milk and Roll” program that was providing meals for elementary school children in two regions of Ukraine. Instead, the organization decided to shift to helping geriatric homes. Children’s needs are addressed by a number of charities, the UNWLA resolved, while senior people seem to be receiving considerably less attention from the state and from international donors. But the understanding that the UNWLA can aid in emergency situation, rather than sustain large groups of the population in need of such support, encouraged the organization leaders to look for projects that would have a long-lasting and transformative impact, and education seemed the right place to start. The scholarship fund for school children, which was helping individual people to get education, was perceived as insufficient, being closer to sustenance than development, and the discussion within the Executive Board highlighted the need to move to the level of tertiary education.

Suggestion to endow a Chair of Gender and Women Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University became the opportunity the UNWLA was looking for. Only due to the lack of available funding, the Ukrainian American women chose to start with a Lectureship and a permanent coordinator’s position rather than endowing a full Chair of Gender and Women Studies at the university. It needs to be noted that the idea of this particular program came from the Ukrainian Catholic University, which had invited guest lecturers from other Lviv universities to read a course in Women Studies in several previous academic years and was planning to add it to their curriculum permanently. The positive response from the UNWLA reflected some of the development within the organization; but at the same time, this fact calls attention to the question of the relationship between a diaspora and its homeland, where homeland is composed of multiple actors, and where the diaspora’s work is enabled and

mediated by the local actors, being a response to the social development in the country of origin as much as it is an independent force with its own agenda.

6.2.2 Education for social change: the UNWLA Endowment Fund for Gender and Women Studies

It took slightly over a year between the first public discussion of the possibility to create the Women/Gender Studies Endowment Fund and the program opening at the Ukrainian Catholic University, which is particularly swift given that neither the UNWLA President nor the Vice-president for Culture, who actively supported the idea from the start, were certain they could get an approval for this undertaking from members of their organization. A few weeks, or maybe days, before the UNWLA Convention, which took place in May 2011, I was contacted by UNWLA vice-president Sophia Hewryk, who asked me whether I would be willing to give a short presentation to address the question of timeliness and importance of a Women or Gender Studies Program for Ukraine. She explained that the UNWLA Executive Board had decided to endow a Chair of Women/Gender Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University, however, it would be a costly effort, requiring good support from all branches if the fundraising for it was to be successful. At that stage the UNWLA leadership only intended to present the idea to the broader membership and ask for their approval to continue exploring the project's feasibility. I had planned to attend the UNWLA Convention anyway, but the invitation to speak in support of the Women/Gender Studies program made it into an even more anticipated event.

My presentation as well as any promotion of the project turned out to be non-essential, however, because the Convention delegates voted for a resolution that required (not simply allowed) the Executive Board to develop the project further with no reservations. The resolution caught the UNWLA leadership off guard because they expected to have a long and intense discussion. Instead, one of the delegates, who had not been involved into the

preliminary planning of the project before the convention, asked for the floor early in the debate wholeheartedly supporting the idea of Women/Gender Studies and putting forward a motion to vote for the full endorsement of the project. Almost instantly two other delegates supported the motion, which according to the UNWLA By-Laws was sufficient to move to the voting itself. The question was decided before the UNWLA Executive Board fully realized what had just happened and whether they should be happy about having the binding resolution on their hands or not.

The prompt and positive response from the UNWLA Convention to the idea of endowing Gender/Women Studies program at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv did not safeguard the project from criticism within the organization, it only showed that there was a certain number among the most active members of the organizations ready to accept and support such an idea. Once the news about the endowment reached all the branches, it found enough objection – some argued there could be a better use for the USD 100,000, others needed more reassurance that the money would not be appropriated by the Ukrainian state or the program would not turn to oppose the main values the UNWLA upheld. The Ukrainian diaspora had previous controversial experience with endowments for college programs and Chairs of Ukrainian Studies at American universities, when the content of the studies and the research later leaned towards Sovietology or East European Studies to the detriment of Ukrainian topics and exclusion of Ukrainian scholars. In the case of the Women/Gender Studies, the undesirable turn would probably involve an introduction of queer theory and sexuality studies at the expense of women's history and sociology of gender that appear to be the preferred fields of study by the UNWLA; however, such a turn would seem rather unlikely under the roof of the Ukrainian Catholic University, no matter its reputation of one of the most innovative universities in the country.

The worry about the use of the money from the fund was relatively easy to dispel, since the endowment was designed to function on its earned interest only, with the full sum of the initial investment remaining in Chicago under the oversight of the Ukrainian Catholic Education Foundation located there, which had been managing the diaspora's donations for the UCU for years. Opened in 2002 on the basis of the Lviv Theological Academy, the Ukrainian Catholic University positions itself as an outlier in the system of higher education in Ukraine and an uncompromising opposition to any legacies of the Soviet system or thinking in Ukraine. Apart from its clear orientation toward spiritual and religious values, the UCU sets out in its mission statement to bring the best world standards of research and education to Ukraine, being the only university in the country with a Western-educated rector – Borys Gudziak, who holds a PhD from Harvard. As a private university, it has certain freedom in curriculum development, compared to the universities whose work is more restricted by the state funding and program requirements. The UCU program includes theological and classical studies as well as humanities (world history, history of Ukraine, pedagogics, psychology, languages) and business management.

The opening paragraph of the UCU history page on their official website states that it is “the first Catholic university to open on the territory of the former Soviet Union” (UCU 2012), which is one of the many indications that it is the Soviet legacies that the university aims to oppose itself to. Being affiliated to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), which experienced persecutions and official ban during the communist years, the UCU cannot but promote a complete break with that page of Ukraine's history. Most of the leaders of the university and of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church were raised and educated in exile in Europe and North America, coming back to Ukraine only after 1989, which makes them into a unique group within the Ukrainian diaspora – the one that did return to settle in Ukraine once that opportunity presented itself. The transnational activities of this repatriated

church and its priesthood could make a subject of an interesting study in itself and would have to take into account the specific social space and the relationship to the state that a church holds in Eastern Europe. For the sake of my research it is enough to point out the existing dynamic and often personal connections between the representatives of the UGCC and the diaspora. Like the *Soyuz Ukrainok*, the Ukrainian Catholic University can be perceived by the Ukrainian American women as a group that is outside or on the margins of the official political system in the country as well as a group that has a historical connection to the UNWLA and carries a pro-democratic, yet traditional, vision of the future of Ukraine. All this made the joint projects possible for the UNWLA at the time when the mistrust and rejection of the official state representatives became highlighted in the diaspora's attitudes.

The transparency of the use of the funds was the easiest question to address, and as a pre-emptive measure to dispel the UNWLA's fear of having no control over the development of the program once it had been launched, the UCU offered to create an advisory committee that would include a scholar from Ukraine and three American professors of Ukrainian origin whose research interests lied within the broadly defined field of Women Studies and who were well-known in the diaspora circles, some of them being members of the UNWLA themselves. The committee would be able to suggest candidates for the guest lecturer position for the program, opening a channel of communication between the UNWLA and the UCU program coordinator. This would not endanger the independence of the curriculum development, still leaving an opportunity for the UNWLA to get involved in some nominal ways.

The most challenging for the UNWLA leadership was the task to make a compelling argument about the timeliness of this program for Ukraine and its transformative potential – an argument that would be accepted by the diverse membership of the organization; the formal resolution supported by the Convention delegates was not enough, since the

endowment had to be filled with a hundred thousand dollars – that was the real vote of the UNWLA members who had to use their branches’ funds and fundraising skills to make it a reality. The numerous appeals to the Ukrainian community and UNWLA members that appeared in the Ukrainian press during the fundraising campaign stressed the potential quality of the lectureship, insured by the “invited leading academics” from within Ukraine and the West, mentioned the important contribution of the Ukrainian woman to the past socio-historical development of the nation and the need to study and challenge the existing gender norms in Ukraine, which prevent young women from realizing their full potential. The aim of this initiative was described as “[h]elping to reposition the dynamics of the women’s role in future societal development” (Zajac 2012) and “empower[ing] the young Ukrainian woman [...] in her professional, personal and family environments” (UNWLA 2012). Because the UCU offers training for future teachers and social psychologists, it was believed the Women/Gender Lectureship would contribute to a larger social change, since schools are an important place of children’s gender socialization.

Promoting this project, the UNWLA directly and indirectly referred to the organization’s historic connection to the *Soyuz Ukrainok* whose work in the first half of the 20th century was aimed at involving women into public life which was believed to benefit the whole community. The UNWLA leaders also decided to resort to “expert opinion” about the relevance of Women/Gender Studies for today’s Ukraine. Half a year after my presentation at the UNWLA Convention, I was joined by three other scholars to discuss the existing gender expectations that work to the detriment of the family and society in Ukraine during the UNWLA annual National Board meeting in October 2012.⁸⁰ With the diverse background of the presenters, everyone chose their own examples of discrimination women faced in Ukraine

⁸⁰ The invited guests included Dr. Marian Rubchak, a professor at Valparaiso University, Indiana, Dr. Martha Kichorovska-Kebalo of the City University of New York (CUNY), Oksana Kis, Candidate of historical sciences, senior research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Lviv (who became the first coordinator of the Women Studies Program at the UCU), and myself.

– from abuse of their work in agribusiness to the non-abating commodification of women’s bodies promoted in mass media. The discussion with the attending UNWLA members after the short presentations focused almost exclusively on the issue of Ukraine being a destination-country for sex tourism and the related images of Ukrainian women that could be found in the West, however. Understanding the problem to be a consequence of the whole set of issues with the women’s status and opportunities as well as the country’s marginal status in its European neighborhood, the attending members of the UNWLA took turns to share their personal unpleasant experience of coming across the images or stories of Ukraine being a country of prostitutes, either during their trip to Ukraine, or while surfing the internet, or in their conversations with American friends or acquaintances.

This image on display, which influenced the reputation of the whole country, was more meaningful and convincing than other cases of discriminatory attitudes to women they knew existed in Ukraine, raising concern among the UNWLA members regardless of their generation or immigration wave. Among the American-born Ukrainian women and their mothers there has been little illusion about the actual status of women in Ukraine after the independence, which was caught in the Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak’s “[e]very American who works in Ukraine comes back to America a feminist”⁸¹ (in Stadnychenko 2000). The recent immigrants, on the contrary, most often refused to accept the arguments about the systematic discrimination against women in Ukraine, maintaining the view that women had equal access to education and paid work and that all underachievement in their careers, if any, depends on the “luck” of every woman with her personal life and support she manages to ensure from her family. “Who discriminates against women in Ukraine?” said one of the recent immigrants when trying to explain her objection against the endowment fund to me, insisting that the money could be of more help in the “Babusi Fund” that paid allowances to

⁸¹ The full quote reads “Every American who works in Ukraine comes back to America a feminist. Everyone sees what they [women’s groups] have to contend with, what they accomplish from nothing and how hard they work” (Bohachevsky-Chomiak in Stadnychenko 2000).

impoverished senior women in Ukrainian villages. She could not dismiss the issues of sex tourism and trafficking in women, however, since they were visible from North America and marked a new phenomenon, compared to the 1990s when the majority of whom we call fourth-wave immigrants left Ukraine. It was one of the instances that reminded the recent immigrants they could be out of touch with some of the developments in their country of origin and had to rely on facts that were presented to them by others rather than on personal convictions. In their interviews or personal conversations, some women would break the course of their discussion related to Ukraine to tell me that, after all, I should know better because they had left the country a decade or more ago and things could have changed by now.

This same realization of their distance from Ukraine and its everyday life encouraged the diaspora women to look for partners in their country of origin who would help them verify the need for a particular project or point them in a certain direction. The Lectureship in Gender and Women Studies became one of the examples of the convergence of ideas of the actors in the diaspora and in Ukraine. While it is still to be seen how this lectureship develops, the course descriptions and the list of guest lecturers and seminar leaders for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years suggest the program accepted the challenge of setting a good standard. The “gender” part of the course’s name had to be given up, however, on request of the university, which decided the word could trigger a controversial reaction. In the last decade “gender” and “gender equality” came to be used as synonyms to “sexual minority’s rights” in the public discourse in Ukraine. The appointed coordinator for this program, Oksana Kis, wrote a letter to the UCU administration expressing her disagreement with that decision and pointing out that the misuse of the term “gender equality” had been a conscious move by the opponents of women’s rights and gender equality reform in Ukraine, who had been trying to discredit the idea and the work that women’s rights activists were

doing. The Rector's office insisted on its decision, however. The UNWLA accepted this last minute change, even though "Gender Studies" had not seemed to raise any controversy on their behalf; but the Ukrainian American women decided to leave the further development of the program to the university and the involved scholars, like they were warned they would have to from the very beginning.

Conclusion

Studying the impact that monetary flows from diasporas may have on formation of national identity in their homelands, Shain and Sherman (2001) argue that in the early post-independence period, diasporas are most likely to direct their financial support to the state and political society – i.e. government (or government in exile) and other state institutions that embody the state sovereignty and are seen as representatives of its people or the oppositional powers competing for the control over the state apparatus. However, in cases when the diaspora wants to see changes in the national identity promoted by the state, its support may be redirected to the civil in search of the actors that would share values with the diaspora.

It is difficult to fit the UNWLA's humanitarian projects into this classification because philanthropic or charity work that aims to assist some of the most vulnerable categories of the population is not included into the analysis. The organization's unwillingness to rely on state actors for distribution of their aid suggests that from the very start the UNWLA had serious concerns about Ukraine's political system and people working in it. In recent years the UNWLA started to use international women's rights discourses for defining their role in Ukrainian nation-building and for expressing their dissatisfaction with the social, but more importantly political processes in Ukraine. These discourses gave the Ukrainian diaspora women more authority in their dialogue with the Ukrainian political elites than the shared ethnic background and concern for the nation's future did, revealing the

competitive nature of the relationship between the Ukrainian political elites and the diaspora. In that context even charity projects produced on occasion political meanings with diaspora trying to ensure that their work was not abused for the benefit of any political party or personal enrichment of people in power in Ukraine and the state representatives worrying that the aid from the overseas Ukrainians could undermine the government's authority, signaling its failure to provide decent standard of living for all.

International discourses on women's rights gradually became one of the tools that the UNWLA started to use for exerting pressure and developing cooperation with the state representatives of Ukraine in Ukraine's domestic and international politics. The UNWLA started to raise the topic of trafficking in women in international women conferences already in the late 1990s, gradually building up on the issues of the status of women in Ukraine through their CSW panels on women in science and rural women and moving to a non-conciliatory tone in naming the state's responsibility for the present situation. Being primarily a charity organization, the UNWLA transferred their disagreement with the political developments in Ukraine into their new project that supported an establishment of Women Studies at the UCU. Since the notion of gender equality and women's empowerment are closely associated for the UNWLA leadership with democratic values, endowing the Women Studies lectureship they believe in its far-reaching transformative potential.

Concluding Remarks

When I asked one of my interviewees about her vision for the UNWLA in ten years' time, she answered without much contemplation:

If Ukrainian state grows, if it becomes a mighty state, then the UNWLA as an organization will continue to exist. It is needed. But it is not going to be a charity organization that provides humanitarian aid for Ukraine. It should be an organization for Ukrainian women in America: so that they know what is going on in Ukraine, so that the Ukrainian language does not disappear from their families. *That direction, to preserve Ukrainianness here in America*" (Uliana, 4th wave).

This statement came from a post-1991 immigrant but it seems to reflect a more general discourse within the organization shared by many members across generations. With the peak of political mobilization for Ukraine behind them, along with its failings and disappointments, the UNWLA members turn to the organization's identity which has always been there under the layer of its diasporic activism. As Ukrainians outside of Ukraine they also share experiences and needs as Ukrainians in the United States. And although those needs are admittedly different for immigrants and the second and further generations of ethnic Americans, the retention of (some parts of) their Ukrainian cultural heritage in their families may be one of the intersections where they meet.

"Reorienting towards ourselves," i.e. towards the needs of their Ukrainian American community and women in it, was among the most frequently mentioned directions for the UNWLA's future work, but it proved to be extremely difficult to visualize. Continuously returning to the questions of (re)production of their Ukrainian identity in the United States, members of the UNWLA did not consider that objective to be fully sufficient because for many of them the "reorientation" was filled with an expectation of a turn, a shift to some new issues and types of work. Highly valuing the Ukrainian space and personal friendships that the UNWLA allows them to maintain and discussing possible ways of making the organization more relevant to the needs of Ukrainian women in the United States, the

UNWLA members do not seem to be ready or willing to relinquish their diasporic work just yet, continuing to seek ways to remain engaged with their country of origin.

The historic connections of the organization to women's movements in Ukraine and in the United States have offered some new directions for the UNWLA to explore in this context, and those directions could help the organization to continue its work on the local and transnational (diasporic) levels. Their participation in the women's movement has never been in the foreground of the UNWLA's work before, however, requiring some earnest effort to rethink the organization's possible engagement with the questions of women's rights and empowerment and other discourses they could bring into their activism today. As a part of that effort, the UNWLA Executive Board has been planning to fund a book project on the history of the UNWLA before their following Convention in May 2014. The idea of the project is not entirely new – it was cherished by previous president Iryna Kurowycky who mentioned it to me back in August 2008 during our very first meeting that took place in her apartment over a delightful brunch. Her successor only added a very concrete deadline to the plan wishing to have it completed before the initial interest was overridden by other priorities. Knowing that the UNWLA and its branches had been self-publishing various brochures and jubilee books with an overview of their history and work on occasions of numerous anniversaries, I first thought this project was a part of a highly traditional undertaking for the UNWLA, if only of a slightly larger scale. The requirements and the vision for the book's content, however, as well as the intended readership, showed they were dealing with something different in quality and purpose.

All the previous in-house publications, while presenting rich material for further analysis today, rarely attempted to go beyond the narrow context of the Ukrainian American community and the UNWLA itself. It was made clear that this type of thick description was not desirable this time – the president and the Executive Board were asking for a solid

analysis which would consider the organization's work within a larger framework of socio-political processes in the United States and in Ukraine, and what is more important, within the framework of the international women's movement and its development in North America. The book had to be written in English because its aim was not only to preserve the memory of the organization but also to tell their story to a broader audience outside of the community. "It is important to have it written so that the memory about all the work that the women carried out remains alive and becomes a part of the American history," told me one of the vice presidents of the organization, adding that the more people knew about the UNWLA, the easier it should be to recruit new members. A proper account of the past accomplishments may also be needed before the organization turns a page and moves into the future with new goals and activities – after all, no one would try to deny that having lost the status of a stateless diaspora (and the responsibilities that came with it) and experiencing the shift in the generation of active membership, the UNWLA can hardly be expected to ever look the same again.

The conceptualization of the English language history of the organization captures the attempt to rethink and reinvent the UNWLA in the new context. If in the 1920s and 1930s (to return to the historic parallel offered by Radzilowski (2009), see p. 66 in this thesis), a creation of a distinct and vibrant ethnic community could be a worthwhile undertaking for East European immigrants in the United States, allowing them to claim belonging in the American society and to maintain the imaginary link to the "old land," today a stress on their unique culture may not be seen as an adequate turn for a well-integrated and often dispersed Ukrainian "community" in the country. The previous experience and current links that the UNWLA maintains with national and international women's movements, on the contrary, may prove to be a good way of restating their loyalty to American values and reasserting connections to Ukrainian heritage. It has also proved to be a productive path for developing

relationships with Ukraine after 1991, linking the UNWLA with some women's organizations in the country and offering a range of issues to shape their cooperation.

Whether that could become a permanent focus for the UNWLA's future work is a compelling question. There undoubtedly *are* members in the organization who would want the statement from the recruitment brochure about the advocacy for women's issues to be not just a passing remark; and while any contemporary "feminist connection" is denied by the UNWLA, its members and leaders continue to evoke the historic links to the Ukrainian women's movement of the turn of the 20th century. Those historic links are multiple and complex and have been acknowledged in previous studies of the women's activism in the Ukrainian diaspora in North America. Nevertheless, it is not the actual links that matter. It is their discursive potential for framing the move to women's rights and empowerment agenda as a return to Ukrainian tradition rather than a break from it that is of significance at this stage.

If that framing succeeds, there will be some challenging questions for women in the diaspora to answer. For instance, what issues they would be willing to highlight and how to negotiate priorities across generations within the organization. Looking back at the UNWLA's previous work, however, one may agree that a more important question is *whose* issues and whose empowerment the organization may be willing to prioritize. The present study indicates that the UNWLA has always had a highly differentiated approach to defining the needs of the woman of Ukraine and those of the Ukrainian woman in the United States, interpreting the former through the language of oppression and violation of human rights and the latter through references to culture retention and resistance to assimilation. A shift to the women's rights struggle can once again be understood as a support of Ukraine in its nation building effort where women's equality is but a sign of the country's democratic development. Becoming a new mobilizing discourse for diasporic work for Ukraine, this

perspective could leave the question of what the women in the UNWLA could do for themselves unanswered; but it would probably deem that question unimportant for the time that the UNWLA has a diasporic cause to uphold.

The UNWLA's quest for objectives and the organization's eight decade history of diasporic work, discussed here only partially, raise many questions to consider. They foreground the oscillating power relations between the diaspora and the homeland where international bodies and discourses serve as a medium for their cooperation and contention. They allow us to talk about certain patterns of diasporic activism and their dependence on the stage of the homeland's state-building as well as on the generational composition of the diaspora and their most active organizations. They reveal the internal tensions and alternative voices within each diasporic group, but they also highlight reflexivity and mutability of the diasporic action. Most importantly, they demonstrate through abundant example that women's participation in diasporic activism is gendered on multiple levels – defining the tools and discourses that may be employed to limit or enable women's successful mobilization for a political diasporic cause. Each of these points may lay ground for further analysis to gain deeper insight about the transformation of diaspora politics in the globalized world. The proposed case-study offers a glance at the way that transformation looks like from within a diasporic organization and as such is limited in its discussion to the perspective that can be gained from there.

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