

## Abstracts / Résumés

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Volume 56, 2005

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt56abs01>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

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(2005). Abstracts / Résumés. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 56, 397–401.

# ABSTRACTS / RÉSUMÉS

## Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935

John Manley

IN THE STILL VIBRANT debate between “traditionalist” and “revisionist” historians of international Communism, the former tend to argue that the key to understanding the Communist experience in any country is recognition of the fundamental subordination of each national party to the will of “Moscow,” exercised both directly and through the Communist International (Comintern), while the latter, though rarely denying the salience of the Moscow connection, suggest that national parties enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy in resisting or adapting Moscow’s demands. American revisionists in particular have emphasized the CPUSA’s creative engagement with American political culture, seeing this phenomenon even in the period most traditionalists see as the point at which national parties incontrovertibly capitulated to Stalinism — the “Third Period” (1928-35) of “Class Against Class,” ultra-leftism, “Social Fascism,” and political catastrophe in Germany. Using the surprisingly under-used tool of comparative analysis to evaluate the conception, implementation, evolution, and “liquidation” of the Third Period in the United States, Britain, and Canada, this article offers some succour to the revisionists, but rather more to the traditionalists.

DANS LE DÉBAT TOUJOURS PASSIONNÉ entre les historiens « traditionalistes » et « révisionnistes » du communisme international, les premiers se montrent enclins à argumenter que la clé de compréhension de l’expérience communiste dans

n'importe quel pays est la reconnaissance de la subordination fondamentale de chaque parti national à la volonté de « Moscou », exercée directement ou par l'intermédiaire de l'Internationale communiste (Komintern), alors que les seconds, bien qu'ils nient rarement l'influence déterminante des rapports avec Moscou, prétendent que les partis nationaux jouissent d'un degré remarquable d'autonomie dans la résistance ou l'adaptation des demandes du Moscou. Les révisionnistes américains en particulier ont mis l'accent sur l'engagement créateur de CPUSA vis-à-vis de la culture politique américaine, en percevant ce phénomène même dans la période que la plupart des traditionalistes regardent comme la capitulation des partis nationaux au stalinisme – la « Troisième Période » (1928-35) de « lutte des classes », ultra-gauchisme, « fascisme social », et la catastrophe politique en Allemagne. En utilisant l'outil étonnamment sous-utilisé de l'analyse comparative pour évaluer la conception, la mise en œuvre, l'évolution, et la « liquidation » de la Troisième Période aux États Unis, en Bretagne et au Canada, cet article offre un certain secours aux révisionnistes, mais beaucoup plus aux traditionalistes.

## *Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism' Debate: Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930

Joan Sangster

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES the connections between ethnicity, gender, and class in the Communist Left from the founding of the Canadian Communist Party to the advent of the Third Period in the early 1930s. Within the Communist Party, ethnicity was a contested and complex relationship; while the Ukrainian section of the Party was numerically very strong, it was also disparaged as too 'separatist and culturalist' by the Anglo-Celtic leadership of the Party. By examining the paper produced by Ukrainians for women comrades, *Robitnytsia* (The Working Woman), we can examine the way in which gender, ethnicity, and class were imagined and experienced in early Party history. The founding, evolution, and content of *Robitnytsia* are explored, along with its influential editor, Myroslav Irchan. Special attention is paid to an extended debate in *Robitnytsia* about women's equality and role in the movement, at the time termed the 'porcupinism' debate.

CET ARTICLE EXPLORE les rapports entre l'ethnicité, le genre et la classe dans la gauche communiste de la fondation du Parti communiste canadien à la venue de la Troisième Période au début des années 1930. Au sein du Parti communiste, l'ethnicité a été une relation contestée et complexe; alors que la section ukrainienne du Parti était numériquement très forte, elle a aussi été dénigrée comme trop 'séparatiste et culturaliste' par les dirigeants anglo-celtiques du Parti. En examinant le journal produite par les Ukrainiens pour les camarades femmes, *Robitnytsia* (La femme au travail), nous pouvons examiner la façon dont le genre, l'ethnicité et la classe ont été conçus et vécus au début de l'histoire du Parti. La fondation, l'évolution et le contenu de *Robitnytsia* sont explorés, accompagnés de son éditeur influent, Myroslav Irchan. Une attention spéciale est accordée à un débat prolongé dans *Robitnytsia* à propos de l'égalité et du rôle des femmes dans le mouvement, à ce moment-là appelé le débat du 'porcupinisme'.

## Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism

Bryan D. Palmer

THE INTERNATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY of communism has been revived by the availability of previously unexamined sources in the Moscow Archives and an outpouring of new writing. Debates abound. But in Canada the study of communism has generated less new work, and little controversy. This article addresses the contentious issues of Comintern bureaucratism, Stalinization, and the transformation of the revolutionary left in the 1920s by examining the political histories of Maurice Spector and James P. Cannon. As the two major figures in Canadian and United States communism who repudiated Stalinism and embraced Trotskyism in late 1928, their struggle to keep the revolutionary potential of Bolshevism alive highlights success as well as failure, offering a comparative look at the importance of the subjective realm in the building of a left opposition.

L'HISTORIOGRAPHIE INTERNATIONALE du communisme a été revigorée par la disponibilité de sources n'ayant pas été précédemment examinées dans les archives de Moscou et par la publication d'un grand nombre de nouveaux travaux. Les débats sont nombreux. Mais au Canada l'étude du communisme a donné lieu à moins de nouvelles études, et à moins de controverses. Cet article aborde les ques-

tions litigieuses du bureaucratisme Comintern, de la stalinisation, et de la transformation de la gauche révolutionnaire dans les années 1920 en examinant les histoires politiques de Maurice Spector et James P. Cannon. En tant que personnages principaux dans le mouvement communiste canadien et américain qui avaient répudié le stalinisme et embrassé le trotskyisme vers la fin de 1928, leur lutte visant à maintenir la vigueur le potentiel révolutionnaire du bolshevisme souligne tant le succès que l'échec du mouvement, offrant une étude comparative de l'importance de la réalité subjective dans la construction d'une opposition de gauche.

## Family Quarrel: Joe Salsberg, the 'Jewish' Question, and Canadian Communism

Gerald Tulchinsky

JOSEPH BARUCH SALSBERG was one of Canada's best known and respected communists when he left the Labor-Progressive Party in 1957 after years of anguish over clear evidence of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. After a 30-year career in the Party in which he and numerous Jewish radicals had invested their belief that communism heralded a "better world's in birth" and solutions for all mankind's troubles, including the "Jewish question," Salsberg concluded that the poison of antisemitism was alive and well in the communist nirvana — and, with a broken heart, he walked away after vainly trying to convince Soviet leaders to reverse the trend.

JOSEPH BARUCH SALSBERG était l'un des communistes les plus connus et les plus respectés du Canada quand il a quitté le Parti ouvrier-progressiste en 1957 après des années d'angoisse sur l'évidence d'antisémitisme au sein de l'Union soviétique. Après une carrière de 30 ans au Parti dans lequel de nombreux militants juifs et lui-même croyaient profondément que le communisme ouvrait la voie à la « naissance d'un meilleur monde » et aux solutions de tous les problèmes des êtres humains, y compris la « question juive », Salsberg est enfin arrivé à la conclusion que le poison de l'antisémitisme était tout aussi répandu dans le nirvana communiste — et, avec le cœur brisé, il est parti après avoir essayé en vain de convaincre les dirigeants soviétiques de renverser la tendance.

**Eugene A. Forsey Prize  
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Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Canadian Committee on Labour History [CCLH] is pleased to announce the 11th Eugene A. Forsey Prize competition. The CCLH, with the consent of the late Dr. Forsey's family, chose to name it in his honour because of his pioneering work in the field of Canadian labour history. Dr. Forsey, Research Director of the Canadian Congress of Labour and later the Canadian Labour Congress, also served on the committee which founded *Labour/Le Travail*.

The CCLH invites submissions for the 11th Forsey prize competition for graduate and undergraduate work on Canadian labour and working-class history.

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**The deadline for submissions is 1 June 2006.** Prizes will be announced in the Fall 2006 issue of *Labour/Le Travail*. Four copies of essays and one copy of a thesis must be submitted for consideration to Forsey Prize, Canadian Committee on Labour History, Faculty of Arts Publications, FM 2005, Memorial University of Newfoundland, FM 2005, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7 CANADA.

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