
This massive book, as Manoly Lupul reminds us in the Preface, was not intended primarily for scholars, but for Ukrainian Canadians. It was commissioned to appear in 1991 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. And, as the author reminds us, it is an attempted synthesis of the first, and largest, wave of Ukrainian immigration.

The essence of the book is that Ukrainian Canadians were moulded by a small group of lay intellectuals who were divided by national and class interests. These divisions had already existed in the Old World and were brought to the New, where, over time, they were transformed to fit the reality of the new homeland.

Orest Martynowych illustrates his theme with a very wide-ranging canvas of Ukrainian life in Galicia and Bukovyna, whence most Canadian Ukrainians originated, and an even bigger portrait of their life in Canada. He shows that, while Ukrainian intellectuals were busy trying to uplift their people in the Old World with self-help and reading societies, they were divided into Russophiles, national
Populists, and Socialists. This division was modified in Canada as Russophilism was replaced by Protestantism, while the nationalist and socialist strains continued. After World War I, Protestantism among Ukrainians declined, but was replaced by a newly-formed Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church battling the old Greek Catholic one, while the Socialists turned into Communists. This division would plague the Ukrainian community well into the 1950’s.

Meanwhile, as Martynowych paints the intellectual landscape, he does not neglect the social one. In minute detail, he describes peasant life in the former Austrian provinces of Galicia and Bukovyna, the transatlantic crossing, the homesteading on the prairies, and life in lumber camps, railroad work gangs, mining towns and in the big cities. He also places the story into the Canadian and prairie context, showing how various Protestant denominations vied with Archbishop Langevin of Winnipeg for the souls of Ukrainians, as well as how various Canadian politicians sought their votes. He ends the story with the shameful actions of the Canadian government which interned several thousand Ukrainians as “enemy aliens” during World War I, and also harassed and destroyed their Social Democratic movement.

The book is based on massive research in government and private archives, on a very wide and deep reading of both the Ukrainian-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian press, hundreds of books, articles and dissertations. As a result, one often gets far more detail than is warranted, even for a scholarly work. However, as both Lupul and Martynowych pointed out at the beginning, the book was intended primarily for Ukrainian Canadians in search of their roots. It will provide them with a great beginning.

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