



Ukrainian Church of St. Vladimir and Olga in Winnipeg, showing transitional architecture between the Greek style of Europe and a modern North American building.

Solid Progress of Ukrainians In First 50 Years in Canada

By WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON, Literary Editor

Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study in Assimilation. By Vera Lysenko; Ryerson, \$3.50.

UKRAINIANS occupy a belt of farm land stretching from Southeastern Manitoba to North-western Alberta, besides numbering 25,000 to 30,000 in Winnipeg. They live in large numbers in Montreal,



Toronto, Windsor, Sudbury and British Columbia. Totalling an estimated 4 per cent of Canada's population, they form the third largest ethnic group in Canada. Though they play an increasingly important and occasionally dominant part in the life of the prairies, little is known about them east of the Great Lakes.

Vera Lysenko, formerly of Winnipeg and now of Toronto, has made a notable contribution to social history in *Men in Sheepskin Coats*, an ethnic study full of the romance of successful settlement. Coming a half-century after the first wave of immigration in the 1890's, Miss Lysenko has graphically traced the original exodus from the Carpathian villages to the raw lands of our West, the second generation's difficulties in adjusting themselves to Canadian ways, and the brilliant achievements of the still youthful third generation, indistinguishable from other Canadians of their age.

Here are the encouraging net results of the coming of the first 60,000 central European peasants between 1898 and 1903. Devoting several years of travel to visit her own people in all parts of Canada, Miss Lysenko has written a book of incalculable importance, the first comprehensive statement on the subject. Her six-page bibliography, also the first on the subject, forms a guide for historians of the future. By the end of this century, many Canadians of Ukrainian descent will point with pride to their family names in *Men in Sheepskin Coats*. With one Canadian in 25 now of Ukrainian stock, the ultimate impact on our society will be great. Those of British and French stocks will be wise to avail themselves of the information here gathered.

MEN—individuals—stand out in this record. Ivan Pillipiw in 1890 heard of Canada from Germans whose cousin had gone there. Since his people were reduced to poverty from lack of land, he investigated. Selling a team of horses and a yoke of oxen, he set out with \$240 and landed in Montreal in 1891. His reports were favorable and he led the first migrant group.

Prof. Osip Oleskiw's book, *On Free Lands*, further stimulated the flow. Written to expose the conditions to be found in Brazil, the book strongly recommended Canada, which Prof. Oleskiw had visited as a prospective home for the landless. He not only made soil tests but gave shrewd advice on obstacles the settlers would have to overcome.

Laurier's immigration policy was devised by Clifford Sifton, whose mind was made up by the sight of first carload of Galician immigrants passing through Fort William. The main body of the Slavs arrived between 1903 and 1913. During the depression, inhabitants of the town of Sifton, Man., were saved from ruin by John Weselowski, who began to manufacture spinning wheels, then added a woollen mill and other enterprises. Many of these people have entered business; 2,500 are in the professions, since they educate their children at least as well as other Canadians.

Galician wheat was an important parent of Red Fife and Reward; and these Ukrainian wheat farmers bumped up the prairie yield by the hundred million bushels. Many have become scientific farmers and even government experts on agriculture. "The Vegreville (Alberta) bloc of Ukrainian farmers is possibly the largest, most prosperous and certainly the oldest community among Ukrainians in Canada. . . . In the district of Mundare in Alberta, where mixed farming is practiced by the Ukrainian farmers, some are worth as much as \$75,000; have tractors, threshing outfits, 30 or 40 horses, 15 to 20 cows, raise as much as 20,000 bushels of grain."

Individual success stories are numerous and vary widely in circumstances. A random example is that of William Salamandik, who came in 1900. He experimented with such small fruits as raspberries and currants, added apples, plums and cherries. In 1922, he began bee-keeping and attained leading position in his province. From Quebec he brought pure-bred Ayrshire cattle and was thoroughly progressed. Five daughters, who graduated from normal school or university, are teachers and musicians.

FOR concreteness and thoroughness, *Men in Sheepskin Coats* is far the best study ever published about any racial group in Canada. It is news and it is exciting because of the degree of assimilation that has already taken place. It is also fair, not failing to record the race prejudice to which these people are still subjected; that French-Canadians are intolerant toward the Ukrainians who live in the poorest of Montreal slums; and that individuals vary in adopting Canadian customs. For instance, Miss Lysenko tells of meeting, in an Alberta village, an old woman with colored shawl on her head and a flowered skirt and bare feet, stepping out of 1911 Buick to do some shopping. Questioned by the author, she said she was going to listen to the soap program on the radio. "Maybe I shall win a prize."

Tragic was the situation when the youngsters of the second generation forsook the habits of their pioneer parents, creating domestic conflicts. But now the third generation is growing up in Winnipeg's North End in modern bungalows with Venetian blinds and fancy bathrooms; and the pretty girls graduate with roses in no way distinguishable from the spring crop at the University of Toronto.

It is to be regretted that the first section of the book, about the pioneers and early conditions, is not followed immediately by the third section, which describes our Ukrainians as they are today. The present second section, which tells of Ukrainian history and European backgrounds, should have come at the end, since it now breaks the narrative flow.

Among other points worthy of notice are the many revealing photos, the tendency of Ukrainians to favor co-operatives and community projects, the zeal with which large numbers of their young men fought in our services against Nazi Germany, and the fact that the Ukraine has always been "the mother-lode of folk lore and art for all Russia."

But the author herself is Exhibit "A" in her own thesis. An M.A. of Manitoba University, she first taught high school and then was a newspaper woman for eight years—with the *Windsor Star*, for instance. She is now a Toronto free lance writer and known to readers of our Book Page as Vera Lesik, contributor of critical articles for the past two years. She has put into her book not only her trained skill as a writer, but an earnest desire to portray her own people faithfully.