

Ukrainian culture: The roots

by David Marples

How often do we hear the term "Edmonchuk" as a designation for this city? It may be difficult for most readers to conceive of the idea that this urban sprawl we inhabit is somehow intrinsically Ukrainian. After all, Ukrainians make up only about 13 percent of the total population, which like most Canadian cities, is dominated by those of Anglo-Saxon background. In one respect, however, the Ukrainians are unique; they have a distinct culture and language, but unlike the other ethnic groups which constitute our multicultural society, the culture of the mother country has remained essentially submerged.



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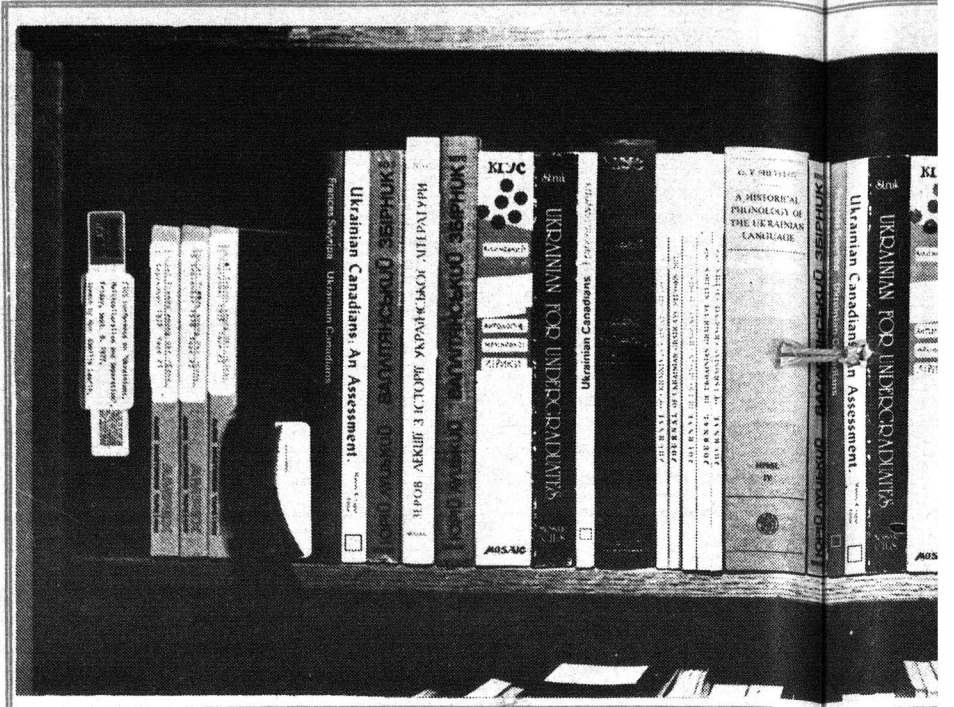
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In its recent history, Ukraine has been dominated by three great nations; the western regions by Austria and Poland and the eastern area by Russia. Its latter-day experience as the second Slav nation of a Soviet empire has done little to alleviate this problem. The Russians, after a brief period of liberalism in the 1920's, have taken up the role of Big Brother. Ukrainian cities are dominated by Russians, particularly in the east. Books and newspapers published in Ukraine are predominantly in the Russian language. More significant, Soviet historiography portrays the entire history of the country as one of eternal friendship with the Great Russian People, linked together as two parts of an integral whole.

Ukrainian Canadians in North America have taken steps to remedy the effects of Soviet rule on Ukrainian culture. In the years following the end of the Second World War, emigre circles conducted a verbal Cold War with their Soviet counterparts. Bodies such as the Anti-Bolshevik bloc of

Nations and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists worked primarily toward the overthrow of Soviet rule in Ukraine. The books and pamphlets produced were political in content and polemical in tone. If understandable, this was also unfortunate, for it left non-Soviet Ukrainian scholarship at a standstill. The trends and progress of Ukrainian culture remained ethereal events, left to a handful of researchers, plodding a course that seemed hopelessly remote from the mainstream of academia.

In 1976, however, the Ukrainians in Canada achieved some formal academic recogni-



tion with the establishment of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Alberta. For the first four years of its existence CIUS was funded by the provincial government, but in April 1980 it was included in the operating budget of the University, as part of the latter's Interdisciplinary Studies. Under the Directorship of Dr. Manoly R. Lupul, and located in Athabasca Hall, CIUS has fourteen full-time staff, including four at its office in Toronto. Its functions can be divided into four main categories.

1. Ukrainian studies programs at undergraduate and graduate levels

The CIUS acts as a co-ordinator of Ukrainian studies courses, currently offered in a variety of departments across

campus, most notably in Slavic Language, History and Political Science. It is possible to peruse the entire history of Ukraine through 300-level courses and a further course deals with the history of Ukrainians in Canada. In addition to regular language courses, the department of Slavic Languages is organizing an intensive summer session of Ukrainian- language courses from 7 July to 14 August 1981. The range of the courses provided render the University of Alberta a pioneer in Ukrainian studies.

On the graduate level, CIUS provides research grants and has collected various items of research interest. For the past two years it has produced a Register of scholars and researchers, outlining thesis topics and fields of

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