



The Ukrainians
in the United States

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*The border and the motif used in this leaflet were drawn by
Czech artist*



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THE Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" are names which have been added to the English language as a result of the remaking of the map of Europe following the World War. But the land and the people have an independent culture and history of which they are all rightfully proud, even though their identity was lost until recently in their political subservience to Russia and Austria and by the use of such names as "Little Russians" and "Ruthenians" to denote the people who now call themselves "Ukrainians."

Three groups of people are now classed as Ukrainians: (1) The people of southwestern Russia, who, under the Czar's regime, were known as little Russians; (2) those who were under Austrian rule over the border in Galicia and were then called Ruthenians; and (3) those living south of the Carpathian mountains who are now included in the Czechoslovak Republic. There are approximately thirty million Ukrainians in Europe, of whom most live within the bounds of the Ukrainian Republic, which is affiliated with the Soviet Government of Russia in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

In language, culture and traditions, the Ukrainians are nearer to the Russians than are any of the other Slavic groups, but the differences which separate the two nationalities are great enough to justify the Ukrainians' claim of independence and to require

separate treatment of this group in the United States.

Where they have settled in the United States

Although Ukrainians have been coming to the United States for over forty years, it is only during the last twenty years that Ukrainian immigration assumed appreciable proportions. There are now over 300,000 Ukrainians in the United States and they have for the most part congregated in the industrial area of our country, in the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Connecticut and Massachusetts. They are to be found in considerable numbers in New York City, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Newark, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Shenandoah, Scranton, Perth Amboy, Jersey City, Bayonne, Passaic, Buffalo, Syracuse, New Haven, Providence and San Francisco.

Religious Condition

The majority of the Ukrainian immigrants to the United States hail from Galicia, and are Greek Catholics by faith. The Greek Catholic Church retains married priests, the old Slavonic language in church services, the Greek calendar and Greek rites, but they acknowledge the Pope and all the Roman Catholic dogmas. There are about 250 Greek Catholic parishes in the United States and 50 in Canada, which are presided over by three bishops.

Many Ukrainians who came from pre-war Russia are of the Orthodox faith, and belong to the Russian Orthodox churches here. There are only a few Ukrainian Orthodox parishes. An independent movement on the part of some Ukrainian Orthodox priests has resulted in the formation here of an Ukrainian National Church, which retains the Orthodox ritual and customs, but uses the Ukrainian language in all its services. There are twenty-five such parishes.

The Protestant Church has been very successful in securing the allegiance of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, there being no less than thirty Ukrainian churches there. But in the States the Protestant churches have been slow to take advantage of the opportunity presented to them, and there are only four congregations in the country, all of which are Presbyterian.

The religious situation in the Ukraine is most favorable to Protestantism, and in this country fully fifty per cent. of the Ukrainians have broken with their old world faith. A large proportion of the unchurched Ukrainians have been drawn into an antagonistic position as regards religion through the communistic propaganda to which they have been subjected here, but most of them are simply indifferent to the church and its message. Among such people propagandists of all sorts are diligently at work; Russellites, Adventists, Pentacostal Brethren, Immersionists and sectarians of all sorts are seeking to win their allegiance by the wide distribution of literature and the pleas of zealous missionaries. In view of all this mixture of cults, sects and creeds, is it any wonder that these people are confused and perplexed and strengthened in their antagonism to religion?

How the Presbyterian Church has served the Ukrainian

That which can be done is best illustrated by what has been done in Newark, New Jersey. About sixteen years ago there was but one Ukrainian parish. All the people attended the Greek Catholic Church. A controversy arose over property matters. After much contention with the bishop and Catholic authorities, the local priest and about one hundred of the members of the church withdrew. In looking about for a landing place they settled on the Presbyterians. A large delegation with their priest came before the Committee of Presbyterial

Church Extension. They told their story and asked to be received into the Presbyterian Church. The members of the Committee were ignorant of the existence of such a people and asked "Who are the Ruthenians?" as they were then called. No action was taken. By and by they came again and kept coming for about a year or more. Finally Presbytery acted, and about 100 of them—mostly young men without families—were organized into a Presbyterian Church under the title "The First Ruthenian Presbyterian Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Newark, New Jersey." They have the proud distinction of being the first Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Presbyterian Church organized in the world. They like to feel that they are the "mother church."

Presbytery received them very much as Christ receives the rest of us—just as we are. They came just as they were—with liturgy, picturesque and brilliant, including "mass," tinkling bell, white-robed priest, and everything else. To celebrate "mass" in a Presbyterian Church was something new! The Catholic dignitaries abused us, charging that we were deceiving the people, and the conservative Presbyterians abused us for allowing such unorthodox practices. The Board of Home Missions came in for a share of the condemnation, for it was helping to support the work. The Presbyterial Superintendent had grace given him to keep quiet and bide his time. He knew that religious prejudices are strong and deep-seated. The customs of generations are not easily given up. It would not do to cut these people off at one stroke of the ecclesiastical bowie knife from things that meant everything to them. They were not heathen; they believed in Christ. Why try to force them at once into our church customs in worship? They knew nothing of our church life. They were Greek Catholics, steeped in all the customs and traditions of that Church and buttressed

about by superstition and ignorance; but they were facing in the right direction with their faces toward the rising sun.

What they needed was light. So the superintendent organized a Bible Class and taught it through an interpreter. They were given the message of the Book and shown the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. They were also instructed in the principles, teaching and government of the Presbyterian Church. One evening a man created quite a sensation by announcing that their priest had written our Bible. He had been taught in the old country that every reformer made his own Bible. Wickliffe had his Bible, so did Calvin and Luther, and his priest, being recognized as a "Reformer," had made a Bible, and here it was! The logic was not bad, but the premise was wrong—that was all. How should people like this man be treated? In love and patience or with the policeman's club? Well, the light began to dawn and the circle began to widen. They began to think less of ritual and more of spiritual reality. It was not long before the Greek Catholic practices began to fade out, leaving the church with a very simple ritual which finally vanished altogether. They went to the extreme of simplicity and had the baldest kind of Presbyterian service. Finding that they had gone to the extreme, they put back a few forms and now have a thoroughly Biblical and Protestant service. It was by a process of education and illumination that the object was attained. It took nearly seven years, but it was worth while!

This church leads the whole Presbytery in the number of young men it has furnished the theological seminaries for training for the ministry. It has sent out two girls to become deaconesses. Another girl is now training for deaconess work. Every summer it has the largest Daily Vacation Bible

School in the city. The church building is large and the auditorium is decorated by mural paintings, all done by hand, representing scenes in the life of Christ. These people have become the representative people of their race in the community, and exert an influence that reaches beyond the confines of the congregation.

Does it pay to be patient, sow the seed, and wait for the results?

Dearth of Protestant work for Ukrainians

But we have but four centers of Protestant work among these three hundred thousand Ukrainians, one-half of whom are still unchurched. Are we to be content with such an answer to this challenge, with such a response to the opportunity?

Board of National Missions
of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.
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