

# UKRAINE AND ITS PEOPLE

*by*

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The history of the Ukrainian people is largely a record of their exploitation, persecution, enslavement, and struggles for freedom. Here indeed is a people of whom it might well be said that: 'They were tortured, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder; they were set wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in dens of the earth/ So it is that leaders arose among them from time to time, fired with dreams of freedom and national independence.

Some of the rebellions they led created widespread interest in Western Europe. Thus news of the Cossack and peasant rebellion of 1648 under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnytsky even reached far-off England, where progress made by the Cossack leader was reported in various news-sheets of the time. It is even said that Khmelnytsky corresponded with Oliver Cromwell, though there is apparently no Ukrainian confirmation of this. British interest in Ukraine was maintained, and in the eighteenth century several English

travellers visited Ukraine and recorded their impressions. In October 1818 Byron wrote his poem about the Cossack Hetman, Mazepa, of whom he had read in Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*. After that time, however, little was heard of Ukraine in Great Britain until recently.

To-day we know that there are separatist movements which aim at the creation of a 'Great Ukraine'<sup>5</sup> by uniting politically the various Ukrainian minorities in Eastern Europe. There is also good reason to believe that Herr Hitler proposes to make use of such movements to serve his own territorial ambitions. The nature of these ambitions, which include annexation of Soviet Ukraine, is indicated in *Mein Kampf*.

How far is Herr Hitler likely to succeed in his schemes where Ukraine is concerned? Before attempting to answer that question it is necessary to know something of the Ukrainian people; their origins and subsequent division into a number of national minorities; their economic conditions, religious problems, cultural development, and relations with other peoples; and the extent *to* which they support the separatist leaders. Such information it is the purpose of this book to provide, so that

present-day problems in Ukraine may be seen in their true perspective. The profoundly important changes lately effected in that part of Ukraine included in the U.S.S.R. are also discussed.

It has been found convenient to refer to East Galicia, Carpatho-Ukraine, and part of Rumania collectively as 'West Ukraine'; and to Ukrainian territory now under the Soviet as 'East Ukraine' when discussing events which occurred before 1920. No attempt has been made to use these names with precision, though usually it may be assumed that the imaginary division between east and west is visualised as following the western frontier of the Soviet Union. When discussing developments which have occurred since 1920, 'East Ukraine' is referred to more accurately as Soviet Ukraine.





## *Chapter I*

### HOMELANDS AND WATERWAYS

The homelands of the Ukrainian people lie to the north and north-west of the Black Sea, and extend from the Carpathians to the river Don. Collectively they have neither natural nor political frontiers; though political frontiers cross these lands at various points without apparent reason, the people's allegiance being divided thereby among several sovereign States. At the present time by far the largest and most prosperous part of Ukraine is that which forms one of the Republics of the Soviet Union. Next in size *comes* a region in the south-east of Poland, including East Galicia, with part of the ancient province of Volhynia, and, less definitely, country to the north as far as the Pripet Marshes. Ukrainian lands of less extent form the eastern extremity of what until recently was known as Czechoslovakia, and part of Rumania. The Ukrainians in the former Czechoslovak territory, like their kinsmen in East Galicia, are sometimes called

Ruthenians and sometimes 'Red Russians'—though not with the meaning of the word 'red' as applied to communists. Their homeland has been given various names such as Ruthenia, Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, Carpatho-Russia, and Carpatho-Ukraine. The Ukrainians of Rumania live in Bessarabia, a province having a frontier in common with Soviet Ukraine; and in Bukovina, on the south-east frontier of Galicia. Bukovina was a crown province of Austria before the Great War. Bessarabia, previously a Russian province, became a prey to conflicting interests after the Russian Revolution of October 1917, but was eventually taken over by Rumania. The Soviet Government has never recognised the annexation, but has pledged itself not to resort to force to recover the lost territory.

In general the Ukrainian lands form the western end of what is known as the black soil belt, a tract of great agricultural fertility extending from the Carpathians to the Urals and beyond, and, in Soviet Ukraine, from the Seim river (a tributary of the Desna) to the Black Sea. Unlike the more northerly expanse of European Russia, which consists of forest land with a clay soil, much of the black soil belt is treeless except in ravines and river

valleys. Travelling south through Soviet Ukraine one comes to a huge, slowly undulating plain, a world of parabolic distances which makes one think of the open sea. In this land there are also occasional marshes and ponds, haunted by herons, storks, wild-ducks, and a variety of singing birds.

The grassy steppe of Soviet Ukraine is subject to the extremes of a continental climate, and the absence of hills and trees exposes the land to winds which may be excessively hot in summer and excessively cold in winter. If, owing to hot winds, the snow melts too soon, or if the melting is delayed by a continuation of very cold winds, widespread damage to crops or destruction of flocks may ensue. Moreover, the intense winter cold, with frost lasting sometimes as long as four months, makes the working year much shorter than it is in Western Europe.

In its natural state the steppe produces a variety of grasses, some of which *grow to* a considerable height and bear silvery plumes which wave in the wind. Under cultivation the black soil is capable of providing magnificent crops. It is rich in humus, it absorbs moisture readily, and is more easily worked than the clay soil of the forest zone. Even on

the old three-fields system of agriculture corn has been grown on it for over fifty consecutive years without any need to add manure.

It must not be supposed, however, that the whole of the territory occupied by the Ukrainian people is steppe. In the northern part of Soviet Ukraine the open steppe is replaced by an intermediate zone in which thinly wooded steppe melts gradually into forest land. To the west of this lie the Pripet Marshes, where conditions are very different. Here are vast morasses interlinked by a network of streams. In some parts these morasses are covered with reeds and rushes, elsewhere they are studded with pines and other trees. Here and there is a stretch of sandy dune forming an island suitable for grazing cattle or for raising crops; but these islands are often well-nigh inaccessible, and the peasants must be adepts in sailing their boats on the languid streams and in finding their way through the treacherous marshes. A series of drainage schemes put in hand from time to time during the past seventy years has resulted in much more land being brought into cultivation. But still the marshes as a whole are estimated to cover between seven and eight million acres—rather less than one-quarter the

area of England. Despite partial drainage, the region is still inimical to health. Fevers as well as throat and lung diseases are common, owing to the combination of a damp atmosphere with poisonous gases liberated by the putrefaction ceaselessly taking place in the marshes. The poverty-stricken condition of the people, together with bitterly cold weather in the winter when the marshes are usually frozen over for at least two months, naturally increases the virulence of recurring epidemics.

Turning to Carpatho-Ukraine we find a country cut off by the Carpathians from the black earth belt, but possessing other advantages. The soil at the lower levels is good, and crops are sheltered by the mountains from north and north-east winds. This region also gets the benefit of moist and relatively mild winds from the south-west. These are factors of considerable importance to agriculture, by which the great majority of the Ukrainian people live, making it possible to work in the fields for at least seven or eight months of the year. On the uplands of Carpatho-Ukraine there are extensive forests. Here live the Hutzulians, highlanders of Ukraine, many of whom were formerly employed in the timber industry but have lately

suffered greatly in consequence of political changes in that region.

Little need be said about Bessarabia and Bukovina, since these are in effect merely extensions of Soviet Ukraine and Galicia respectively. Much of Bessarabia presents the same wide, open, treeless spaces as Soviet Ukraine. In the north, however, there is mountainous country with wide-spreading forests. In Bukovina too there is much forest land. The soil is exceptionally fertile, and under more favourable economic conditions might be made remarkably productive.

As might be expected, crops vary in kind or area sown according to natural conditions. Wheat, rye, barley, and maize are grown throughout the greater part of Ukraine. Potatoes, sugar-beet, sunflower, and hemp are widely cultivated; whilst cattle and pig breeding, poultry farming, and like activities are common to all the sections into which Ukraine is politically divided. In Carpatho-Ukraine, East Galicia, and Bukovina grapes, tobacco, and hops are grown. Cotton growing has recently been greatly developed in Soviet Ukraine.

Some parts of Ukraine are rich in mineral resources. There are, for example, valuable

oilfields in East Galicia in the neighbourhood of Boryslaw and Dohobycz, though the output of the wells has declined in recent years. In Soviet Ukraine there is the great Donetsk coalfield, covering an area nearly equal to all the British coalfields combined. Apart from importation, Donetsk was practically the sole source of coal in Tsarist Russia. Some two hundred miles farther west is the iron-ore region of Krivoi Rog, output from which has been enormously increased under the first and second Five-Year Plans. Other minerals such as manganese, zinc, lead, and silver are also mined in this region.

Oil and coal are two of the primary resources for the production of power; and a third resource of ever-increasing importance, the flow of water, is also widely available in Ukraine. Under the Soviet regime these and other resources in various parts of the U.S.S.R. are being exploited on a scale which has already placed the Union in the front rank as a producer of electric power. The most notable of such developments is the giant hydro-electric power plant on the Dniepr, near the site once occupied by the famous Zaporozhye Cossack Camp.

It is abundantly evident that the rivers of

Soviet Ukraine will in future figure prominently in the development of the country. But for the present we are more concerned to stress the important part they have played in times gone by. All the Ukrainian homelands—with the exception of Carpatho-Ukraine, which is accessible from Galicia by mountain passes—are united by navigable rivers. For example, the Dniestr is navigable in small boats from East Galicia down to the sea. It touches Bukovina, and winds along the frontier between Soviet Ukraine and Bessarabia. Farther north it is possible to propel small craft through the Pripet Marshes and along the Pripet to the Dniepr, means of transport being thus provided between a large tract of Soviet Ukraine and lands lying to the west. These rivers and their tributaries have been used for transport for hundreds of years, and facilitated control of Volhynia by the Princes of Kiev from the ninth century onwards.

But the Dniepr has played a still more important part in Ukrainian history. To understand why, we must now look farther afield.

European Russia, including the former western territory of the Tsars, is itself a great plain or plateau nearly nine times the size of



France in area. This plateau, which presents greater physical resemblances to Western Siberia than to Western Europe, has no mountains to check winds, to bring down rain from clouds borne by winds from the sea, or to arrest the advance of arctic weather from the north; or again, to act as barriers to freedom of travel between one part of the plateau and another. Nevertheless, the boundless forest in the north—huge stretches of which still remain—together with numerous formidable swamps and ferocious wild beasts, must formerly have sufficed to deter men from wandering over great distances, were it not that nature provided roads through the wilderness whereby all obstacles might be circumvented.

Over the plateau flow many slow-moving rivers, forming what is perhaps the finest natural network of waterways in the world. The watersheds from which these rivers flow, some north, some south, are low; and gradients are in general so gentle that except for occasional rapids the rivers are navigable in small boats far upstream. The principal watershed is the Valdai Hills in the province of Novgorod. The highest point on these hills is noo feet above sea-level, but few of the rivers rise at a

greater height than 600 feet and many have their sources in the foothills. The headwaters are so near together that it is relatively easy to drag boats over land, across the watersheds, from one river to another; excellent water roads thus being provided from the Baltic to both the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Already by the second century a.d. a number of Gothic rovers had made their way from the Baltic through what is now Soviet Ukraine to the Black Sea. Later came the Vikings, with whose advent Ukraine may be said to emerge from the misty region of conjecture on to the stage of history. The routes ordinarily followed were along the West Dvina from the Baltic and down the Dniepr, or alternatively from the Gulf of Finland by way of the Neva to Lake Ladoga, thence up the Volkhov to Lake Ilmen and on to the source of the Lovat, across the Dvina, and so down the Dniepr to the Black Sea. Yet another route, taking the rovers farther east, was provided by the Volga, which, after following a sinuous course for some 2400 miles, empties its waters into the Caspian Sea.

Lack of natural frontiers, and the geographical position of Ukraine, have greatly influenced the history of that country. Looking back

into the distant past we see a constant movement of peoples; invasions and migrations, piratical exploits, and trading activities. This movement necessarily resulted in a complex intermingling of races and reacted extensively upon the characteristics of the people. The Black Sea—Baltic water road lays the country open to attack and colonisation from the north, a fact of which the Vikings took full advantage. The black soil belt provided a natural highway for invaders from the east. To the south the Black Sea afforded ready access to Constantinople, thus ensuring contact with the civilised world of the time. For some centuries the bulk of the trade between the Orient and Western Europe—so long, that is, as this trade was controlled by merchants of the Greek Empire—passed over the water road through Ukraine, thereby stimulating the growth of towns which sprang up on the Dniepr and farther to the north. The influence of Byzantine civilisation has left its mark not only on Ukraine but on the whole of European Russia to the present day. For example, when Christianity came to these lands it was the Greek Orthodox confession which was established there. Poland, on the other hand, was under West European influences and adopted

Roman Catholicism. As we shall have occasion to note later, proselytising zeal on behalf of the rival Churches gave rise to prolonged persecution of which the Ukrainian people were the principal victims.

## *Chapter II*

### THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE

It is impossible to determine accurately the number of Ukrainians in different countries, as reliable census figures are not available and estimates differ considerably. Figures given here must therefore be regarded as rough approximations, providing a general guide to the distribution of the people.

We may safely assume that there are at least 40,000,000 Ukrainians in Europe, whilst 1,000,000 or more emigrants to America are in the main divided between the United States and Canada. There are also smaller groups of Ukrainians in the Far East and other parts of the world. Taken as a whole they form the second largest of the Slavonic peoples, they are one of the largest groups in Europe with a common tongue, and even in Canada they are the third largest of such groups, being exceeded in numbers there only by Canadians of British and French descent. By far the greatest number—about 26,000,000—live in

Soviet Ukraine. Together with another 8,000,000 in adjacent Soviet territory they form between one-fifth and one-sixth of the total population of the U.S.S.R. Soviet Ukraine is a densely populated region, with sixty-five inhabitants to the square kilometre. The next largest group is found in those parts of Poland known as East Galicia, Volhynia, and Polessia, where there are between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 Ukrainians. Poland has a population of 32,000,000, so that here, as in the U.S.S.R., the Ukrainians form a minority of about one-fifth to one-sixth of the total population of the country which claims their allegiance. Geographically the Ukrainians of Galicia comprise three-quarters of the people living in that province east of the river San.

Turning to the smaller groups, there are 500,000 Ukrainians in Carpatho-Ukraine, and in Bessarabia and Bukovina together another 800,000. Finally, there are perhaps 100,000 Ukrainians in Jugoslavia, Hungary, and other countries of Eastern Europe.

Certain physical differences between the Ukrainians and Great Russians may be noted, though such differences are far from being universal and are not so numerous as resemblances. If we could find an 'average'<sup>5</sup>

Ukrainian and an 'average' Great Russian we should probably note that the Ukrainian was the taller; that he had a broader head, with a tendency for the head to be flattened at the crown; and had also a straighter nose and a brighter complexion. Nevertheless, if we looked about us we should find a good many Ukrainians with a lighter colouring, such as chestnut hair and brown eyes, which would make us slow to generalise. In so far as Ukrainians differ from Great Russians it is reasonable to assume that difference of racial admixture and *milieu* are responsible. In our next chapter it will be seen that the earliest known home of all the Slav tribes was in much the same region as that occupied by the Ukrainian people to-day; and the guess may be hazarded that those Slavs who migrated to the north-east in times long gone by have changed more than those who stayed behind. Facial characteristics often seen among Great Russians are high cheek bones, squat noses, and dark complexions, which suggest an admixture of Finnish blood; and history shows that such an admixture is what in all probability took place. The Ukrainians, on the other hand, came into more intimate association with Turkish peoples, and made little

contact with the Finns. Both Ukrainians and Great Russians became interblended in some degree with the Tartars, and acquired some of their characteristics.

Marked difference of soil, with forest and marsh predominating on the one hand, and open grasslands on the other, must have reacted differently on the two branches of the Russian people. If it is true that Ukrainians show a tendency to be less practical and persevering than Great Russians, as several authorities have suggested, this might well be due to the fact that life in the forest zone, being more arduous, called for greater resource and endurance than life on the steppe. Similarly among the Ukrainians themselves; we might reasonably expect to find, and in fact do find, differences, though less marked, between Ukrainians of the steppe and those who settled in the Carpathian highlands.

Like their ancestors before them the great majority of Ukrainians are peasants. Outside the Soviet Union they lead a life very similar to that of other peasants of Eastern Europe, where many are still semi-literate, and most toil for a bare subsistence. There are, of course, exceptions; well-to-do peasants who, by good luck or cunning, have saved a little



money and usually add to it by playing the part of usurer to those less fortunate than themselves. But the majority are almost unbelievably poor. They work intolerably long hours and are exploited both economically and politically. Population presses on the means of subsistence; and despite the fact that Polish and other landlords have in some districts had to suffer a reduction in the size of their huge estates—for otherwise there would have been a revolution as in Russia—the peasants are still desperately in need of more land. Yet in those regions where there has been a more liberal distribution of land, the benefit to the peasant is promptly taken off him again in the form of taxation.

In order to keep body and soul together, and meet the iniquitous exactions of the tax-gatherer, many a peasant in West Ukraine works from daybreak till nightfall on his pitifully diminutive holding of a few acres, tilling the soil or harvesting his crops with implements which are museum-pieces so far as efficiency is concerned—comparable with those used in England in the time of Alfred the Great. Only too often he has little to show but a permanently bent back, gnarled hands, broken health, and a load of debt in return

for years of unremitting toil. The life he leads is the life his father led before him; and so he continues year in and year out, tied to the soil, until at last the earth claims him altogether.

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans  
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,  
The emptiness of ages in his face,  
And on his back the burden of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Despite adverse conditions, these Ukrainian peasants have a well-deserved reputation for both personal and household cleanliness. They quite obviously possess considerable native intelligence, and an aesthetic sensibility which finds expression in their dainty and colourful embroidery, their folk songs, legends, music, and dances. Like Russian peasants in general they are by nature kindly and hospitable.

It so happens that the present writer has first-hand experience of peasant life. He has lived with peasants, sharing their hardships, their heart-breaking sorrows, their simple joys. As an engineer he knows 'beyond a peradventure' that there is no necessity, no rational reason at all, for the crushing burden of poverty endured by peasant populations outside the Soviet Union. With scientifically designed agricultural implements, with full use

of modern chemical knowledge and facilities, with large-scale mechanisation and electrification of agriculture, and an equitable distribution of the material plenty which would ensue, poverty both in the country and the towns could be ended once and for all. Peasant life could be—and in the U.S.S.R. is being—lifted on to an altogether higher plane.

In Soviet Ukraine the people—the ‘common people,’ for there are no others—are living under conditions startlingly different from those of their brothers beyond the Soviet frontier. In recent years there has been both an unparalleled increase in the industrial activity of the Republic and a complete revolution in agriculture. Instead of large private estates and tiny peasant farms of a few acres, there are now thousands of huge collective farms which have changed rural life beyond recognition. Indeed the agrarian revolution has involved more fundamental changes in the lives of the people than they had experienced during the course of centuries. And already the outcome is that the people in Soviet Ukraine, whilst still having many difficulties to overcome, many problems to solve, many administrative and other faults to eliminate, are far more prosperous and far better edu-

cated than ever before. A steadily widening range of cultural facilities is being placed at their disposal. Everywhere one sees them going about their affairs, eager, confident, purposeful.

There is thus a wide gulf between conditions within and conditions without Soviet Ukraine. Because of this gulf we shall find it convenient in our earlier chapters—which will be mainly historical—to look no farther ahead than the decades immediately before the Great War. Down to that time the various groups of Ukrainians were treading parallel paths. Conditions were sufficiently uniform to justify a generalised treatment of events occurring in the various parts of Ukraine. From 1914' onwards such a generalised treatment becomes more difficult, and a few years later practically impossible. For the Soviet frontier dividing Ukraine and its people is different from all other frontiers. It is a boundary between different worlds, which become more dissimilar with every year that passes. Some of the more fundamental differences will be contrasted in separate chapters at the end of this book. But first we must sketch in outline the historical background without which it is impossible to see present-day Ukraine in its true perspective.

### *Chapter III*

#### WHENCE CAME THE UKRAINIANS ?

The earliest known references to peoples dwelling in what is now Soviet Ukraine occur in the *History* of Herodotus, who wrote in the fifth century B.C. Herodotus refers to inhabitants of country to the north of the Black Sea as Scythians. We are told that some were employed, in agriculture, others were pastoral nomads. They had replaced another people, the Cimmerians, and various other tribes are mentioned as living farther inland. The whole account is vague. It is impossible to say whether the Ukrainian people of later times had any Scythian blood in their veins. Philologists suggest that the Scythians were of Persian stock.

From evidence provided by a study of languages, from archaeological excavation, and from the legends of early Slavonic annalists, we may conclude that in the opening centuries of the Christian era the dominant people in the East European plateau consisted of Slavonic

tribes. These tribes were at first confined to an area, probably not much larger than Ireland, lying between the Carpathian Mountains and the northern extremity of the Pripet Marshes (then of much greater extent than now), and extending south-east in the direction of the Black Sea. It will be seen that much of this territory is the same as that already described as the Ukrainian homelands. The Ukrainian people of to-day are for the most part Slavs, speaking a Slavonic language or dialect. But history teaches that in the eternal vortex of life the character and ethnical identity of a people are being constantly modified by the infusion of alien blood. So many wanderers from distant lands have swarmed over the Ukrainian homelands at one time or another that we shall have to follow threads of Slavonic history running through a thousand years before we can point unerringly to ancestors of present-day Ukrainians. And here it will be convenient to note that when we refer to the Slavonic race, or to any other race for that matter, we are thinking primarily in terms of continuity of language and culture, and not at all in terms of permanent physical barriers between one branch of the human family and another.

Reference has already been made to Gothic tribes who descended the water road in the second century. Two hundred years later there came an invasion from the east. Taking advantage of the black soil belt, where the steppe grassland provided suitable camping sites for the invaders and fodder for their horses, Hunnish hordes from Mongolia travelled rapidly westward, conquering and destroying on their way. By the fourth century they reached the lands which hereafter it will be convenient (though as yet inaccurate) to call Ukraine, and drove many Slavs from one region to another. It is probable that the Huns came to Europe because their numbers had increased to a point at which life became intolerable in their own country. They could no longer invade China because the Chinese had built the Great Wall and now had armies sufficiently formidable to make the Huns realise the futility of attacking them. The population of Mongolia outran the meagre sustaining power of its own land, and as there was little to hope for farther north, the Huns found themselves with no option but to move towards the west. A nomadic people, hardy and accustomed to living on horseback, they travelled fast and far; and as they streamed

westward across Ukraine they left the whole country in a ferment. There is some evidence that a number of Huns remained in Ukraine and were eventually assimilated by the Slavonic population there. It is certain that in the sixth century a Hunnish people, the Bulgars, were living in the vicinity of the Don in close association with Slavs, together with whom they raided the Greek Empire of Justinian.

Apart from stragglers left behind, the Huns passed farther west and broke up the western Roman Empire. The Slavs, whom they had set in motion, now spread out in various directions. Those who turned to the south-east found their progress arrested by a Turkish people, the Khazars, who dominated the Black Sea coast-land and had established a kingdom to the east; their capital Itil standing at the mouth of the Volga near the site of present-day Astrakhan. To the north of the Slavs were the Lithuanians, in the region of the Niemen. In between and to the north-east the forests were inhabited by Finns, a people whose language differed widely from that of the Slavs. The dwellers in the forest lived principally by hunting, trapping, and fishing, as well as gathering natural products such as wild berries, fruits, and honey. Gathering



honey came to be a very important pursuit among both Finns and Slavs. A certain amount of agricultural work was also carried on in forest clearings, involving much arduous labour in felling trees and tilling the heavy, reluctant soil. The implements used were very primitive; a bent stick or the bough of a tree being used for ploughing, a practice still followed in many parts of Russia down to less than a hundred years ago. Millet was the usual crop. No doubt the crops of this and other cereals were scanty and the total area sown very small. It must not be forgotten that a great part of the East European plateau was uninhabited at this time, especially where there were huge swamps and where the forest was so dense as to be impenetrable. Forest clearings would be made where there was already some open space. Trees and undergrowth were hacked down with axes and then piled together. After about twelve months the pile was burned. The wood ash served as manure. The clearing was then ploughed and sown. After a few years the fertility of the soil was exhausted, and the whole laborious procedure had to be repeated elsewhere.

Farther south, in the intermediate zone

where forest gradually passes into steppe, and especially in the black soil zone, agricultural work involved much less labour.

Both hunting and agriculture necessitated collective activity on a large scale, since one man alone, or even a small group of men, could not possibly secure an adequate return under the arduous conditions obtaining with primitive implements and methods. The people accordingly lived in clans, consisting sometimes of several hundred individuals related to the head of the clan. The members of the clan held their property in common; hunted, fished, tilled the soil, and fought in close association; and shared between the members the spoil and the harvest. That is to say, they practised a primitive communism. The clan system gradually disintegrated, however, as more efficient implements and methods were invented. Such apparently simple developments as the use of a plough equipped with a well-designed share, possibly even metal-tipped, and so constructed that draught animals could be attached to it; or again, the application of cattle manure to the soil; must have profoundly affected social conditions. The ensuing increase of productivity rendered the collective labour of large groups

no longer necessary. The clans split into smaller families; and, on the more fertile soil at least, it became possible for the small family to meet the needs of its members by restricting operations to a limited holding of land. Such land became in course of time private property. The implements also, being now of greater value,, were regarded as the private property of the family or even of individuals instead of the clan as formerly. Some holdings were more productive than others, and their owners became wealthy in cattle and grain. The richer men endeavoured to become richer still by means of raids, and also by participating in the trade along the water road. Primitive communism gradually disappeared. But there is reason to believe that communistic—or at least collectivist—tendencies were retained by the Slavs, and were never again completely stamped out even under the most despotic of autocracies. It has been said, with reason, that left to his own devices the Russian peasant turns instinctively to collective methods, a fact to which the peasant village community (in Great Russia the *mir*, in Ukraine the *hromada*) owed its existence.

In the seventh century a number of Slavs

found their way eastward from the Carpathians as far as the basin of the Dniepr. Here they settled and founded Kiev, now the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. It is possible that at this time other Slavs had wandered far to the north, and built a fortified settlement on the Volkhov which later became the trading city of Novgorod; a city second in importance only to Kiev at first. On the other hand, there is a record which seems to show that Novgorod was founded by the Swedes in the eighth century. However that may be, there is no doubt that the Slavs spread far through the forest lands. By the ninth century they were in possession of practically all the waterways of the East European plateau, except those of the remote north and the middle and lower reaches of the Volga. These reaches were dominated by Asiatics, the Bulgars and the Khazars. The Bulgars had a large trading emporium near the junction of the Kama and Volga rivers. The capital of the Khazar State was, as already noted, at the mouth of the Volga.

With the beginnings of agriculture and trade; with settlements and towns both in the north and the south; and with ready means of communication between the chief

centres of activity; the East Slavs were now on the way to the founding of a unified Slavonic State. But now more invaders from afar fell upon them with the effect of hammer blows, modifying such rudiments of organisation as\* they had originated, and giving a new orientation to their further development.

Vikings came from the north, new hordes of Asiatics came out of the east. The Vikings, or Varangians, were Swedish sea-rovers who combined trading activities with ruthless brigandage. One of the principal commodities in which they dealt was slaves. Such hardy adventurers traversed the water roads without difficulty. During the ninth century they reached Kiev and then Constantinople by this route, and entered into trade relations with the Slavonic towns on the way, or plundered the people according to whichever course was deemed the more profitable. Others again founded headquarters of their own along the water road, some hired themselves to fight for Slavs, some entered the service of the Byzantine Emperor. Before long they had established themselves in East Ukraine as masters of the native population.

The ancient Kiev Chronicle of Nestor tells

how a number of Vikings came to Novgorod and laid tribute on the Finns and the Slavs. The Vikings were driven out again: but owing to the inability of the Slavs to govern themselves and manage their affairs without constant bickering, the Vikings—so the story goes—were invited to return and bring with them a prince to rule over the country. A Swede or Dane named Rurik, quite possibly the same person as Rorik of Jutland, who was a very active Viking raider of that time, returned with two of his brothers and a number of followers and built a stronghold on Lake Ladoga. They seem to have made such a nuisance of themselves that some of the Slavs rebelled against them. The rebellion was put down; and thereafter, says the Chronicle, Rurik ‘established himself there as a prince, and divided among his companions the lands and the towns.’ It is because these Vikings were also known as ‘Rus’ that the country acquired the name of Russia.

Two of Rurik’s followers, Askold and Dir, travelled on down the water road to Kiev, seized it, and promptly set off again to raid ‘Tzargrad’ or Constantinople. They were defeated and returned to Kiev. Meanwhile Rurik died and was succeeded by Oleg, who

appears to have resented the pretensions of Askold and Dir. He followed them to Kiev, killed them, and took possession of the city. Oleg thus controlled the water road and its towns, the most important of which were Kiev and Novgorod, with Smolensk between the two. These towns and the country of the East Slavs he formed into a principality known as Kiev Rus, with Kiev as its capital. He united the various Slavonic tribes within his sphere of control, and stimulated the trade over the water road 'between the Varangians and the Greeks,' and exacted heavy tribute from the Slavs.

At that time Constantinople was not only the centre of Christian civilisation but also one of the world's leading slave markets. Oleg and his successor Igor kept that market liberally supplied with slaves from the conquered territory. At the same time they did not hesitate to raid the imperial city and ravage the surrounding country when this seemed the more profitable procedure. Such was their brutality on these occasions, we are told, that their name became a byword among the subjects of the Byzantine Emperor. On the other hand, it must be admitted that in all ages, not excluding our own, it has been

the practice among all peoples to accuse the enemy of the vilest atrocities; the moral indignation of the accusers apparently being founded on the naive belief that their own people could not possibly be guilty of such abominable misdeeds. The misdeeds did not prevent an attempt to come to an understanding between Constantinople and Kiev. After a successful raid by Oleg, the Emperor concluded a commercial treaty with him in 912 which among other things recorded the 'eternal friendship of the two nations' and stated that the agreement was 'unshakable.' Like many another agreement of a similar nature this one proved to be little more than a 'scrap of paper.' In 935 a fresh attack on the Greek Empire was made by Igor with a huge fleet of war vessels. Igor and his men were defeated, only to return again for a fresh offensive a few years later. The Emperor decided on a policy of appeasement, reviving the old treaty, to which he added various concessions. This policy, however, which resembled that of giving Danegeld to the Danes, failed to prevent a repetition of menacing attacks on the Empire by the Varangian rulers of the East Slavs.

We have now seen how a Slav State came



to be formed in the ninth century, with its capital at Kiev in Ukraine, as a result of conquest by Varangians who founded a line of ruling princes. In course of time the identity of the Varangian conquerors became merged with that of the Slavs. They adopted the Slavonic language, and soon we find the ruling princes with Slavonic names — Svyatoslav, Vladimir, Yaroslav, and so on—in place of the Varangian names of their predecessors. So it was with the many other invaders of the country. The Slavs must inevitably have experienced an extraordinary commingling of their blood with that of other races. Yet it was the Slavonic language that prevailed, together with Slavonic habits and customs; thus ensuring to the inhabitants of Ukraine a continuity of culture which otherwise might have been altogether lost.

After the death of Svyatoslav in 972 the Rurikovich dynasty appeared to be on the decline, but his son and successor Vladimir contrived to give the principality a new unity. In this he had the support of a rising class of landowners, who felt the need of State power to protect their special interests. Vladimir was not only a warrior like his father before him, but seems also to have been something

of a statesman. He realised that if all the lands under his rule had a common religion, this in itself would be a powerful factor making for State consolidation and stability. He experimented first with a pantheon of pagan gods, but this did not satisfy the dominant classes. New feudal relationships were being superimposed on the disintegrating tribal order in Kiev Rus, and the ruling class of owners felt the need of a religion which would lend powerful support to the new system of relationships. In the Byzantine Empire feudalism was much more highly developed: the Church itself was a wealthy landowner and a feudal institution in its exercise of temporal power. As such it supported feudalism in general. To a warlike and sensual heathen like Vladimir it was no doubt a matter of indifference what form of religion he adopted so long as it served the purpose he had in view. He seems to have considered Mohammedanism as an alternative to Christianity. Mohammedanism would certainly have attractions for this confirmed polygamist with three wives and some eight hundred concubines. However, he gave up the idea and also turned his back on Roman Catholicism. Acceptance of the Greek Orthodox confession seemed the most promising line

to take, and in addition would give Kiev Rus a more satisfactory standing in its relations with the powerful\* Byzantine Empire. So in the end Vladimir married a princess of the Imperial house, and he and his people were duly baptised. Where there was resistance the baptism of his subjects was effected at the point of the sword.

We must now consider briefly another train of events overlapping in time with the establishment of the Kiev State. Not long after Rurik came south to Ukraine the steppe lands were again overrun by hordes from the east, this time by two Asiatic nomad peoples, the Magyars and the Pechenegs. They fought the Khazars and in fact appear to have fought with everyone within reach, including each other. The Magyars spread along the lower reaches of the Dniepr and then, still travelling westward, followed the valley of the Danube as far as Moravia. Here they found a Slav kingdom the inhabitants of which had already been converted to Christianity by Greek missionaries from Constantinople, who had also invented a Slavonic alphabet. The Magyars scattered the Slavs of Moravia and conquered the whole of the territory represented by Hungary and Transylvania. Already

at that time there were Slavonic tribes beyond Moravia in the heart of Western Europe, and ever since the coming of the Magyars these West Slavs have been cut off from political union with their fellow Slavs of the great East European plateau.

The Pechenegs remained in the country immediately north of the Black Sea, harrying Slav and Varangian traders alike. Their ferocious attacks continued into the early years of the eleventh century, when they were finally crushed by Prince Yaroslav, whose grandfather Svyatoslav had been killed by the Pechenegs at the Dniepr Rapids. Unfortunately the end of the Pechenegs was not the end of the Asiatic menace. They were followed by Turkish invaders, the Cumans, who raided the Kiev State again and again; devastating the country, taking captives and destroying houses and barns. Treaties were concluded with them only to be broken almost as soon as made. They infested the water road and cut the arteries of trade. Such social organisation as there was began to break up under the strain of perpetual conflict and the general decline in prosperity. Already a tendency to disintegrate had set in owing to conflicting claims of the large number of sons

born to successive princes. These sons established themselves as rulers over outlying parts of the Kiev State, then began to fight with one another. Conditions became so unbearable for the common people—many of whom had been forced into slavery—that emigration set in on an extensive scale, and continued throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Peasants and slaves ran away whenever opportunity permitted: some going towards the Carpathians and settling in Galicia, some following the water road to the north, and many making their way through the forest to the Moscow region and along the Oka river to the valley of the Volga.

It was not long after the coming of the Cumans that the Tartars, the most terrible of all human scourges from the east, fell upon the unhappy country, completing its depopulation and destroying its nascent civilisation. Cities were sacked, houses and churches were burned, or razed to the ground with battering rams. Men fled to the forests in the hope of escaping from the pitiless foe. In one raid alone the Tartars took over 100,000 prisoners. These, like thousands of others, were hauled off to the slave markets. What with slaughter, migration, and capture the steppe land was

almost denuded of its population for the next three hundred years.

In 1241 the Tartars streamed into Poland in two hosts, one of which passed through Galicia. They laid waste the country and carried off great stores of booty. Whole villages with their inhabitants were swept away. Cracow, standing not far north of the Carpathians, was fired and then deserted by its inhabitants in anticipation of the coming onslaught. In Poland at this time the Tartars are said to have collected nine sacks full of human ears as trophies. Those of the panic-stricken peasants who contrived to escape hid in the thickets and marshes, or fled in their thousands over the mountain passes into the forests of the region now called Carpatho-Ukraine. The Delatyn Pass winds down into the district of Marmaros, in which stands the town of Chust, prominent of late as a centre of Ukrainian *irredentism*. It was by this pass that Ukrainians first came to Marmaros; and a century later some of these people emigrated eastwards to found the principality of Moldavia, out of which were eventually formed the provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia.

During the centuries in which the Tartars imposed their power on the Russian people a

powerful Muscovite State was formed with its centre at Moscow. The Poles and Lithuanians also increased and extended their authority. By the fourteenth century Lithuania reached southward to the Black Sea. In 1569 Lithuania and Poland consolidated their union at the Congress of Lubin, after which Poland became the dominant partner, and more than half of Ukraine came directly under Polish rule. East Ukraine had now become a border country, beyond the Russian frontier, where conditions were relatively free.

Tartar nomads had formed a Khanate in the Crimea from which they would sally forth on horseback across the steppe, riding north until they came to districts inhabited by Russians. Equipped with ropes, and with large baskets attached to their horses, they seized peasants of both sexes and their children and carried them off for sale in the slave markets of Kaffa and Constantinople. Great numbers of Russians were abducted in this way every year. Yet in spite of the Tartar menace a mass migration from Galicia back to East Ukraine took place from about 1550 onwards, consisting largely of peasants and serfs returning to the land which their forefathers had left many years before. Fugi-

lives also came from Central Russia. The risks of life on the steppe seemed preferable to the certain degradation and misery of bondage under Polish and Russian masters as pitiless as the Tartars themselves.

On the steppe adventurous men could lead a free-roving life beyond the reach of despotic power. The Russian Government had erected a line of forts and stockades against the Tartars, extending for hundreds of miles along the southern frontier and marking the limits of effective State control. Daring and hardy frontier guards were required to man the forts and ward off attacks. Some of the most fearless and resolute of the immigrants hired their services for this task, and were known as Cossacks, the name being derived from a Tartar word meaning a labourer hired by the day. When not engaged in defending the frontier the Cossacks spent their time in fishing, hunting, and agriculture, or in raiding Russians, Tartars, or Turks.

At the dawn of the seventeenth century the misery of the people in Russia was accentuated by widespread famine during three years in succession. During these years more peasants migrated to the steppe to escape starvation. The steppe was further colonised by a forced



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transfer of serfs from Central Russia. Since that time there has been no considerable mass movement of population in Ukraine. The people living in that country at the end of the seventeenth century were the direct ancestors of the Ukrainians of to-day.

## *Chapter IV*

### SLAVE, SERF, AND FREEMAN

Reference has already been made to the eventual transfer of power from Kiev to Moscow, which became the capital of Great Russia. From the seventeenth century onward Ukraine, White Russia, and other outlying territories were added to Great Russia, thus forming the Russian Empire. In this chapter we shall consider certain historical trends in relation to Russia as a whole, as a preliminary to the discussion in greater detail of Ukraine and its people. Ukraine has for centuries been so intimately associated with Great Russia that many developments are common to both, and the one cannot be understood without the other.

Let us first go back in time before the rise of Moscow. When a number of independent principalities took the place of the Kiev State the emergence of social classes became much more sharply marked. Constant fighting involved extensive military operations, which

could not be successfully undertaken without the mass of the people submitting to increasingly concentrated authority. The prince who filled the role of leader was naturally hostile towards followers who showed signs of becoming his rivals, whilst those who followed submissively were rewarded by privileged treatment, by promotion to subordinate positions of authority, and by gifts of one kind or another. Those privileged individuals in turn adopted similar methods, and so a graduated hierarchy came into being; the prince at the top, nobles with their principal underlings in the middle, and at the base of the pyramid the slaves and mass of free and partly free peasants. The prince acquired further prestige and power by successful raids enabling him to reward his followers with loot, by the occupation of conquered territory, and by annexing a large part of the profits of trade.

We have seen that in the beginning the prince was a Varangian chief who combined in his person the roles of trader, brigand, and pirate. Christianity increased his authority, since the Greek Church held that rulers are appointed by God 'to deal retribution unto the wicked and favour unto the good/ Such

teaching naturally strengthened the position of one whose duty it was to maintain order and security. The prince's successors, the Tsars of Russia, were firm believers to the last in 'the Right Divine of kings to govern wrong.' To assist him in performing his duties the prince selected a special retinue of faithful followers. This formed an upper class comprising 'princes' men' or *boyars*, and, in a lower grade, household and serving men.

The retinue was a military class which evolved out of the armed traders of the water road. The trading towns also maintained military forces, of which a number were elected to act as town wardens. In the early years of Varangian rule the wealth of the military class, as of the princes, was largely founded on slave trading. After the eleventh century, however, slave trading was replaced by slave ownership. The reason for this change, which is an important turning-point in Russian history, is to be found—at least in part—in an extensive reorientation of world trade then taking place.

This briefly is what happened. In the eleventh century there was a good deal of manoeuvring to get a grip on the lucrative Levantine trade at the eastern end of the

Mediterranean and in the Red Sea. Constantinople occupied a very favourable position geographically in relation to this trade, of which it had secured a virtual monopoly so far as Europe was concerned. The Byzantine Empire formed a barrier to direct commerce between west and east; western traders, to the annoyance of the ambitious Italian cities, not being permitted to pass through Byzantine territory or waters into eastern lands. The Levant itself had since the seventh century been in the hands of the Arabs, who controlled both the ancient overland caravan routes and the shipping in the Red Sea. But in the second half of the eleventh century the Eastern Caliphate was overrun by the Seljuk Turks, who swept onward and were soon face to face with Constantinople across the Bosphorus.

When the Byzantine Emperor appealed to the Pope at Rome for assistance in stemming the advance of the Turks, the Italian traders realised that here was an opportunity not to be missed. The Pope also saw an opportunity to unite Christendom and subordinate the Greek Empire and Church to Rome. Crusades were thereupon organised against the infidels. No doubt many of the crusaders were actuated by the highest motives. Equally there is no

doubt that many were intent upon breaking the monopoly of Constantinople and securing control of the Levantine trade. The Fourth Crusade was clearly organised by the merchants of Venice as a campaign against Constantinople, which was taken and sacked in 1204.

The enormous amount of loot secured by the crusaders, including great quantities of gold and silver, and the subsequent development of Italian trading centres, brought a revival of trade and industry to all Western Europe, with a considerable increase of money in circulation. Even in the Baltic countries and in Northern Russia there was a clearly marked stimulation of trade following on the changes of that time. In the twelfth century the cities which were later included in the Hanseatic League had already emerged as important trading centres; and subsequently the commercial relationship of Novgorod, at the northern end of the Russian water road, with these cities was greatly strengthened. Novgorod also traded with many towns in the north of Russia, and continued to share in the commerce of the Volga. And when in the fifteenth century Moscow began to emerge as the new centre of power, it owed much of

its affluence to the fact that it had important trading connections by both land and sea with the Novgorod and Kiev regions, as well as many towns along the Volga and the Oka.

We are now in a position to note the significance of these developments in relation to Russia and Ukraine. In the thirteenth century the water road finally lost its importance as a link tending to hold the already disintegrating Kiev Rus together, having been replaced by a new trade route from the Mediterranean to Northern Europe by way of Alpine passes and the Rhine. Constantinople no longer afforded a market for Russian slaves. Traffic in slaves by the successors of Rurik had formerly reached huge proportions, but had already suffered severely through raids by the Pechenegs and Cumans. Now the Russian princes and their followers had more slaves than they could find customers for. The new trade of the north was not in slaves but in furs, wax, honey, silver, and other products. The slaves were therefore set to work on the land, and agriculture carried on by servile labour came to replace slave trading as a source of revenue. Large-scale ownership of land, hitherto unknown in Russia, became general from the twelfth century onwards.

The owners were the princes, the *boyars*, and the Church.

As time passed, relationships between master and peasant took many forms, with a variety of grades between freedom and full slavery. Questions concerning contract relationships, relative degrees of enslavement, rights and duties, rewards and penalties, the steps by which men passed from one stage to another, are too complex to be discussed in detail here. At most we can only note a few developments of a general nature which will throw light on more recent events in Ukraine.

Slavery became established in Russia many centuries before the beginnings of peasant serfdom. The free, or partly free, peasants always considerably outnumbered the slaves, but the very existence of slave labour in agriculture necessarily depressed the status of the peasants, whose rights were increasingly restricted with the passage of time. Formerly they had possessed their own cattle and land, and when the soil ceased to be productive they could move on and be reasonably sure of finding other land suitable for clearing and growing crops. But it often happened that a peasant lacking the means to obtain implements, seed, stock, and so on, was compelled



to resort to a landlord for assistance in money or in kind. The landlord would generally make a loan on condition that the peasant was pledged to work for him on terms which would never have been accepted by a man who was economically free. One form of contract would bind the peasant to extinguish the debt by a period of service. Sometimes interest had to be paid in the form of service, the borrowed capital itself being returnable at the end of the agreed period. Whatever the terms, it is clear that they would tend to restrict the peasant's freedom of movement. The peasant might want to move on, but it was to the landlord's interest to see that he did nothing of the sort. Thus it came about that laws were passed whereby peasants who ran away before the termination of their contracts were reduced to the status of slaves if caught. Also the demands of the employers for payment of interest and repayment of debt became so extravagant that very often the peasant was unable to fulfil his contract, and so had to work indefinitely under conditions less and less distinguishable from slavery. In particular the landlord's demand for additional hours of unpaid labour became increasingly burdensome.

Apart from peasants attached to private estates, there were those who worked on State lands. They were banded together in village communities, the community as a whole and not the individual paying taxes to the State. They were registered, and each was made individually responsible to the State for the tax payable by the group. Under these circumstances a peasant could leave his community only with great difficulty. To leave was to evade obligations to the State, whilst throwing an additional burden on the others in the group. If one tried to escape, the others went to considerable trouble to bring him back again. Whether working for a private owner or for the State, the whole trend of changes taking place in the peasant's status was towards serfdom; that is to say, though not in law the absolute property of the landlord, the peasant became bound to the soil and subject to the landlord's will.

Serf law first became established in Poland in the fourteenth century, and in Lithuania during the fifteenth century. All through the sixteenth century the rights and authority of the Polish-Lithuanian landlords were steadily increasing. A large part of Ukraine, as we have noted in the preceding chapter,

had come under the control of Poland and Lithuania by the end of the fourteenth century; and with the later spread of serf law the majority of the Ukrainian people were forced into serfdom by their new masters, who treated them with the greatest brutality. In some Polish manors gallows were permanently erected, and on these serfs were hanged for quite trivial offences. We can see, therefore, why from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards Ukrainian peasants who managed to escape migrated back to the steppes of East Ukraine. How desolate that region had long ago become may be gathered from a statement by Plano Carpini, who travelled through the steppe in 1246, to the effect that he found his road strewn with the skulls and bones of people slaughtered by Tartars and other barbarians. It was in this wilderness that the Ukrainian peasants now hoped to find refuge from their ruthless masters.

Serfdom was not legalised in Great Russia until the seventeenth century, though this does not mean that conditions in the meantime were appreciably better than in Poland and Lithuania. Slaves were not taxed, and many of the so-called free peasants preferred to part with their 'freedom,' selling themselves into slavery

to escape the intolerable burden of taxation imposed upon them. In the sixteenth century a law was passed whereby certain serving men previously free might now be forced into bondage. It throws light on the attitude of the gentry of that time when we read that they were 'infatuated with a lust for enslaving anyone whom they happened to come across,' and that they used all manner of expedients to increase the number of their slaves.<sup>2</sup>

At the dawn of the seventeenth century there was a prolonged famine when masters turned away many slaves in preference to feeding them. Then if they took service elsewhere, their former masters prosecuted them for desertion and theft. But before the end of the century slavery as an institution had begun to decline. There was already a move towards the establishment of a new status for the peasant, the earliest known Russian contract relating to serfdom being dated 1627.

Whereas formerly a time limit of five years had been fixed in which owners could recover fugitive peasants, this was increased to ten years in 1642, and in 1646 was abolished altogether. To quote Sir Bernard Pares, the time limit 'had been the one last hope of legal escape for the peasant. . . . Now he was

driven outside the law, if he was to find any escape from impossible conditions.’<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century there was a marked increase in the wealth, power, and privileges of the relatively small upper class, concurrently with still further degradation of the serfs, whose lot was now desperate indeed. The gentry lived in an intellectual and moral world which became ever more remote from the world of the peasant masses. This century brought the upper section of the community under western, and particularly French, influences; French culture, French clothes and manners, French fashions were adopted. French literature and use of the French tongue were considered essentials for educated men and women. It became a matter of importance to adopt French deportment in the most trivial matters, such as the manner of taking off one’s hat or of opening and closing a snuff-box. Records of the time give a general impression of the futility of many of the well-to-do. Thus, the Princess Danikoff devoted her declining years to taming the rats which abounded in her Moscow mansion. And we are told of the wife of a country magnate that she was very fond of mutton stew, and whilst eating it frequently

had the menial who prepared it brought before her and flogged; not as a punishment, but in order to give the meal additional relish. The serfs were in fact regarded as barely human, mere chattels to be bought and sold with the land on which they worked. Their serfdom was hereditary. Besides being under an obligation to pay heavy taxes and furnish recruits for the army, they were at the mercy of their extortionate masters, who exacted dues which frequently brought the serf to the verge of starvation. The master was at liberty to beat his serfs, and exile them at his own whim to hard labour in Siberia. The serf was forbidden under drastic penalties to complain to the authorities, no matter what treatment was meted out to him and his womenfolk. Citing a Russian historian, one writer tells us that:

‘ Confinement and beating were common forms of punishment, and a devilish cunning had been employed in perfecting a whole arsenal of flogging instruments: rods, staffs, whips, and bundles of leather thongs twisted with wire—sometimes, though certainly rarely, so zealously employed that the serf was beaten to death.’<sup>4</sup>

All this time the Russian frontier was being extended southward. The peasants and the Cossacks frequently resisted this encroachment

on the steppe, but their freedom was increasingly restricted and the servile system imposed upon them. By the end of the eighteenth century the peasants of Ukraine and Great Russia alike came to be regarded and treated as legally recognised slaves, with the additional burden of having to pay State taxes which had never been imposed upon Russian slaves of former times.

It is scarcely surprising that there was a rising tide of revolt among the peasants. The time came when the Tsar, Alexander II, began to realise that something must be done. This was about the middle of the nineteenth century. 'Better that emancipation should come from above than from below,<sup>5</sup> he is reported to have said. Already initial steps had been taken towards the liberation of serfs in Estonia and what remained of the former Polish State. In 1861 came the Proclamation of Emancipation. This event, however, was not due to any general increase of humane sentiment in high places, but rather to fear of what the serfs might do if they got out of hand. Another factor which carried weight was an unprecedented check in the natural increase of peasant population.

The peasants might have been forgiven if

they had called the freedom conferred upon them by some other name. True, according to the Statute: 'The right of bondage over the peasants settled upon the landlord's estates, and over the courtyard people, is for ever abolished.' But there is such a thing as economic servitude, and the new conditions found the peasants with some burdens removed, but onerous economic burdens of another kind imposed.<sup>5</sup> The land laws were so complicated and contradictory that the peasant—usually illiterate anyhow—could not get any clear notion of what his rights were. An allotment was thrust on to him which had to be paid for in instalments extending over a lifetime. Every difficulty was put in the way of either renouncing his rights to the allotment or disposing of it to anyone else. He was still forbidden to leave his village community without permission. In general he had less land for cultivation than before. Even in the old days, as already indicated, there had been severe economic distress. Yet now there were more mouths to feed with less resources for obtaining food. Between the emancipation and 1900—possibly stimulated by a vague hope of better times to come—the peasant population increased by fifty per cent.



A few years later came the revolution of 1905. With the expansion of industry there had been a considerable migration of peasants to the towns. Here they found life no easier than when they worked on the land. Writing so recently as 1911, Stephen Graham recorded his impressions of Moscow as follows: ' At the Khitry Market one may often see men and women with only one cotton garment between their bodies and the cruel cold. How they live is incomprehensible. And the beggars! They say there are 50,000 of them in Moscow alone. The city belongs to them; if the city rats own the drains, the beggars own the streets.'<sup>6</sup>

Industrial employers were as harshly repressive as the landlords. Purchasing power seldom rose above the level of sheer misery. During 1905 some thousands of workers assembled in St. Petersburg to present a petition to the Tsar, beginning with these words: ' We workers, inhabitants of St. Petersburg, have come to Thee. We are unfortunate, reviled slaves. We are crushed by despotism and tyranny. At last, when our patience was exhausted, we ceased work and begged our masters to give us only that without which life is a torture. But this was refused.' The

petition ended: ‘ Sire, do not refuse aid to Thy people. Order and swear that our requests will be granted, and Thou wilt make Russia happy; if not we are ready to die now. We have only two roads: freedom and happiness, or the grave.’

Thus the common people sought to plead their cause. The reply of autocracy was to call out the troops, which fired on the procession, and on the crowds. It is estimated that 500 were killed and 3000 wounded. For the moment autocracy had its way. But change, swift and sweeping, was near at hand.

## *Chapter V*

### RELIGION

The Ukrainian peasant, like his brother in Great Russia, has always been at heart a pagan. Such indeed is the case with all peasant people. Steeped in immemorial superstition, the twilight mind of the illiterate peasant held tenaciously to the ancient beliefs of the race. Everywhere in peasant countries one can still find unshaken faith in pagan mythology with its deities and rites. There is no need to go to the other end of Europe to confirm this statement. In Ireland, for example, there are peasants who still put out saucers of milk for the fairies every night, stick pins into wishing trees, remove warts—as they firmly believe—by incantations, and overcome powers of evil by performing appropriate rites at the cross-roads or at the well. So it is in Ukraine, where the common people cling to a hundred customs and observances that are pagan in origin.

When Christianity came to the Kiev State

the deep convictions which for generations had reigned in the minds of the people could not be immediately flung aside as though they were of no moment. To the peasant any declaration that the old gods were a mere fiction would have seemed the height of absurdity. At a time when Christianity was widely regarded with suspicion the Church had to devise means of overcoming resistance. A people might be baptised at the point of the sword, but this left things very much as they were before. So recourse was had to rival forms and ceremonies, to rites and magic and spells which, by bridging the break with the past, might persuade a people to accept the Christian faith. In place of the pagan gods and goddesses the Church offered a galaxy of saints. In Russia St Vlas (or St Blaise) became the protector of flocks and herds instead of Veles the god of cattle. The prophet Elijah with his chariot of fire replaced Perun the god of thunder. There were saints or Biblical personages to take the place of all the old heathen deities. Hallowed wax, sacred medals, amulets, rosaries, and holy water were substituted for the charms and elixirs of earlier days. This did not take place all at once, nor yet everywhere. But the people were

gradually won over to the *forms* of the new religion, since these forms differed but little in essence from those to which they had been accustomed. Adherence to the Christian faith also brought with it material advantages not to be lightly ignored. Yet still the older gods were a living reality, and to the peasant it seemed obvious that they would be angry if he deserted them altogether. Thus these earlier gods began to assume the shape of malignant spirits, to be suitably propitiated in order to ward off the evil they would otherwise be certain to inflict.

The people eventually settled down to a compromise between paganism and a superstitious reverence for the outward forms of the Greek Orthodox Church. Centuries have passed, yet still there is the sorcerer in competition with the priest. And still to-day many a peasant in Ukraine offers small propitiatory gifts to powers worshipped by his pre-Christian ancestors.

It should not be overlooked that most of the rural priests were themselves ignorant and credulous men. They were also not above behaving as though they were merchants dealing in magical sacraments, and greedily they extorted the highest possible price for the

peculiar merchandise of which they held a monopoly. If the peasant could not or would not pay the sum demanded, the priest frequently refused to administer the sacrament. Sometimes he would even refuse to bury the dead if unable to make enough on the transaction. Thus it came about that in recent times there was a saying among dissenters in Russia, that the Orthodox Church was not a house of prayer but a house of plunder.

Religion to the Russian peasantry remained to the end primarily a faith in the efficiency of forms and ceremonies, with payment to the *pop* or priest for his indispensable part in securing certain advantages. The ritual became hallowed by centuries of usage, and it was held that departure from it even in minor details would not only deprive it of its efficacy but might also spell disaster. Such is the religion—fetishism clothed in a Christian garb—to which the peasantry in West Ukraine is still passionately devoted.

This devotion was strengthened by the fact that after the decline of Constantinople, Orthodox Russia became relatively isolated from other nations adhering to the Christian faith as formulated by the Greek Church. Whenever the Russian people were called upon to

defend their country against aggression, they had to fight enemies of another creed as well as of another nationality and speech. Thus Orthodoxy became identified with the life of the nation, and so acquired a strong hold on the minds of the people; a fact of which neither Church nor State was slow in taking advantage.

The first bishops came to Ukraine from Constantinople, and from Constantinople the rites and regulations of the Greek Orthodox Church were imported, together with documents upon which the first Russian legal code, *Russkaya Pravda*, was founded. In 1299 the Metropolitan of Kiev moved to the town of Vladimir, but in the time of John Moneybag (1328-4,0) Moscow became the seat of the head of the Church. In the fifteenth century, however, we find two Metropolitans installed, one at Moscow, and one at Kiev for Orthodox Ukrainians, who by this time had come under Polish—and therefore Roman Catholic—rule. Most of the Ukrainian gentry seem to have readily adopted Roman Catholicism, a change of religious outlook which put them on a better footing with the Polish ruling class. The peasantry and many of the clergy remained loyal to the Orthodox Church, and

were accordingly subjected to a persistent campaign on behalf of Roman Catholicism by Jesuit missionaries. In this campaign the Jesuits met with enough success to make the position of the Orthodox clergy difficult. The idea occurred to Bishop Terleci of Lutsk and others that the best way of preserving the Orthodox rites would be to bring the Ukrainian branch of the Church under the supremacy of the Pope. There was a good deal of opposition, with excommunication and counter-excommunication, but the Pope agreed and a new 'Uniat' Church was established in Ukraine in 1596. Those Ukrainian nobles and landlords who had not already deserted the Orthodox Church now went over to Rome. The peasants and their priests still held fast to Orthodoxy. The result was to create a wider gulf than ever between the upper and lower classes in Ukraine. When at a later date East Ukraine formed part of Russia, those who had become members of the Uniat Church were severely persecuted, especially under Alexander II and Alexander III. Under the former, many of the Uniats were driven into the Orthodox Church by a decree of 1874, and the Tsarist Government remained hostile to adherents of the Uniat Church



even after proclaiming religious tolerance in

1905\*

After the establishment of the Uniacy not many years passed before the Russian Church was torn by a crisis brought about by what appeared to be innovations in the Church books and services. Actually the alleged innovations were part of an attempt to bring Russian Church practices into conformity with those of the early Greek Church, a number of errors having occurred in course of time through mistranslation and defective copying of manuscripts. The Patriarch Nikon, who had been appointed in 1652, issued in 1659 a revised edition of the Church books after correcting them in accordance with Greek and Old Slavonic texts. At that time it was customary in Russia when giving the benediction to make the sign of the cross with two fingers held together, whereas the Greeks always used three fingers drawn to a point. Nikon decided to adopt the three-fingered usage (the 'pinch of snuff cross' as its opponents called it) for private devotions. He also re-established the Greek custom of celebrating the mass on five wafers instead of on seven as had been the custom for many years, and he reversed the direction of rotation of Church

processions. But what probably caused the most widespread resentment was the decision to substitute the spelling 'Jesus' for the contraction 'Jsus' which in the course of many copyings had come to be universally accepted as correct.

It seems fantastic that such corrections in the name of Christianity should have led to the execution or burning alive of thousands of both Great Russians and Ukrainians, whilst many thousands more had their hands cut off, their tongues slit, or were tortured with the knout or on the rack. Yet that is what happened to many of those who resisted the changes. The fact is that superstitious reverence for accustomed forms was reinforced by a belief that the Russian Church was the only remaining true Orthodox community after Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. Moscow had, in fact, become a third Rome, the repository of a ritual which it was impious to alter in the slightest degree. But now the people were informed that they were grievously mistaken in their beliefs. Two other Patriarchs, one from Alexandria and one from Antioch, presided over a council in 1667 at which those who persisted in the old methods of two-fingered crossing and so forth were

anathematised and excommunicated—‘their souls to be given up to eternal torments.’ Many people were not slow in drawing the inference that all the holy men of Russia’s past must, according to this judgement, already be writhing in hell. Refusal to accept the changes was widespread, and instructions were thereupon issued that dissenters must be sought out, tortured, and if still impenitent burned alive. For upwards of thirty years the process of extermination continued. On one occasion over two thousand ‘Old Believers’ set fire to the wooden church in which they were hiding, and perished in the flames rather than be taken by the authorities.

The Old Believers, or *Raskolniks*, scattered far over the land and formed small agricultural colonies beyond the reach of the special officers appointed to hunt them out. Under persecution their ardour increased. Very naturally they threw in their lot with other discontented elements. Thus we find them associated with the Cossacks of the Don and Yaik (Ural), and Pugachev’s standard bore the *Raskolnik* cross with eight points emblazoned upon it. The *Raskolniks* split up into a number of sects, some of which developed the most extraordinary beliefs and practices,

but in course of time they settled down and lost much of their religious fanaticism. East Ukraine was less affected by sectarianism than other parts of Russia, until after 1865 when a form of Protestantism made rapid headway among the people. This religious movement embodied sects the most important of which was known as the *Stunda*. In the beginning the *Stunda* appears to have been formed under the influence of German Protestants who had settled in Ukraine. The founder was a wage-labourer, Michael Ratushny, who lived in the Odessa district. The sect based its teaching on the New Testament, emphasising the desirability of simple living and affirming that men should live like brothers, ready to share their possessions in time of trouble. It is interesting to note that the New Testament was first made available in Russian in 1818 by the labours of three Englishmen who founded the St Petersburg branch of the London Bible Society in 1812. The Russian branch of the Society was suppressed in 1826 by the Minister of Public Instruction, who denounced the Society as being a revolutionary association intended for the overthrow of thrones, churches, law, order, and religion throughout the world. It was quite clear,

said this enlightened Minister, that 'in translating the Scriptures from the language of the Church into that of novels and the stage, the Bible Society's sole objects were to shake the foundation of religion, to spread unbelief among the faithful, and to kindle civil war and foster rebellion in Russia.' <sup>7</sup> In short, Tsarist officialdom adopted much the same attitude towards the spread of Christian knowledge as many people in Great Britain to-day adopt towards the spread of Bolshevism. At no time were the Ukrainian people allowed under the Tsars to have the Gospels translated into their own language, a Ukrainian version even of any part of the Scriptures being strictly prohibited.

Returning to the seventeenth century, we find the Russian Church greatly shaken by the Great Schism and the *Raskol* movement that sprang from it. Early in the eighteenth century Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate and substituted for it a Holy Synod. By arranging for a special officer, selected by himself and significantly called by him 'the Tsar's eye,' Peter saw to it that in future Church policy was determined by the secular power. From that time forward, save for a brief period of leniency under Catherine II,

the Orthodox Church in Russia degenerated into an instrument of repression in the hands of the Tsars.

Summing up, we may say that with relatively few exceptions the Ukrainians have never known anything of Christianity in the sense in which the word is used in Protestant countries. The Church to which they were faithful for so long deliberately strengthened the grip of superstition on the illiterate peasantry and set its face against popular education. Many of its priests down to the present century were themselves almost unbelievably ignorant and superstitious, and only too frequently given to drunkenness and immorality. The official religion may have brought the people a certain amount of consolation. It assuredly increased their need for consolation by reinforcing their servitude and intensifying their misery. Finally, the fanatical intolerance of Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox rulers alike was responsible for the further affliction of a people already crushed by repression and exploitation.

## *Chapter VI*

### LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

In an earlier chapter we noted that authorities have not yet decided whether Ukrainian is a language or a dialect. There is, however, general agreement, except among fanatical Ukrainian nationalists, that there are more similarities than differences. It is impossible to discuss this matter here in any detail, but it may be noted that the alphabets are much the same, as are conjugations and declensions. There is a marked difference of accent, though this is by no means uniform; so that there are, as it were, dialects within a dialect. A general tendency is for Ukrainians to pronounce the original *y* and *i* rather like the English short *i*—a difference from Great Russian which may perhaps be compared with the different ways of pronouncing the Greek *vj* in classical antiquity. Again, gutturals sometimes become sibilant, and there is in general less ‘softening’ than in Great Russian speech. One difference, the use of *h*, in Ukrainian where Great Russian

has *g*, is not so marked as might be supposed. If the reader will say the English word 'grow,' and then say 'hrow,' pronouncing the latter word as much as possible in the back of the throat and rolling the letter *r* slightly, he will see that there is a distinct connection between *g* and *h*.

Had there been complete freedom of movement, a general intermingling with Great Russians for several generations, which of course implies economic as well as political freedom, it is not improbable that these and a number of other differences would have dwindled almost to vanishing point. And so far from anyone being worse off aesthetically, spiritually, or materially, there is every reason to believe that mankind would greatly benefit by the elimination of such differences all over the world. The fanatical nationalist, however, resolutely refuses to see matters in this light. He and his kind are everywhere searching for trivial differences of language and literature, not to eliminate but to exaggerate them, and use them to reinforce various separatist movements. Where differences do not already exist, or are insufficiently marked, such people do not hesitate to create new, or revive old, differences. In the name of 'patriotism' they emphasise every petty distinction which can



be traced by exhaustive research. Their so-called patriotism has its roots in an egoism which demands distinction for themselves as leaders in a literary and national revival. This is clearly seen in the activities of a number of *emigrt* Ukrainian nationalists—literary men, professors of literature and languages, intellectuals of one sort or another—who do all they can to create a feeling hostile towards the Great Russians and their culture. To this end they invent new language forms, devise new ways of spelling words, hunt out obsolete words, and adopt whatever shade of Ukrainian dialect is most unlike the Great Russian language. In order to support their claims they magnify the importance of obscure writers, and are even prepared to distort and falsify history.<sup>8</sup>

There is, of course, a genuine Ukrainian nationalism which is not based on the self-esteem of intellectuals, nor on hatred of neighbouring countries. It is not concerned to exaggerate or create differences, but takes a natural pride in the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people. We shall be better able to judge how far that pride is justified if we now run through a few notes on the literature of Ukraine.

To begin at the beginning we have to go back to the time of Nestor of Kiev, who was born about 1056, and later became a monk of the Petcherski Monastery at Kiev. As the reputed compiler of what are known as the Russian Chronicles, Nestor is generally regarded as the father not only of Ukrainian but also of Russian history. Whether or not the Chronicles, or part of them, were compiled by Nestor; or, as some authorities believe, by Silvester of Kiev; they are accepted by Russians and Ukrainians alike as a source of historical information of fundamental importance. Sir Bernard Pares tells us that the chroniclers took great pains to secure accuracy. 'These annals,' he continues, 'were a school of history in which man was taught to use the past for guidance in the present and to see always before him the great choice between good and evil. They have exercised a deeply moral influence on all succeeding Russian historians.'<sup>9</sup>

It is of interest to note from another source that a number of ancient Kievan folk-songs are preserved in the Chronicles. The casting of legends into poetical form—an art still common to both Great Russia and Ukraine—thus dates back at least to the time of the Viking princes,

and may therefore have had its origin in the sagas of the Northmen.

Another work which probably dates from the twelfth century is a prose-poem *The Campaign of Prince Igor*. This is said to afford every internal evidence of authenticity, yet doubts have arisen because the manuscript was only discovered in 1795 and was shortly afterwards destroyed in the great fire of Moscow.

Continuations of the Chronicles brought the historical narrative down to the thirteenth century. From that time to the end of the fifteenth century there is a gap in Ukrainian literature. Then in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came a revival in which the literature of the time was dominated by the ceaseless struggles against the Poles, also by the conflicts caused by attempts of the Jesuits to force Roman Catholicism on to the Ukrainian people. The western provinces were the first to suffer in these struggles, and so we find that the literary movement was first centred in East Galicia. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Kiev became the more prominent literary centre. Yet a century later the extraordinary development of literary-aesthetic tastes in Great Russia drew Ukrainian intellectuals away from their own land, and so for the time

being the literary development of Kiev was arrested.

The eighteenth century produced one of the first writers in modern Ukrainian, Ivan Kotliarevski, author of a travesty of part of the *Aeneid* in which he displayed marked poetical talent. But the greatest and by far the most widely known of Ukrainian poets was Taras Shevchenko (1814-61), many of whose songs and lyrics have been translated into English by Padraic Breslin, E. L. Voynich, and others. Shevchenko was born a serf at Kirilovka, a village in the province of Kiev. As a youth he was ambitious to become an artist, and following his owner to St Petersburg he occasionally found an opportunity to see famous pictures and statuary. By a happy accident he was brought by a Ukrainian painter, Soshenko, into touch with friends who bought him out of his serfdom. Shevchenko now became a pupil at the Academy of Arts, where he speedily came into contact with others having interests similar to his own. From the age of twenty-four he began to write poetry. His first volume brought him prompt recognition. Meanwhile he continued his career as an artist, and in 1845 became a teacher of drawing at the University of Kiev. Here he

made friends with a group of intellectuals who formed themselves into a society called the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius. The Russian authorities considered the society to be dangerously subversive in tendency, and its members were arrested and imprisoned. Shevchenko was sentenced to exile and military service in Siberia for life; the Tsar, Nicholas I, giving instructions that he was not to be allowed either to write or draw. Eventually some friends secured his release. He was, however, broken in health and died a few years later in 1861. A remarkable statue of Shevchenko, executed by the Soviet architect, M. Manizer, was erected in his memory at Kharkov in 1935. Grouped about the plinth of the statue is an ascending series of figures, tracing the changes which have taken place from the days of serfdom to the present day in the lives of the Ukrainian people.

In his poetical works Shevchenko drew on an inexhaustible wealth of Ukrainian folklore, and returned again and again to descriptions of Ukraine and dramatic aspects of its history. The Cossack wars and popular insurrections in particular held his imagination and provided him with material for many of his verses.

A contemporary of Shevchenko's was another Ukrainian who became a world-famous writer, Nikolai Gogol. But though Gogol was born in Ukraine he wrote in the Great Russian language, and is therefore regarded as a Russian rather than a Ukrainian author. Besides his well-known works, such as *The Inspector-General* and *Dead Souls*, he wrote two series of stories about Ukraine, including *Evenings in a Farm near Dikanka*, by which he first became famous.

The Ukrainian language or dialect is very rich in tales and songs, including narrative poems based on history or tradition. Some of these are songs of the early princes of Kiev and their followers; whilst others, like much of Shevchenko's work, are based on Cossack exploits of the seventeenth century. Collections of such songs were made early in the nineteenth century by Prince Tsertelev and M. Maximovich. In 1834. a collection of *Ukrainian National Songs* by Maximovich was published; a work which strongly influenced the modern Ukrainian national movement. Another volume of Ukrainian songs, collected by V. Antonovich and M. Drahomanov, was published in 1875. A more recent collection was made by Catherine Hrushevski and pub-

lished in 1927. These songs, like the others, dwell in the main on the picturesque and passionate aspects of Ukrainian life and history.

It will be seen from this brief summary that, disregarding the ancient Chronicles and the story about Prince Igor, which were written in a language different from modern Ukrainian, the literary work of Ukraine has sprung almost entirely from the common people. The greatest Ukrainian poet began life as a serf, and there can be no doubt that the Ukrainian songs and tales originated with the peasantry and have been handed down by them from generation to generation. This is all the more remarkable in that right down to 1914 illiteracy was almost universal in Russian Ukraine. Not a single school gave instruction in Ukrainian. In East Galicia conditions were more favourable, the Austro-Hungarian Government having decided to encourage Ukrainian nationalism there as a check to Polish influence. Thus the Ukrainian language was granted equal rights with Polish, and there were over 3000 primary schools giving instruction in Ukrainian. The language was also used in association with several professorial chairs at Lemberg University. In Bukovina, too, there was a number of schools where the children were taught in

Ukrainian. Nevertheless the economic repression of the Ukrainian peasantry by Polish landlords not only continued but was intensified during the period of Austrian rule. In practice, therefore, the Ukrainians of Galicia and Bukovina were never able to take full advantage of the educational facilities which the Austro-Hungarian Government sought to confer on them.

Provision for education in what is now called Carpatho-Ukraine was on a lower level, the Austrian Government evidently seeing no reason why this section of the Ukrainian population should have favourable treatment. In 1914 only eighty elementary schools gave instruction in Ukrainian out of a total of 630, and even so the Magyar language was made compulsory for all. The schools were hopelessly understaffed, each teacher being expected to look after an average of 150 children.

All things considered, it is not surprising that the total literary output of Ukraine has been small. Nor is it difficult to understand why much of the literature that has been produced is not infrequently marred by a too narrow conception of patriotism, and a somewhat extravagant rhapsodising about semi-barbaric



fighting and bloodshed of times long gone by. Indeed the miracle is that good literature ever came out of pre-war Ukraine at all. The fact remains that in spite of every discouragement the common folk (not the well-to-do intelligentsia) have developed a culture of which they may well be proud; a culture which manifests itself not only in song and legend, but in music and dance, and in the sensitive appreciation of form and colour displayed in handicrafts such as the embroidery of fabrics, carpet weaving, and designs on glazed ware.

## *Chapter VII*

### THE COSSACKS

The Cossacks of Ukraine first came into prominence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before discussing the Cossacks themselves, it may be well to note a few important events associated with their emergence from obscurity. We have already referred to a mass migration that took place in the sixteenth century, when Ukrainian peasants fled from ruthless Polish masters to the East Ukrainian steppe. We have also noted that in 1569 Lithuania and Poland were united, and that in 1596 a Uniat Church was established in Ukraine. Let us now take the year 1600 as a convenient point of observation from which we can look backward or forward as may be necessary. In 1600 Ukraine was largely in the hands of the Poles, who claimed the provinces of Galicia, Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev. The Crimea, together with a strip of steppe, was under the control of a Tartar Khanate. The Turks were feeling their way along the

northern coast of the Black Sea. At this time a main line of fortified towns with their intervening ramparts ran, roughly speaking, from Kazan on the middle Volga by way of Riazan, Tula, and Putivl to Periaslavl on the Dniepr, some fifty miles downstream from Kiev. Other lines of defence had been constructed somewhat farther east, with outposts at Livny, Voronesh, and Belgorod, as the Tartars were gradually pushed back. As the frontier advanced the servile system advanced with it.

In 1600 Boris Godunov, head of a prominent Moscow family of Tartar origin, occupied the Russian throne. Two years earlier his predecessor, Fedor, son of Ivan the Terrible and last of the dynasty founded by John Moneybag, had died. Fedor's half-brother Dmitry died a few years earlier still. Boris was chosen as Tsar in 1598. The period between that date and 1613 is known as the Time of Troubles. It was in fact a most troubled and confusing time. For three years in succession, from 1601 to 1603, Russia was in the grip of starvation owing to repeated failure of the crops, and it is said that the people resorted to cannibalism. Peasants pleaded to be taken into slavery in the hope that their masters would feel compelled to

feed them. Other peasants took to murdering and robbing travellers, whilst others again fled in their thousands to the open steppe where at least there was some prospect of securing food by hunting and fishing. It was a time when great masses of people were ready for revolt and revolution. They were prepared to follow anyone who showed capacity for leadership and promised to alleviate their misery. There was no lack of such leaders. Two Pretenders to the throne turned up and secured substantial backing from the Cossacks, peasantry, and other discontented elements. Both pretended to be Dmitry and so became known as False Dmitry I and False Dmitry II. Both were presently murdered, the remains of one being fired from a cannon in the direction of Poland, the country from whence he came. Boris Godunov died suddenly—the manner of his death is doubtful—and his wife and children were massacred by the people of Moscow. A rich *boyar* called Basil Shuisky now became Tsar, only to be driven from the throne and compelled to enter a monastery. Several new Pretenders appeared and faded out again. The Polish Crown Prince Vladislav was chosen to succeed Shuisky, but neither he nor his father (who really wanted the crown

for himself) succeeded in occupying the throne. Finally the Romanov dynasty was established in 1613; beginning, as it was to end three hundred years later, in a time of social chaos.

In East Ukraine wealthy Polish, Lithuanian, and to a less extent Ukrainian landlords were busily annexing large tracts of steppe, and seeking to enslave the peasantry by extending Polish serf law to their new lands. As the land-grabbing and enserfing process went on, peasants scattered over the steppe in the hope of getting beyond the reach of these rapacious landlords. It will be remembered that some of the fugitive peasants divided their time between hunting game and fighting Tartars, whilst some hired themselves to the authorities from time to time as frontier guards. These guards with thousands of other steppe-rovers became known as *kozaki* or Cossacks. In a Russian folk-song a Cossack is asked who his companions are. He replies that he has four companions—the dark night, a knife of steel, a good steed, and a tough bow. His keen arrows are his messengers.

The earliest known reference to the Cossacks dates from the fifteenth century, when a band of these freedom-loving adventurers protected the town of Riazan against Tartar attacks.

Their numbers rapidly increased in the sixteenth century as more and more peasants sought refuge from the Poles. Yet the Cossacks were by no means all peasants, nor were they all Ukrainians or even Great Russians. Some were the sons of impoverished *boyars*, and we read of several princes among them as well. Some were Tartars turned Christian and ready to fight against their compatriots. There were also numbers of vagrant Poles, Lithuanians, Scandinavians, Serbs, and even Germans. The majority, however, were Ukrainian peasants.

The Cossacks lived in camps on the lower Dniepr, the Don, lower Volga, and in other regions at first beyond the reach of Polish and Russian authorities. There was little difference in character between the various fraternities, though the camps on the Don and the Volga contained a much larger percentage of Great Russians. The Dniepr Cossacks established a camp on islands in the river. This was known as the *ZaPorozhskaya Sech*, or Camp below the Rapids, and its history can be traced back to the year 1499. The camp was at first close to the rapids, but was moved later on to more inaccessible islands farther down the river. Women were not admitted to the camp. Apart from this restriction, all who

seemed likely to make good comrades were welcomed by the fraternity. The men, among whom there were many light-hearted adventurers and not a few desperate and hardened cut-throats, became more and more addicted to raiding and plundering as their numbers increased. The characteristic which united them all was love of independence.

In the seventeenth century they owned a fleet of small galleys which they used for piratical exploits on the Black Sea and for attacking the Turkish and Tartar ports. Among other trophies carried off on these occasions were a number of small cannon with which they equipped the ramparts of their camp. Such raiding activities greatly embarrassed the Polish Government, which had no desire to become embroiled with the Turks. Moreover, the Cossack hordes were considered to be a threat to the established order. The nobles and other landowners also had good reason to fear the Cossacks. Attempts were therefore made to break up the raiding fraternities. The number of Cossacks hired as frontier guards was greatly increased and a system of registering the guards was adopted. Whereas in 1570 there were only 300 registered Cossacks, the number had risen to 6000 not

many years later. Concurrently with steps taken to restrain the Cossacks, every effort was made to force the majority of them into peasant occupations. In this task the authorities received every assistance from the local landowners, who had experienced considerable difficulty in getting enough serfs. To escape the new restrictions several thousand Cossacks migrated to the Don, but the majority remained and retaliated by joining the ordinary peasants in acts of violence against the common enemy.

Religious persecution and the establishment of the Uniat Church added fuel to the fire of their hatred. It also brought them more allies in the small traders and craftsmen of the Ukrainian towns. The wealthy merchants of Poland were as intent upon grabbing Ukrainian trade as Polish landlords were upon grabbing Ukrainian land. The small traders of Ukraine were adherents of the Orthodox Church, and this gave the Roman Catholic Polish merchants a 'respectable'<sup>5</sup> excuse for squeezing them out of business. The Ukrainian traders, however, were organised in brotherhoods attached to their churches; and their organisations, which provided for mutual help, now became an important factor in the general resistance to the Poles. The schools of Ukraine afforded



an element which could counter the arguments of the Jesuits, for some of the scholars had been sent to Rome and other cities of Western Europe as part of their training. The brotherhoods, Cossacks, and peasants formed a united front against Polish merchants and landlords, and also against Roman Catholic propaganda; standing together for economic and religious liberty. The Cossacks saw nothing incongruous in robbing and slitting the throats of Polish landlords whilst posing as champions of the Orthodox faith.

As the Zaporozhye community grew in numbers and solidarity, a form of military government was adopted. A council was chosen which elected annually and by popular vote a leader or 'hetman'; also various subsidiary civil and military officers. The hetman and selected officers formed a 'rada' or governing body which administered the affairs of the fraternity, now known among themselves as 'The Knighthood of the Zaporozhye Host.' Their constitution was essentially democratic, with a large admixture of anarchy in their external relations.

The Cossacks now ranged over the steppe, plundering the landlords there and sometimes making raids farther afield.' Some penetrated

far into Russian territory and were lost altogether to Ukraine. The majority devoted themselves to the task of exterminating the Polish and Ukrainian landlords, whilst giving support to the peasantry and others who adhered to the Orthodox Church. All this time there had been a considerable measure of equality within the community. This gradually gave way to inequality as some Cossacks acquired more property than others, and so also acquired a different outlook. The older Cossacks (the 'Elders') tended to lead a more settled life near the frontier towns, and took to farming. Among them were men originally drawn from once well-to-do families, and these with the rest of the Elders participated in the defence of the frontier. Many became proprietors of estates, and began to look down on the rank and file of peasant Cossacks as being their inferiors. Their aim was now diverted from the task of exterminating the Polish gentry to establishing themselves as a Cossack upper class in Ukraine. But the Polish Government had other ideas. Warsaw (and later Moscow) progressively restricted all Cossack rights. The registered frontier guards were put in charge of Polish officers, and had their property taken away

from them. The election of leaders was abolished, Poles being appointed instead. Thousands of peasant Cossacks were rounded up and driven into serfdom. The time came at last, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when official Acts abolished all freedom of movement on the steppe.

In 1654 the Dniepr or Zaporozhye Cossacks under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnytsky offered to submit themselves to the authority of the Tsar. The Tsar agreed, and East Ukraine, with some 60,000 Cossacks, became subject to Russia. The Cossack Elders secured advantages denied them by the Poles, such as the right to elect their own hetman, right to administer the affairs of the country, and freedom from religious persecution. This, however, did not mean that the peasantry were less oppressed than before. Later the Cossacks wavered in their allegiance. In the 1660's a considerable number of them decided to place themselves under the protection of the Sultan of Turkey, who in 1672 proclaimed himself 'Lord of all Cossacks.' The opportunism of the Cossack Elders at this time will be discussed more fully in our next chapter when we tell of the Cossack rebellion led by Bogdan Khmelnytsky.

The Cossacks who remained at the camp

were driven out by Peter the Great in 1709 owing to the treachery of their leader. From 1711 to 1734 the Cossack camp was removed to the mouth of the Dniepr in Turkish territory, but was subsequently moved back on to Russian soil during the reign of Empress Anne (1730-40). Later they were again expelled and their fortress at the rapids was finally destroyed by Potemkin in the time of Catherine II (1762-96). The Cossacks were now scattered abroad, many retiring to the Crimea and from thence to the Kuban river. Even here they were no longer beyond the ever-lengthening reach of the Russian authorities. In 1784 Crimea and the Kuban district were annexed by Russia.

Those Cossacks who remained under Russian rule were subjected to a rigid military discipline. They had long proved themselves to be brilliant cavalymen, and invaluable for scouting and suchlike military purposes. Under the Tsars they retained special privileges such as freedom or partial freedom from taxation; hunting, fishing, and brewing rights; and also received grants of some of the best lands. In these and other ways they were won over to the support of autocracy. In 1831 the Emperor Nicholas I reorganised the regiments

of Ukraine under the name of Cossacks of Little Russia. Every Cossack between the ages of eighteen and forty-five was liable for military service and had to supply himself with a horse, arms, and equipment. The nominal dignity of hetman was vested in the heir-apparent to the Russian crown. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the total number of male Cossacks was estimated to be a little under 1,000,000.

The camps of the Don and Volga Cossacks were, of course, outside Ukrainian territory, but a few words may be added here about the Cossacks of the Don. Their camp was established somewhat earlier than that of the Dniepr Cossacks. They were in closer touch with Moscow, but resembled the other Cossack fraternities in their organisation and way of life. The Russian authorities supported them in their raids on the Tartars and Turks, and Moscow bought slaves from them which they captured in such raids. The Don region was very dependent upon Moscow economically, and the Cossacks would have found it difficult to maintain their existence without supplies of powder and lead and also corn from the Russian capital. In return the Cossacks served the Moscow, Government as frontiersmen and in

other capacities. In the middle of the seventeenth century we find a division of the Cossacks into rich and poor such as we have noted in connection with the camp on the Dniepr. The Elders seized the best lands and accumulated property. The poorer Cossacks had no property, and either became the serfs of the Elders or were captured by the Tsar's officers and handed over to Russian landlords. Sometimes they succeeded in migrating to the Volga, the Caucasus, and even wandered into Siberia as far as the Chinese frontiers.

In their combination of restless rover, reckless freebooter, courageous warrior, and, at their best, loyal comrade, the early Cossacks resembled in some degree the Vikings, the Crusaders, the Teutonic Knights, the Livonian Order of Brethren of the Sword, and other companies of the 'glorious past' which sentimentalists see through a rosy haze of romanticism. The truth is that there were all sorts and conditions of men among the Cossacks, as in most other groups of human beings. This much may be said in their favour, that collectively they exhibited far more attractive qualities than the Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian nobles and landlords who wavered between exploiting and crushing them.

## *Chapter VIII*

### COSSACK AND PEASANT REVOLTS

In his later years Ivan the Terrible, Tsar of Russia from 1533 to 1584, behaved like a homicidal maniac. We may suppose that his bloodthirsty activities were in some degree responsible for the revolutionary period that followed soon after his death. As one observer wrote during the Time of Troubles: 'In those days the Tsar did cause a great sundering of the State: and this division, methinks, was the forerunner of all dissensions by which the land is vexed to this day.'

If it were true that Ivan became Tsar, as he himself put it, 'by the will of God and not by any false dispensation of man,' the only possible comment would be that truly God moves in a mysterious way. Ivan killed his own son with the iron rod which he habitually carried as a walking-stick. He murdered his cousin, Prince Vladimir. He was responsible for the murder of the Metropolitan of Moscow when that prelate refused to give him a

blessing. But these were trifles compared with the wholesale torture and execution of thousands of his subjects. The total number of executions is not known; but we do know that on occasion he had lists of them made, sometimes containing upwards of 4000 names, for circulating to monasteries so that prayers might be offered up for the souls of his victims. At one time he instituted a reign of terror in Novgorod, when a great many of the inhabitants were massacred whilst hundreds of men, women, and children were thrown into the river and thrust under the water to drown. He resented having to share power with the *boyars*, and frequently, when talking to foreign visitors, expressed his desire to exterminate them. His executions, however, were by no means confined to the *boyar* class. For his personal protection he had a bodyguard the excesses of which earned it the name 'Blackness of Hell.'

It seems probable, then, that the Tsar's crazy orgies accentuated the general feeling of insecurity and exasperation. Nevertheless history is made not so much by the actions of this or that individual as by the material needs and greeds of men in their collective capacity. Broadly speaking, the Cossack and peasant revolts were a form of class warfare;



a rising of the needy against the greedy, of the persecuted have-nots against the haves. True, there was considerable confusion in the alignment of forces. Men were not always certain where their interests lay. The situation was complicated by a struggle for power then in progress between the *boyars* on the one hand, and on the other a rising burgher class. The latter had already had some encouragement during the reign of Tsar Ivan, who desired to find substitutes for the *boyars* whom he hated.

The first of the Cossack and peasant revolts took place in 1595-96, when two Zaporozhye Cossacks, Loboda and Nalivaiko, were responsible for widespread destruction in that part of Ukraine lying to the west of the Dniepr. The famine from 1601 to 1604 greatly strengthened the revolutionary element throughout Russia, and especially East Ukraine, which became the principal haunt of malcontents. Huge numbers of fugitives were daily joining the Cossacks. Other fugitives formed themselves into groups of armed bandits and occupied the forests within easy reach of Moscow. Giles Fletcher, uncle of John Fletcher the poet and dramatist, and Queen Elizabeth's minister in Russia, found the whole country 'full of grudge and woeful hatred \* at this time.

It will be remembered that Boris Godunov was elected Tsar in 1598. He was a capable ruler but suffered from a reputation for cunning and deceitfulness. He was also too autocratic to suit the *boyars*, who regarded themselves as his equal. Moreover, he was only an elected Tsar, and as such failed to impress the people, who had been taught to respect hereditary rulers. Attempts were now made to find a substitute for Boris who would pass as having an hereditary right to the throne. During the famine it was rumoured among the Cossacks that there was an unknown man claiming to be the Tsarevitch Dmitry. The rumours spread to Moscow; and Boris Godunov, who was already suspected of having murdered the original Dmitry, was now said to have cut the throat of the wrong child. The pseudo-Dmitry appears to have come originally from Poland, and it has been suggested that he came at the instigation of the Poles as part of a plot to subjugate Russia. Another suggestion is that the *boyars* put him forward in order to get rid of Boris Godunov. It is not improbable that some of the Cossacks had something to say in the choice of this Pretender, since it is known that he lived for a time at the Zaporozhye Camp on the Dniepr, and

there was a large number of Cossacks among his followers. 'Dmitry,<sup>5</sup> whom we will now call Dmitry I, invaded Russia in 1604 with Polish support and a force of 40,000 Cossacks. He took a number of towns and entrenched himself at Putivl. At this juncture Boris Godunov died. The Pretender marched on Moscow, and being welcomed by the people was installed as Tsar. For the moment the *boyars* supported him. One of the first things they did was to bribe the mother of the genuine Dmitry to recognise the new-comer as her son.

Dmitry I was a talented young man, well educated, democratic in outlook, and simple in his habits. He dispensed with pomp and show and was very approachable. It soon became clear that he was not going to let the *boyars* have their own way. At the same time he was very friendly towards the common people and passed laws in their favour, much to the disgust of the *boyars*. The people, however, were becoming discontented with the behaviour of the Poles introduced to Moscow by Dmitry. In 1606 several *boyars* forced their way into the Kremlin and murdered the young man whom they had hoped would leave them to rule the country.

With Dmitry out of the way they decided

that one of themselves should be elected. There followed the usual scramble for power among the *boyars*, with plots and intrigues which enable one to understand why Ivan the Terrible expressed that amiable desire of his to exterminate the lot of them. Presently they agreed to elect Basil Shuisky.

Before the end of 1606 the whole country was ablaze with revolt. The peasants and Cossacks found a leader called Ivan Bolotnikov, a former slave who had joined the Cossacks on the steppe. He too marched on Moscow, his men killing *boyars* and sacking houses on the way. A number of discontented nobles and small landlords joined his movement, and marshalling his forces, he proceeded to besiege the capital. But there was no real cohesion among his followers. Shuisky made all sorts of glowing promises to the upper-class adherents of Bolotnikov and persuaded them to desert him. Bolotnikov was compelled to retire with his peasants and Cossacks. He fled to Tula, where he was captured by the *boyars*. They put his eyes out and then drowned him in the river.

Meanwhile rumours were going round that Dmitry I was not really dead. In 1608 a False Dmitry II turned up and established

himself in a great entrenched camp at Tushino near Moscow. Russia now had two Tsars. The upper classes supported Shuisky, while the peasants, Cossacks, and downtrodden people in general backed Dmitry II. As with Bolotnikov, some *boyars* and landlords joined the new leader for a time when his cause seemed to be prospering. It is said that some were cunning enough to draw pay from both camps. Contemporary records give the impression that Dmitry II was a vagabond, calling him 'the Thief of Tushino' and other uncomplimentary names; but as these records were made by men who could read and write, and were therefore in all probability among Shuisky's adherents, it is difficult to arrive at the truth. There is distinct evidence of class prejudice in a contemporary statement that the Polish nobles scorned Dmitry II because he wore a simple peasant costume and mud-bespattered boots.

Dmitry II had behind him an army of Poles and Cossacks from both the Zaporozhye Camp and from the Don. The Poles deserted him, but the people stood by him as solidly as ever. However, he was killed by a Tartar and the revolt collapsed, though the general unrest continued. Shuisky had already been removed

by the *boyars*. They now proposed that the Polish Crown Prince should become Tsar of Russia, saying that it would be better to live under the rule of a foreigner of their own class than under the domination of their peasantry. A determined effort was made by a form of counter-revolution to establish law and order, but the people rose against the Poles and turned them out. It was at this stage that the Romanov dynasty was founded; and during the reign of the first of the line, Michael Romanov, many of the roaming bands of Cossacks were either crushed or driven back over the frontier on to the steppe.

But the Cossacks and peasants were not yet finally subdued. In 1648 Ukraine was once more in a ferment. This time they hoped to free themselves and the steppe from the encroaching tyranny of the Poles. A well-to-do and very able Cossack, Bogdan Khmelnitsky, making the Zaporozhye Camp his *centre*, sent emissaries wandering throughout East Ukraine disguised as beggars and monks. These emissaries undertook to rouse the peasantry in the villages and on the estates. Khmelnitsky meanwhile came to an agreement with the Khan of Crimea. Leading an army of Tartars, Cossacks, and Ukrainian peasantry,

and backed by the Orthodox priests of Ukraine, Khmelnitsky attacked the Poles and inflicted on them two severe defeats. The serfs now rose throughout East Ukraine, murdering Polish landlords and plundering their manors. Practically the whole region came under the control of the insurgents at this time. They even attacked the Galician city of Lvov; and Khmelnitsky, who had an army of over 100,000 men, boasted (probably with reason) that all the common people as far west as Cracow were ready to support him. Even men from the towns of Ukraine flocked to his aid. But defeat came when the Khan of Crimea deserted Khmelnitsky, who presently entered into an agreement with the Poles. This agreement secured various advantages for the Cossacks, but none for the serfs, who were even ordered to submit themselves to their masters again.

The agreement did not last. Khmelnitsky had more onerous terms forced upon him, and he then turned to the Tsar of Russia for assistance. In 1654, as stated in our last chapter, he offered to submit himself, his followers, and the Ukrainian territory under his control to Russian rule. This being agreed to, the Tsar made war on Poland, the result

being that Russia annexed Kiev and all Ukraine east of the Dniepr. There was disagreement among the Cossacks, however, who divided into two camps, those on the right bank of the Dniepr remaining under Polish jurisdiction.

As repression of the common people increased in severity, the peasants and Cossacks turned more frequently to thoughts of revolt, and in turn the Government became still more sternly repressive. About the middle of the seventeenth century many Ukrainian peasants decided to leave their homeland and join the Cossacks of the Don. Here they placed themselves under a Don Cossack, Stephen Razin, who made himself leader of all the poor among the peasants and Cossacks. In 1667 his band set out for the Volga, where they attacked a fleet of trading vessels. Moving on to the river Ural they surprised a fortress and defeated the Government troops. Before long they had equipped themselves with a fleet on the Caspian Sea and were raiding the Persian coast. From these raids they returned to Astrakhan laden with booty which they sold to the merchants, and in this way they acquired so much wealth that they began to prepare for more extensive operations. Having



purchased better equipment, Razin and his men sailed up the Volga, pillaging the towns and all the country round. In many of the towns there was, so to speak, a 'fifth column' of sympathisers who opened the gates and so rendered progress relatively easy. Everywhere the rebels slaughtered the nobles and landlords, and soon they had a large part of the country under their control.

Moscow now made a supreme effort. Razin was defeated and returned to the Don, where he was captured in the early part of 1671 by the Hetman of the well-to-do Don Cossacks and handed over to the authorities. He was brought to Moscow, where he was tortured and executed.

The rebel horde was broken up, large numbers being taken prisoner. Now the Government was in a position to inflict punishment. It is recorded that thousands of peasants were flogged with whips, had their fingers and hands cut off, and their tongues pulled out: they were burnt, hanged, or hacked to pieces, or again they were impaled on spikes. The town of Arsamas in the province of Nijni-Novgorod was selected as the centre for punishment. Here were to be seen rows on rows of gallows, each carrying from forty

to fifty corpses; also many rows of spikes on which peasants were left to die a lingering death.

The rebellion was crushed. The conditions which produced it remained.

In 1707 Peter the Great proceeded to hunt out a number of fugitives who had fled to the Don Cossacks for refuge. Kondrati Bulavin, a Cossack leader, decided to resist, but he was defeated and retired to the Zaporozhye Camp in Ukraine. Next year he returned. The rich Cossacks turned against him, and seeing no way of escape he shot himself. At that time Russia was at war with Sweden, and the king of that country, Charles XII, had reached Mogilev on the Dniepr with a large army. Mazeppa, Hetman of the Dniepr Cossacks at that time, turned against Peter the Great and joined forces with Charles of Sweden, who had turned south along the course of the Dniepr. They were decisively beaten, however; Peter's troops took the Zaporozhye Camp, and the Swedish army was cut to pieces. With difficulty Charles and Mazeppa escaped by boat to Turkey.

The last of the great Cossack and peasant revolts began in 1773 under the leadership of a semi-literate but intelligent Don Cossack,

Emelian Pugachev. Having got into trouble with the authorities he found a refuge in Ukraine. After receiving a sum of money for revolutionary purposes he collected an army of Cossacks from the Dniepr, Don, and Ural Cossack camps. He also had a large following of fugitive serfs, exiles, and escaped convicts, and many men of the tribes or races subject to Russian rule. Pugachev set up a 'court,' complete with officials, courtiers, and maids of honour, and styled himself 'the great lord emperor Peter Fedorovich.' A revolutionary council was formed with a staff to supervise all military affairs, the distribution of food, and organisation of control of districts associated with the revolt. At its height the revolt spread to most of east and south-east Russia in Europe. Pugachev had many successes at first. The Government then concluded its war with Turkey and thus released its military forces to deal with the conflict at home. Five armies closed in on Pugachev. He suffered a series of reverses and in the end his own followers—hoping to save themselves—captured him and took him to the authorities. He was taken to Moscow in an iron cage and executed on January 10, 1775, in the Bolot Square. By way of punishment, instructions

were given that rebels from those towns where governors, landlords, and other personages had been murdered should have their hands and feet cut off, and after execution their heads and bodies were to be exposed on the public roads. All without exception were to be 'cruelly flogged at the gallows.'

Historians differ widely in their reaction to these events. On the one hand we are told that False Dmitry II and others on the side of the poor were ruffians and desperadoes. It is taken for granted that those among the discontented gentry who at first followed Bolotnikov should desert him when they discovered that he was only a fugitive slave. The common people who rose in their thousands to throw off a yoke which had become more than flesh and blood could bear are described as a 'rabble' or a 'mob.' No mention is made of the barbaric punishments inflicted on the rebels after their defeat, but Catherine II is commended because she refrained from torturing Pugachev before he was executed. On the other hand there are those who look beyond the atrocities committed by the rebels, seeking for first causes which they find in the ever-increasing exploitation of the many by

the few. They see that the few were rich and powerful, the many poor and weak: that the many had been bludgeoned into silence and thrust down into a hell of suffering: that the retaliatory measures taken against them after their revolts—measures sanctioned by the Church—had no conceivable relation to the teaching of Christ, to justice, or the dictates of common humanity. Seeing the revolts in this light, such observers are slow to condemn these social outcasts for seeking their liberty in the only way they could find, or for their intoxication when for a brief space they found it.

## *Chapter IX*

1914-1920

In 1914 Galicia and Bukovina were provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bessarabia and East Ukraine, also the greater part of the old Kingdom of Poland, were incorporated in the Russian Empire. The population of Galicia was mainly Polish and Ukrainian; Poles predominating in the west and Ukrainians in the east, with a fair sprinkling of Jews in the towns.

The outbreak of war found East Galicia a centre of conflicting aspirations. Among a large number of 'activist' nationalist groups there were Poles who wanted an independent Poland carved out of Russia; Poles who desired an autonomous Poland still linked to Russia; Poles led by Pilsudski who wanted an independent Poland which would include Galicia; Poles who wanted Galicia and Russian Poland combined as a federated State in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Poles in Galicia who wanted that province to have

a separate government. In East Galicia many Ukrainians were hoping to set up a little independent State of their own. Some, however, proposed that East Galicia should unite with other Ukrainian territory to form a Greater Ukraine.

For a while these conflicting aspirations had to be subordinated to the stern necessities of war. Almost with the outbreak of hostilities heavy fighting took place in Galicia. In August 1914 the Germans inflicted a crushing defeat at Tannenberg on Russian forces which had advanced into East Prussia. Meanwhile the Austrians launched an attack from Galicia into Russian Poland. The Russians were soon pushing the Austrians back, and by the end of August were near Lemberg in East Galicia. On September 3 the Austrians evacuated Lemberg, abandoning a great quantity of military equipment. Shortly afterwards they were driven back on Przemysl, near the western extremity of Ukraine. This city was strongly fortified, and was not finally captured by the Russians until March 22, 1915.

By that time there were already signs of disaffection among the Russian troops.

The Germans transferred thousands of men to Galicia and presently the Russians were

faced by an enormous army of over two million men, supplied with greatly superior equipment. The Russian troops were at a further disadvantage in that they were incompetently led. On being attacked they retired in disorder. Przemysl was retaken by the Central Powers on June 3. Three weeks later they took Lemberg, and within two months the greater part of Galicia was in their hands. During 1915 the whole Russian front, stretching some 800 miles north and south across Poland, was rolled back with enormous losses. By July of that year the total Russian losses already amounted to nearly four million men. The inefficiency of the Government at St Petersburg was now glaringly obvious. Disaffection in the ranks rapidly increased as casualties soared into millions, and great armies of terrified refugees fled eastward before the onset of retreating troops.

At this time the Tsar and his whole family had fallen under the spell of the unspeakable charlatan Gregory Rasputin. The Tsar himself became more reactionary and obstinate than ever. Public meetings were broken up, newspapers suppressed, prisons filled to overflowing. Unrest in the cities at the rear grew apace. At the front incompetent, corrupt, and



brutal officers did as much as the enemy's onslaught to destroy the morale of their men. The officers bullied and beat their men for entirely imaginary misdemeanours, thrashing them for not saluting smartly enough, and even for failing to keep the officers supplied with vodka. In June 1916, however, there was a momentary recovery by the Russians in the south-western (i.e. Ukrainian) sector. Here they made a surprise attack, taking Czernovitz and a large part of the province of Bukovina. It was this attack that finally brought Rumania into the war on the side of the Allies. But the Russian troops were worn out and near the limit of their endurance. Large numbers of ill-equipped men had been hurriedly drafted into the army—many of them men without boots, men who did not know how to use a rifle, even men without rifles to use. Millions of troops never reached the front at all. Badly fed, clothed, and equipped; hungry, cold, and with ever-mounting resentment in their hearts; those at the front stumbled on from disaster to disaster, without purpose, without hope. Desertion from the rear became a daily occurrence. It is estimated that by January 1917 there were 1,500,000 Russian deserters.

Economic distress was now general throughout Russia. Prices leaped far ahead of wages. Transport was chaotic. The people were starving in the middle of a bitterly cold winter. Everywhere a cry for bread echoed through the cities. On March 8 there were riots in Petrograd, followed by a formidable strike of workmen. The people looted the bakers' shops. Troops unable to proceed to the front began to fraternise with civilians in the streets. On March 12 a part of the Petrograd garrison mutinied when told to fire on the seething crowds.

The strikers organised a Soviet of workmen's and soldiers' deputies, and on the 12th a Provisional Committee of the State Duma was appointed to take over the functions of government. On March 15 the Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, and a Provisional Government was formed with Prince Lvov as Prime Minister. From that time forward until near the end of the year there were two competing sources of authority: the bourgeois Provisional Government, which was *soon* headed by Kerensky, and the Soviets set up by workers, peasant communes, and soldiers. The Provisional Government was mainly representative of the landowning, capitalist, manufacturing, and

professional classes. Its object was to become a democratic, parliamentary government on West European lines, to continue the war in accordance with the secret treaties of 1915 (which among other things provided for the annexation of Constantinople by Russia), and to protect the rights of property. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, desired the overthrow of the bourgeois minority, confiscation of land without compensation, and control of the factories by the workers. In between these there were many nondescript parties, for the most part mentally confused and incapable of leadership towards any clearly defined goal.

In East Ukraine there was now a demand for recognition of a bourgeois Ukrainian Government. At the same time the workers there formed a Ukrainian Soviet, and something like civil war broke out. The bourgeois group proceeded to set up a Central Rada (or government) which received considerable backing, not only by the middle classes but by the richer peasants and the capitalist leaders of the co-operative movement. Among leading members of the Rada were Petlura, Mazepa, and Vinnichenko.

At the end of March an All-Russian Confer-

ence of Soviets was held in Petrograd, and on April 16 Lenin arrived from abroad.

On May 1 the Provisional Government announced that the war would be carried on to a decisive victory. In East Ukraine a first Ukrainian Army Congress was being assembled at Kiev, and in June the Rada issued its first Manifesto; proclaiming the principle that the Ukrainian people must 'determine its own destiny.' At the same time the Rada stated that there was no question of political separation from Russia. This was followed by an All-Ukrainian Peasant Congress, a second Ukrainian Army Congress at Kiev, and the establishment of a General Secretariat as executive of the Rada.

Following up his declaration of war aims, Kerensky proceeded in July 1917 to carry out plans for an offensive in Galicia against the Central Powers. The result of the offensive was disastrous. The Russians were driven back with a loss of some 60,000 men in ten days. At this time there was a Bolshevik revolt in Petrograd, whereupon Kerensky sent a large body of loyal troops to quell the disorder and the Bolsheviks were defeated. Kerensky then turned his attention to East Ukraine, where the Rada was becoming in-

sistent on fuller recognition. A delegation led by Kerensky drew up a treaty which conferred no rights but held out a vague prospect of future concessions. This was signed at Kiev. By that time Kerensky was in control of the Provisional Government at Petrograd, and seeking to take a firmer line he restored capital punishment, suppressed newspapers and meetings, and made provision for arrest without warrant. Orders were then issued for the arrest of prominent Bolshevik leaders, and Lenin was forced to go into hiding.

Immediately the forces of reaction began to manifest themselves. An order of the Provisional Government dated August 17 annulled the agreement already made with the Ukrainian Rada, and restricted the scope of that body to minor local government activities. This naturally aroused the resentment and hostility of the Rada.

The Tsarist General Kornilov now came on the scene, bringing with him the blessing of Lord Milner, who thought Russia ought to be under a military dictatorship. In September 1917 Kornilov advanced on Petrograd and demanded the surrender of the Provisional Government to military headquarters. Kerensky's reply was to have Kornilov arrested.

Nevertheless it was widely believed that Kerensky was in sympathy with the Tsarist generals, and only arrested Kornilov under pressure from the Soviets. As a result there was a marked increase of sympathy with the Bolsheviks.

By this time the forces at the front had come to resemble a leaderless mob rather than a disciplined army. Whole regiments were deserting at a time. The Germans were threatening Petrograd and Kerensky prepared to move his Government to Moscow. The Bolsheviks gained the upper hand, and in November all the members of the Provisional Government were arrested with the exception of Kerensky, who escaped. The situation both at the front and in the country generally looked so black that the masses were prepared to welcome almost any change in the hope of improvement. A new Government called the 'Soviet of People's Commissars' was formed, and immediately declared for peace.

The Allies refused to listen to the Soviet peace overtures. Meanwhile the Germans were busy in East Ukraine, where they hoped to get much-needed food supplies. The Rada, which had already sold itself to French interests and was now looking for German support,

and was prepared to betray either or both, had announced its complete independence in December.<sup>10</sup> On February 9 it signed a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers. Simultaneously a Moldavian Republic was proclaimed in Bessarabia, and Austria pledged herself to form East Galicia and Bukovina into a separate crownland. A peace treaty between the Central Powers and the Soviet leaders of Russia was signed at Brest Litovsk on March 3 and ratified on March 16, 1918.

In the early months of 1918 there was much confusion in the south of Russia. A Soviet Ukrainian Government was set up at Kiev and the Rada was driven into a corner of the eastern provinces of Ukraine. The Central Powers, on being invited by the Rada to restore law and order, lost no time in occupying the territory. In April German and Austrian troops took control, and the pro-German Tsarist General Skoropadsky was appointed Hetman. The Rada was thrust aside altogether. The Bolsheviks were coping with a revolt of Don Cossacks led by their Hetman Kaledin and assisted by General Kornilov. Ex-officers of the Imperial Army and a host of wealthy anti-Bolsheviks poured into the Don Cossack area in the hope of par-

icipating in the overthrow of the Bolsheviks. However, many of Kaledin's Cossacks went over to the Red Army, Kornilov was killed whilst fighting, and Kaledin committed suicide.

At this point it will be convenient to refer briefly to other Tsarist officers who led armies against the Soviet Government in Ukraine, the Caucasus, Siberia, and North Russia. Until August 1918 the Kuban district, to the east of the Sea of Azov, was under the control of the Tsarist Generals Alexeiev and Denikin. Alexeiev died in August, when Denikin became Commander-in-Chief. In 1918 also there was further Don Cossack activity under Krasnov, another Tsarist General who after being captured by the Bolsheviks and then released on parole promptly broke his word. In January 1919 Krasnov submitted to Denikin as commander of the Tsarist forces in Ukraine, and Denikin in turn accepted the leadership of Admiral Kolchak. After setting up a government in Siberia with considerable help from the Allied Governments, Kolchak was finally rounded up and executed at Irkutsk in February 1920.<sup>11</sup> Denikin came to the end of his tether in April 1920 and sailed for Western Europe, leaving Baron Wrangel in charge in Ukraine. Wrangel was pushed back into the



Crimea and in turn left the country in November 1920. The Allied Powers, without any declaration of war, supplied these Tsarist officers with men, munitions, and equipment in the hope that they would defeat the Bolsheviks. According to Mr Lloyd George, then British Prime Minister, the British Government alone spent .£100,000,000 in this way. It would appear from this and from more recent events in Spain that capitalist powers are prepared to intervene against, but not on behalf of, governments with a large working-class element.

The methods adopted by the Tsarist officers to 'restore order' (which, as the British Agent in Russia at the time, Mr Bruce Lockhart, pointed out, meant restoring to the bourgeoisie their property <sup>12</sup>) can be indicated by a typical example from *The Memoirs of General Wrangel*. On one occasion, he tells us, 'we took three thousand prisoners and a large number of machine guns. ... I ordered three hundred and seventy of the Bolsheviks to line up. They were all officers and non-commissioned officers and I had them shot on the spot/

To return to the main sequence of events. Under Skoropadsky East Ukraine became in effect a German colony. Huge quantities of

foodstuffs were transported to Germany and Austria, regardless of the needs of the Ukrainian peasantry. Himself a large-scale landowner in Ukraine, Skoropadsky promptly restored the estates and manors to their former owners. Every effort was made to suppress working-class organisations, with the result that there was constant friction between the people and the foreign troops. Increasingly Kiev became a Mecca for thousands of Tsarist officers and civilians, who rather than lose their property were quite ready to assist in the dismemberment of their country by the Germans. However, events were taking place elsewhere which speedily terminated the German occupation. In October the Austrian Empire fell to pieces. Revolts by the nationalities of which the population consisted had reached a point at which continued existence of the Empire as a unit became impossible. The trend towards disintegration had been accelerated by leaflets showered on the Austrian troops by the Allies. The Poles promptly made a claim to the whole of Galicia. The bourgeois Ukrainians of East Galicia replied that they would rather die fighting than be placed under Polish rule. On October 18 they met at Lemberg and elected a Ukrainian National Council under Dr Eugen

Petrushievicz. This Council was recognised by the now practically moribund Austrian Government, which handed over a part of the imperial assets. On November 1 the Council took possession of the government buildings in Lemberg. A struggle ensued between those Ukrainians who favoured, and those who were against, union with East Ukraine, but Polish troops entered Lemberg on November 5 and the Galician-Ukrainian Council left for Vienna.

The troops which had supported the Council retreated into East Ukraine. Allied troops from Salonica also entered the territory, and, a revolution having broken out in Germany, Skoropadsky retired to Berlin with the German forces which alone had made his dictatorship possible. Simon Petlura, a Social Democrat who had been a member of the original Rada, now formed a 'Directorate<sup>5</sup> with himself at the head, and was joined by the Ukrainian troops from East Galicia.

By the end of November the Directorate was in occupation of Kiev, Kherson, and Nicolaiev. The Allies controlled Odessa, and the Soviet Government held Kharkov. In January 1919 Petlura proclaimed a union of the 'Republics of Ukraine and West Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> The Ukrainian

workers and peasants, however, had no more desire to be exploited by Petlura than by Skoropadsky. It cannot be said that the peasants were on the whole enthusiastic about Bolshevism at this time, but they preferred the Bolsheviks to military dictators and reactionaries like Petlura. They put up a fierce resistance, and Petlura now had the mass of Ukrainian people, the Soviet Government, and the Poles against him. Moreover he received no support from the Allies or from General Denikin. He soon lost his hold on East Ukraine, which was occupied by the Red Army before the end of January. Petlura was driven back to the Galician frontier, with the victorious Red troops pressing hard at his heels. In March the Reds cleared the French forces out of Kherson, and out of Odessa a month later. By this time the Bolsheviks controlled all East Ukraine and surrounding districts except the Crimea.

Owing to the rapid success of the Red forces the Crimea was crammed with White Russians, including many Tsarist officers and a large part of the old Russian nobility. On April 7 a whole galaxy of Grand Dukes, Duchesses, Princes, and Princesses (twenty-four in all) embarked for France. But the end had not

yet come. British war material was being poured into Black Sea ports still held by the Whites. General Briggs arrived with eleven transports loaded with war supplies. According to *The Times*, Great Britain supplied General Denikin with complete equipment for 250,000 men—much of which was to fall later into the hands of the Red Army. But first the Whites under Denikin and Wrangel scored a number of successes.

In June 1919 the general situation was as follows. The whole of East Galicia was now in the hands of the Poles. Petlura was still active somewhere west of Kiev. Thanks to British and other Allied assistance the White forces were successful in East Ukraine and also still farther east as far as the Caspian Sea. The Poles were continuing with a determined attack on Soviet Russia, encouraged by the Allies and also by Pilsudski. The latter had developed a gargantuan appetite for territory and was talking of 'the inexorable logic of events' and 'the glorious destiny of Poland.' Gangs of armed bandits—Makhno, Grigoriev, Marusya, Stchooss, and others—had long been roving the steppe and adding to the general confusion and terror; whilst Denikin, Petlura, and the rest were also plundering the people

and despoiling the country. It is interesting to note that General Wrangel himself commented on the shocking orgies of the White officers at this time, which he affirmed were such that 'violence and abuse reigned supreme.'

During July and August Petiura claimed a number of successes and drew nearer to Kiev. The Red Army was forced to evacuate Odessa and retired northwards. By October Denikin's troops had advanced to the north of East Ukraine and were only 200 miles from Moscow. After this, however, the tide began to turn. In December 1919 Mr Garvin announced in *The Observer* that: 'All across South Russia Denikin has been smashed in spite of his British material and equipment.'

Far away in Western Europe the Supreme Council had been grappling all this time with the problem of frontiers and national minorities, and on June 24 had awarded to East Galicia the right of self-determination; at the same time authorising the Polish forces to occupy the territory. The Ukrainian Council at Lemberg thereupon resolved not to recognise Petlura but to set up a separate State. In December, however, the Supreme Council decided that East Galicia should have autonomy for twenty-five years under a Polish protec-

torate; its future after that to be determined by the League of Nations. This arrangement was resented by both the Galician-Ukrainians and the Poles: the Ukrainians because they wanted complete autonomy, and the Poles because they wanted unrestricted control of the territory. The Ukrainian representatives, however, were helpless. In East Galicia there were no Ukrainian troops, and in East Ukraine the troops were busy fighting either Poles, White Russians, the Red Army, or simply one another. In any event the Polish authorities were determined to treat East Galicia and its inhabitants as they thought fit, in spite of a special treaty which they had signed in June, agreeing to confer on their minorities all rights of citizenship, with full protection of life and liberty to all without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race, or religion. It may be added that in 1923 a Conference of Ambassadors recognised the acquisition of the whole of Galicia by the Poles.

The Polish attack on the Soviet Government had slackened off in October, but between January and March 1920, Polish troops occupied several towns between Galicia and the Dniepr. Pilsudski and Petlura came to an agreement for a joint attack on East Ukraine,

and towards the end of April their troops marched on Kiev. With the customary bombast of the fanatical nationalist Pilsudski issued a proclamation to the Ukrainian people, referring to the Ukrainian motherland and its gallant sons, and stating that his troops would presently retire 'having fulfilled their glorious duty as liberators of the peoples.'

Kiev was occupied by the Poles on May 8, but a series of events checked their farther advance. The Ukrainian peasantry rose against the invaders. On May 11, dockers in London refused to load the S.S. *Jolly George* with munitions for Poland, and organised labour in other countries followed suit. Soviet reinforcements were rushed to the Polish front. The American, Albert Rhys Williams, who at the request of Lenin organised an International Brigade in 1918 to help the Bolsheviks, tells us that: 'Budenny's cavalry racing day and night across the Ukrainian steppes flung themselves suddenly on the Polish flanks, turned the victorious advance of the legionaries into a disastrous retreat and harried them up to the gates of Warsaw. Wrangel was beaten and bottled up in the Crimea, and while the shock troops of the Soviet hurled themselves against his concrete forts, the main Red Army hurried



across the frozen Sea of Azov and the Baron fled to Turkey.’<sup>13</sup> The authorities at Warsaw, now thoroughly alarmed, sent an urgent appeal for help to the Allied Powers, and towards the end of the month a British and French Military Mission arrived in Poland. The Polish Army, rapidly raised to a strength of 1,000,000 men and supplied by the Allies with the most up-to-date equipment, was placed under the supreme command of the French General Weygand. The Soviet forces had no equipment comparable with that now possessed by the Poles. They had, moreover, advanced too rapidly, not expecting a counter-attack, and failing to take sufficient precaution. They were decisively defeated outside Warsaw and were thrown back over the territory across which they had so recently advanced.

On August 9 an emergency meeting in London of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., the National Executive of the Labour Party, and the Parliamentary Labour Party, made it abundantly clear to the British Government that unless the combined Allied and Polish attack on Soviet Russia was abandoned ‘the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war.’ The Prime Minister immediately an-

nounced that the Polish war on Russia could not be justified, and that Poland had been advised to make peace. There can be no doubt that these events were mainly responsible for bringing the conflict to an end. A preliminary treaty was signed at Riga on October 12, the final treaty not being signed until March 18, 1921. By the end of November the Red Army had defeated Petlura's troops, and as we have already noted, Kolchak, Wrangel, Denikin, and the rest had either been 'liquidated' or had left the country. In December 1920 a Ukrainian Soviet Government, in military and economic alliance with the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, was proclaimed in East Ukraine for the third and last time. The alliance was converted into a federal union in 1922-23.

Now let us note the effect of six years' armed conflict on Ukraine and its people. The following extract is taken from a diary written by an observer who travelled through East Ukraine in 1920-22. 'Frequent changes of government, with their accompaniment of civil war and destruction, have produced a mental and physical condition unknown in other parts of the country. They have created an atmo-

sphere of uncertainty, of life lacking roots, of constant anxiety. Some parts of the Ukraine have experienced fourteen different regimes within the period of 1917-20; each involving violent disturbance of normal existence, disorganising and tearing life from its roots. The whole gamut of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary passions has been played on in this territory. . . . The long-continued military and civil struggles have deranged the whole life of the South. Social classes have been destroyed; old customs and traditions abolished; cultural barriers broken down, without the people having been able to adjust themselves to the new conditions which are in constant flux. There has been neither time nor opportunity to reconstruct one's mental and physical mode of life; to orient oneself within the constantly changing environment. The instincts of hunger and fear have become the sole *leitmotif* of thought, feeling, and action; uncertainty is all-pervading and persistent; it is the only definite, actual reality. The question of bread, the danger of attack, are the exclusive topics of interest. . . . Alarm and dread punctuate the life and thought of the people. They permeate the entire consciousness of being.' <sup>14</sup>

In West Ukraine, too, social dissolution was

everywhere in evidence. Factories were idle, farms were laid waste, the fields untilled, transport and communications broken down. Among the common people there was an acute shortage of food and fuel. Famine brought pestilence in its train. Fever, typhoid, and dysentery were widespread. In addition to the appalling slaughter of war, many of the survivors were perishing of hunger and disease.

## *Chapter X*

### WEST UKRAINE, YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

During recent years Ukrainian affairs in West Ukraine have centred politically about the nationalist movement or movements, and in the economic sphere about agrarian reform.

Ukrainian nationalism has been developing for at least a century. One movement early in the nineteenth century was persecuted by the Austrian Government because it adopted too friendly an attitude towards Russia. On the other hand the Austrians decided to encourage a Ukrainian nationalism which was hostile to Russians and Poles alike. In this way it was hoped to counterbalance the power of the Poles in the Austrian Reichsrat, without running the risks of a Russophil separatism. After the turn of the century the Poles and Ukrainians in Galicia began to resort to violence in their conflicts with each other. Riots and fighting between Polish and Ukrainian students at the Polish University of Lemberg became increasingly frequent. The Governor of Galicia,

Count Andrew Potocki, took steps to put an end to the disturbances. The Ukrainian leaders, however, supported by the clergy of the Uniat Church, had got out of hand. They did everything they could to encourage the Ukrainian students and to stir up the peasants; and there were riots and strikes on some of the large estates of East Galicia. Violence at length reached the point in February 1908 at which a peasant was killed. A month or two later Count Potocki was assassinated by a fanatical Ukrainian student.

Although efforts were made by the Austrian and Polish authorities to solve the Ukrainian problem, the Ukrainian leaders themselves made agreement impossible. In accordance with their former policy they continued to encourage the students and to take advantage of the genuine economic discontent of the peasantry. There was more fighting among the students and in 1910 a Ukrainian student was killed.

It is usually the policy of the leaders of national minorities to agitate for educational facilities in their own language. Sometimes this springs from a genuine and commendable desire to preserve a distinctive culture, sometimes from a consciousness that such agitation

puts their opponents in an awkward position. To resist demands for special linguistic facilities in education has every appearance of being unreasonable, thus giving the leaders a grievance they can exploit. On the other hand, to accede to such demands is to risk encouraging separatism disguised as a cultural movement. Although the Austrian Government promised to meet the wishes of the Ukrainian nationalists, no immediate steps were taken. Any action contemplated was indefinitely postponed by the outbreak of war in 1914.

Nationalist aspirations were stimulated by the War, and there is no doubt severe repression of the nationalists in West Ukraine during recent years has greatly strengthened their movement. The new Polish Government was committed by the Treaty of June 1919 to an extension of full rights of citizenship, including linguistic, educational, and religious privileges, to the Ukrainian and other minorities. Again, in September 1922, the Polish Sejm passed a law purporting to establish local government bodies for dealing with purely local affairs, and arranging for such bodies in East Galicia to consist of two chambers, one of which was to be Ukrainian,

Provision was also to be made for a Ukrainian University at Lemberg. The promise of minority rights was not kept, nor was the Act of 1922 given practical application. In 1922 the fate of East Galicia had not been decided, and the Ukrainians would appear to be justified in their contention that the Act was merely a piece of window-dressing, designed to persuade the Allied Powers to allot East Galicia to Poland. Whether this suspicion is well founded or not, the fact remains that within six months the Conference of Ambassadors recognised Poland's *de facto* frontiers, thus placing East Galicia and its Ukrainians under Polish sovereignty. Although the Conference stipulated that Poland should give effect to the Act of 1922, nothing further has been done in the matter. The Poles, on the other hand, have had good reason to believe that attempts to 'appease' the Ukrainians would only encourage them to be more intransigent than ever. Moreover, evidence was available that the nationalist movement was receiving assistance and encouragement from *emigres* and foreign governments hoping to benefit by stirring up trouble in Poland.

It must not be supposed that agitation for complete linguistic freedom was confined to



parochially minded intellectuals animated by ulterior separatist motives. On the contrary, there was a widespread desire among the people to preserve the distinctive features of Ukrainian culture, in the thoroughly justifiable belief that such features were worth preserving. Recognising this fact the Soviet Government complained that Poland, ignoring her treaty guarantees, was discriminating against the Ukrainians of East Galicia and adjoining provinces in both scholastic and religious affairs. The complaint was justified, for the Polish Government had already closed a number of Ukrainian schools. Although the Poles replied to the Soviet that treatment of racial minorities was a domestic matter, it was decided to create at least the appearance of adopting a more liberal attitude; and not long afterwards, in July 1924, a language law was passed providing that Ukrainian should be the language of administration, law courts, and schools, wherever the language was spoken by a majority of the population. It was also provided that in a town or village where the population was 25 per cent. Ukrainian, a Ukrainian school might be established on receipt of an application by the parents of at least forty children of school age; though the

provision was not to hold good in any locality where an application was received from parents of twenty children demanding the establishment of a Polish school. How this law would have worked out in practice it is impossible to say, for its application was largely prevented by the simple process of closing Ukrainian schools. Thus, at the end of 1923 there were 3030 Ukrainian schools in Poland. By 1926 the number had dropped below 3000, and fell thereafter progressively; so that by the end of 1930 there were only about 700 Ukrainian schools in Poland.

At this stage a Presidential Decree was issued to the effect that there could be no change in the language of instruction 'from the date of legislation of the last decision regarding the language of instruction in the respective school.'

The reader will probably recollect that in 1930 Pilsudski established a reign of terror among Ukrainians who were unfortunate enough to live under his dictatorship. Just exactly what happened at that time it is not easy to say. There is no doubt that efforts of the Ukrainian leaders to stir up trouble had resulted in many desperate acts of sabotage being committed. Polish property was de-

stroyed on an extensive scale; stacks, silos, cottages, barns, and other farm buildings being burnt by the so-called 'Ukrainian Military Organisation' and other disaffected groups. The Poles allege that the sabotage was carried out at the instigation of Berlin, and that they were fully justified in resorting to severe measures against the incendiaries. However that may be, Marshal Pilsudski set about 'pacifying' the Ukrainians in a manner quite in keeping with his military-fascist tendencies. Military punitive expeditions were sent into scores of villages, where many of the inhabitants were promiscuously and brutally flogged. At the same time much damage was done to house and other property. In some of the villages Ukrainian clubs, co-operadve stores, and other institutions were completely wrecked.

Those who enjoy reading about 'atrocities' can obtain more detailed information from the Ukrainian Bureau, a nationalist propaganda organisation in London. Lists of atrocities, however, seldom do any good, and generally create prejudice by appealing to emotion instead of to reason. After sifting the evidence, we have come to the conclusion that both sides were at fault, and that both have resorted

to exaggeration in support of their claims. Even so, there can be no doubt that Marshal Pilsudski's instructions were responsible for shocking brutalities committed against innocent Ukrainians by the Polish troops.

After Pilsudski's bravoes had finished their job of 'pacification' in the Ukrainian villages the nationalist movement collapsed for a time; though an enormous amount of propaganda was undertaken by Ukrainians and their sympathisers abroad. More recently, events in what was formerly Czechoslovakia have brought the Ukrainian nationalist movement in East Galicia into prominence again.

Czechoslovakia, like other succession States in Europe, signed a minorities treaty and undertook to guarantee the rights of all her citizens, without regard to language, race, or religion. But unlike other countries, Czechoslovakia had rulers who took such guarantees seriously, and made a genuine effort to give them practical application. The attitude of Dr Benesh is indicated by the following extract from one of his speeches on the subject: 'The Peace Conference entrusted this territory to Czechoslovakia, rightly realising that by this course it would once and for all remove from Central Europe the difficulties, disputes, and

struggles which would inevitably have fallen to the lot of Carpathian Ruthenia [i.e. Carpatho-Ukraine] if any other solution had been adopted. Moreover, the Peace Conference, with a proper comprehension of the future of Central Europe, desired to grant Czechoslovakia certain international political possibilities of vital importance to its co-operation with Rumania and to Central Europe as a whole. These tasks and these duties towards Carpathian Ruthenia will be fulfilled by Czechoslovakia come what may, just as it will not surrender any of the rights which the Peace Treaties assigned to it concerning Carpathian Ruthenia.' It is not the fault of Dr Benesh that the performance of both tasks and duties has been taken out of his hands. We may note here that the Ukrainians of Carpatho-Ukraine were incorporated in the Czechoslovak State at the request of the Ukrainians themselves, after a plebiscite, carried out among Ukrainian emigrants in America, had shown a considerable majority in favour of this arrangement. The fate in March 1939 of Slovakia, where Herr Hitler made use of the separatist leaders and then ruthlessly thrust them aside when they were no longer of any use to him, indicates clearly enough what might

have happened in Soviet Ukraine if the Soviet Government had not liquidated the separatist leaders there, and had not built up a powerful Red Army.

The result of the enlightened Czechoslovak policy was that for a time the Ukrainians of Carpatho-Ukraine fared much better than their kinsmen in East Galicia. In 1919 these people were for the most part completely illiterate. The few who could read and write had been taught in the Magyar language, which many of them knew better than their own. They were also living very near the starvation line owing to prolonged repression and exploitation by the Hungarians. If home rule had been immediately granted to these people—so the Czechs argued—it is highly probable that they would have found themselves more than ever under the yoke of the better-educated and quicker-witted Magyar and Jewish elements living among them. The Czechoslovak Government accordingly decided to undertake an intensive educational campaign on behalf of this backward people before taking steps to give practical effect to the promise of autonomy in accordance with the Constitution of 1920. A large number of schools teaching in Ukrainian were provided, also several

teachers<sup>5</sup> training colleges and commercial academies. New text-books were issued. In addition to schools, educational societies and cultural institutions were also provided, the first being established in 1920. This was known as 'Prosvita,<sup>5</sup> and had until recently a total membership of 15,000. The society controlled a large number of reading-rooms, a library of 10,000 volumes, and encouraged musical and other cultural activities. It is also active in Galicia. Again, the Czechoslovak authorities undertook to educate and train officials for government service in Carpatho-Ukraine, teaching them the Ukrainian language.

These and other steps taken on behalf of the Ukrainian minority showed the Czechoslovak Government in a much more pleasing light than some of the other European governments. Yet the *irredentist* Ukrainian leaders were far from being satisfied. It is, in fact, manifest that many of these leaders, both there and in East Galicia, never had the slightest intention of being satisfied. During the 'pacification' of East Galicia by the Poles in 1930, the Warsaw Correspondent of *The Times* reported a conversation with one of the Ukrainian leaders, who said: <sup>4</sup> We do not want

peace. If our people are allowed to enter into friendly co-operation with the Poles they may cease to cherish the dream of an independent Ukraine, which we hope to realise in thirty or forty years' time. Whatever is done for us, we must always be discontented.<sup>5 15</sup> That may not be representative of all the nationalist leaders, but it certainly squares with the actions of some of them, both in Poland and Carpatho-Ukraine. Legitimate grievances of molehill proportions have been magnified until they seem mountainous to those who have little acquaintance with the facts. In this there is a marked resemblance to the Sudeten German leaders.

The position as we see it is that the peasants of West Ukraine have genuine economic grievances, the majority living in conditions which are a disgrace to civilisation. There is, therefore, a considerable amount of discontent among them. Unscrupulous leaders exploit this discontent to further their own political ends.

The more irreconcilable of the Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia had made contact with Berlin in the days of the Weimar Republic. But with the rise of Herr Hitler to power nationalist movements generally



were galvanised into renewed activity. From the first, Hitler sought to stimulate unrest in the various parts of Ukraine, and some of the Ukrainians accepted Nazi assistance. Others looked askance at the idea of accepting help from that quarter. The surrender of Czechoslovakia's fortified frontier in September 1938 gave the Nazis much greater facilities for intrigue in West Ukraine. The establishment of a so-called 'independent' Carpatho-Ukraine encouraged the Ukrainians of Galicia to renew their demands for self-government. With Chust in Carpatho-Ukraine as their centre a number of Nazis, shady Russian *emigres*, and others interested in creating trouble in Galicia—though by no means always with identical aims—have maintained contact with the Ukrainian nationalist organisations in Poland, including the pro-Nazi U.N.D.O. (Ukrainian National Democratic Organisation). The fighting between Polish and Ukrainian students in Lemberg broke out again with renewed violence in November 1938; demonstrations against Poland being provoked in part by Nazi agents, and supported by scurrilous attacks on Poland and the Soviet Union in the pro-Nazi journal, *Ukrainsky Actuality*, founded at Prague a little earlier in the year. In retaliation for acts of

violence a number of Polish students led mobs against Ukrainian houses and institutions in Lemberg, attacking, destroying, and plundering—while the police looked on without intervening. Shortly afterwards Herr Hitler sent £8500 to Chust 'for Ruthenians in distress/

Since that time there has been a more definite demand for Ukrainian autonomy in East Galicia, together with the provinces of Tarnopol, Stanislavov, and Volhynia, and parts of the provinces of Bialystok, Lubin, Cracow, and Polesia. A Bill submitted to the Polish Sejm in December 1938 outlined proposals for Ukrainian autonomy, with its own Government and a Ukrainian minister attached to the central Government at Warsaw. It was stated in the Bill that the President of Poland would be acknowledged as head of the Ukrainian State. In Polish circles there was a distinct tendency to regard the proposals as part of a campaign against Poland and the Soviet Union, backed by Herr Hitler. According to the Polish newspaper, *Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy*, the scheme 'is clearly an integral part of Germany's external policy to use the Ruthenian province of Czechoslovakia as a base for Ukrainian irredentism in Poland and other countries.'

Whatever they may do in the future, nationalist movements have not yet perceptibly improved the lot of the peasants. Economic changes have been effected in West Ukraine since the War, but these are not the fruits of nationalist activity. When the peasantry seized the big estates in Russia after the Revolution, capitalist governments in Eastern Europe were compelled to resort to agrarian reform to check revolution in their own countries. Before that time a very large proportion of the arable land in Eastern Europe was divided up into huge private estates, while peasants either had to be content with miserably small holdings or go without land altogether. Thus, wherever there were peasants there was land-hunger, and nearly everywhere the peasants formed the majority of the population. In Poland, for example, 65 per cent, of the people are employed on agricultural work. In East Galicia nearly half the land was owned by a relatively small number of landlords, and most of the peasant farms were limited to a few acres. Legislation was enacted in 1919 and 1920, and again in 1925, with the result that a considerable amount of land was parcelled out—with compensation to the former owners—among the peasants. Maximum holdings

were limited to 150 acres in industrial regions, 750 acres in the eastern provinces, and 450 acres elsewhere. But even so, the redistribution did not nearly meet the legitimate requirements of the peasantry; and in East Galicia the Ukrainians complained that there was general discrimination in favour of Polish peasants. Agrarian reform, moreover, has been systematically obstructed throughout the country by the great Polish landlords, so that redistribution of the land has not been on the scale originally planned. It is, perhaps, some indication of the value to the peasant of nationalist movements, and of agrarian reform which consists in multiplying the number of dwarf holdings, that the Ukrainians in Poland are now sunk into a state of destitution which almost defies description. One British newspaper correspondent recently in East Galicia reported that some of the villages he had visited reminded him of descriptions of France as it was before the Revolution. A considerable number of large estates remain, and many a peasant is left to face either semi-starvation or emigration—the latter alternative rarely being available owing to lack of means.

In Carpatho-Ukraine agriculture gives employment to 67 per cent, of the population.

Here again a large proportion of the land was in the hands of a few owners (including the Government) before the War. In April 1919 a law was passed for the whole of Czechoslovakia, compelling the owners of estates to surrender their land to the Government if called upon to do so. Other legislation followed, including a law of April 1920, providing for compensation. By 1926 over 2,000,000 acres had been distributed among half a million peasants. Even this measure of reform still left large tracts of land in the hands of relatively few landowners, the maximum holding being limited to 600 acres. In order to meet the needs of the peasants in Carpatho-Ukraine it was found necessary to take over State land and even to clear a number of forest areas.

In Rumania before the War about half the agricultural land was in the hands of owners who formed little more than a half of one per cent, of the agricultural population. After the War legislation was passed providing for the expropriation of 5,000,000 acres of land, the maximum holding being limited to 1236 acres. Out of the land rendered available for distribution, 71,000 families in Bukovina, and 375,000 in Bessarabia, were provided with

holdings. The majority of peasant farms in Bukovina are less than 20 acres, while some do not exceed two acres. The larger holdings are in the mountain regions, the smaller in the lowlands. In Bessarabia the maximum size for a peasant holding is 25 acres.

Agrarian reform which creates a multitude of dwarf farms is an imbecility worthy of a social system which, in order to keep up prices, curtails production or destroys the goods of which millions of people are in desperate need. The future lies with large-scale farming, utilising all the resources of modern science. Of course there are large-scale farms which have proved a failure, and there are dwarf farms on which peasants contrive to live at coolie level. The fact remains that much of the world's present population would perish if it were not for large-scale farming with up-to-date implements, machinery, and power resources. But dwarf farms are not the only cause of the peasant being reduced to destitution. As Sir Robert Greig remarks in a *Survey of World Agriculture*, issued by the Royal Institute of International Affairs: 'The production of food and other essentials for profit or as a by-product of a method of living is fundamentally

wrong even when left to the free play of the markets and the unstable equilibrium of supply and demand. It results in enormous wastage of land, labour and capital, and in gluts and famines. But when there are superimposed upon the natural difficulties of food production and distribution the artificial handicaps of duties, prohibitions, stimuli and discouragements due to national fears and consequent agrarian policies founded upon these fears, then there is a risk of the break up of civilisation as we know it.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the whole of peasant Europe, except in the Soviet Union, there has been no general improvement in the methods of cultivation since the War. The peasant cannot afford to buy the implements and chemicals he needs, nor would the diminutive size of his holding permit him to operate on scientific lines even if the resources of modern agricultural engineering were placed at his disposal. Nor, again, can there be any systematic and comprehensive planning of agriculture as a whole so long as agrarian policy is based on small-scale individual peasant proprietorship. Even if some years are less lean than others, the peasant will fall back into his slough of despond with the periodic return of agricultural

depression. Under such circumstances he may and probably will take refuge in dreams; perhaps dreams of the good time coming when at last a great Ukrainian State has been established—thereby ‘fulfilling the glorious destiny of the Ukrainian people.’ The more intolerable his economic condition the brighter will shine that vision of future glory. And there will be no one to tell him what the inevitable consequences of dreaming about national glory are under capitalism—in the words of Sidney Smith: ‘Taxes upon every article which enters the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed on the foot . . . taxes on everything on earth and in the waters under the earth.’<sup>16</sup>

Dreams are all very well, but they do not fill empty stomachs. The fact may as well be faced that there is no hope whatever of permanent prosperity for the great majority of peasants, whether of Ukrainian or any other nationality, within the framework of the capitalist system.



## *Chapter XI*

### SOVIET UKRAINE

#### I

##### Resurrection of a People

Russia in 1921 might well have been described as a 'House of the Dead.'

During the Great War some 18,500,000 Russians were mobilised. The total number of casualties—killed, wounded, and missing—was over 10,000,000. More Russians were killed than all the soldiers killed in the British, French, and Italian armies combined.<sup>17</sup>

The destruction caused by the War was altogether unprecedented, both in degree and extent. Not only was the army front far longer than that of any other Power, it swept repeatedly over far larger areas. Territory containing perhaps 25,000,000 people was devastated by the alternate processes of occupation and evacuation. Refugees had to be transferred by the million as the front swayed to and fro with the fortunes of war. Before the fighting was over, industrial production

and transport were down to one-fifth of their previous inadequate scale. Factories were shattered, machinery was wrecked, electric power stations—such as they were—were put out of action. The Poles not only destroyed the water-works and power station of Kiev but, as Albert Rhys Williams relates, dynamited the Cathedral of St Vladimir in sheer malice.

Despite urgent need the task of reconstruction had to be postponed. Almost immediately the carnage and devastation were renewed whilst the counter-revolutionary ‘Whites’ supported by the Allied Powers overran the country, hoping to crush the Soviet power. Five million men were enrolled in the Red Army, and by the end of 1920 the casualties, direct and indirect, had again mounted into millions. The destruction of property which took place at this time is beyond recording, and it must suffice to say that over a thousand miles of railway were torn up and nearly 8000 bridges blown out of existence. Save for feverish efforts to meet the needs of the Red Army, production was practically at a standstill. So frightful was the *debacle* that as late as the end of 1927 over 17,000 men were still employed in repairing the damage done by the ‘Whites’ on a single oilfield in the Cau-

casus. Mr H. G. Wells, who visited Russia in 1920, wrote: 'Our dominant impression of things Russian is an impression of vast irreparable breakdown.' And for a glimpse of what life was like in the cities we may turn to a speech made by Stalin a few years ago, in which he said: ' Not for a short time, but over a space of two years, from 1918 onwards, you will remember, comrades, the workmen in Petrograd did not receive even a single piece of bread for several weeks at a time. The days on which they received a piece of black bread, which was half oil-cake, were happy days.' In Moscow over much the same period there was neither running water nor effective sanitation.

In Soviet Ukraine the carnage during the years of intervention took especially frightful forms. Dr J. H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi in Great Britain, affirms that in 1919 and 1920 'Three million Jews of Ukraine were handed over, helpless and hopeless, to murder and dishonour ... by the wild hordes of Denikin, Petlura, Grigoriev, Makhno, and other bandits raging like wild beasts amid the defenceless Jewries of South Russia. . . . Wholesale slaughter and violation, drownings and burnings and burials alive, became not merely commonplaces, but the order of the day. . . . Yet all this perse-

cution, torture, slaughter, continued for nearly two years without any protest by the civilised Powers, with hardly any notice in the English Press of this systematic extermination.’<sup>18</sup>

Yet, after horror piled on horror, another scourge came in 1921 in the form of the worst famine within living memory. Walter Duranty, Moscow Correspondent of the *New York Times*, visited some of the districts most affected by the famine. Here is a part of his description: ‘When they see that the crops have failed, they drift away from their villages, not ravenous like locusts, but helpless like sheep, without goal or purpose, knowing only that it is death to remain, and perhaps a hope, however slim, of life if they move away. All along the Volga they were moving through the dust under the blank blue sky by tens and hundreds of thousands, and across the steppes of the North Caucasus and the rich black earth of the Ukraine. It is said that 5,000,000 souls took part in that dreadful exodus, moved less by hunger itself than by their knowledge of hunger to come,\* and that disease killed ten of them for every one who died of hunger, and killed others too, by thousands in the towns and cities to which they came with their load of pestilence and woe. The Soviet authorities

reckoned, and their figures were checked by the A.R.A. and Nansen's Red Cross Relief, that upwards of 30,000,000 people were made destitute by the Great Famine of 1921/ <sup>19</sup>

Now, before proceeding further, we ask the reader to bear constantly in mind that it is from these depths that the citizens of Soviet Russia have climbed since the War; not only without assistance from abroad but in spite of the hostility, sometimes open and sometimes veiled, of the outside world. When making comparisons, therefore, it is in relation to *these* conditions that the present-day progress of Soviet Ukraine and of Soviet Russia as a whole must be gauged. Any comparison with conditions in Great Britain, without reference to the level from which the Soviet people have so recently climbed, must necessarily be altogether misleading; especially having regard to the fact that the people of Great Britain benefit enormously, through investments abroad, from the labour of human beings in the Empire and elsewhere, who are ground down often enough to a much lower scale of existence than is known in the Soviet Union to-day.

Bearing these facts in mind, then, let us now note some of the agrarian and other problems which the people of Soviet Ukraine, guided

and assisted by the Central Government at Moscow, have had to solve.

After the February revolution of 1917 there was no holding the peasants from seizing the land which they had always regarded as their property. There was a general rush to grab and divide up the large estates. Church, monastery, and individually owned lands alike were appropriated, the owners being expelled and not infrequently murdered. The bourgeois Rada in Ukraine, like the Provisional Government itself, was quite helpless in this matter: so also at first were the Bolshevik Governments that came after them. The peasants only repeated on a large scale what they had done spasmodically on a smaller scale for many years before the War. For example, within four months of the Emancipation there were 647 instances of rioting among the peasants; and a police report of the 1880's stated that 'there is no ground for hope that the number of peasant disorders will decrease of itself, unless there is a real change in the existing organisation of peasant life.' In 1902 there was something approaching a peasant revolution in Ukraine. In five days eighty estates were attacked. In 1905 many peasants were ruthlessly massacred after a series of riots in

various parts of the country. Durnovo, Minister of the Interior at that time, issued the following instruction: 'Take the sternest measures to bring the disorders to an end; it is a useful thing to wipe the rebellious village off the face of the earth, and to exterminate the rebels themselves without mercy, by force of arms.'

Such measures were futile then, and would have been infinitely more so in 1917 even if anyone in power had been disposed to apply them. But whilst building up the Red Army and maintaining their fight against counter-revolution, the Bolsheviks also made determined efforts to find a solution of the agrarian problem. The rich peasants, the kulaks, were seizing all the best lands and at the same time refusing to supply the Bolshevik Government with foodstuffs at fixed prices. Detachments of industrial workers were therefore sent into the rural districts to organise the poor peasants for a struggle against the kulaks. 'Committees of Poor Peasants' were formed which were instrumental in redistributing the confiscated land, distributing agricultural implements, and breaking the power of the kulaks. These committees also helped to supply surplus food to the towns and the Red Army.

Meanwhile some of the middle peasants, who had been uncertain which way to turn, began to throw in their lot with the Bolsheviks, who had adopted the policy proclaimed by Lenin of relying on the poor peasant, maintaining a stable alliance with the middle peasant, and fighting the kulak. Despite every effort, however, the production of foodstuffs dwindled to a minimum. The famine of 1921 brought matters to a head, and the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party decided to adopt Lenin's New Economic Policy (N.E.P.). This put an end to the system of appropriating the peasant's surplus stocks. Instead a tax in kind was adopted, the peasant being allowed to retain all produce in excess of the tax and dispose of it as he pleased. That is, the peasant became free to develop private trade, and at the same time permission was given to private manufacturers to establish small businesses. Such a step was very naturally hailed everywhere as a retreat towards capitalism. But the object was to give the peasant an economic incentive to increase his production of food, as the most vitally urgent of all necessities; after which it would be possible to establish socialism on a much firmer economic foundation.

Near the end of his life, when already seri-



ously ill, Lenin was preoccupied with the line to follow after the end of N.E.P. He was convinced that so far as agriculture was concerned, the future lay with large-scale collective producing associations or collective farms. The question was how to effect a transition to such collectives from the small, individual farms of which at that time there were about 25,000,000. Such a transition, he decided, could best be made by utilising the co-operative agricultural societies. These would permit the increasing adoption of collective methods, thus facilitating a gradual approach to the ultimate goal. But it was not until the end of 1927 that the decision was taken to convert the whole of the peasantry to collective farming, and their petty individual farms 'into large-scale undertakings on the basis of communal, fraternal collective tillage of the soil, supplying agricultural machinery and tractors, applying scientific methods for the intensification of agriculture.' The report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from which this quotation is taken continued with the words: 'There is no other way out.'

Now let us leave Soviet agrarian policy for a while and turn to other developments in Ukraine.

The constitution adopted by the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (Uk.S.S.R.) greatly irritated the separatist-nationalists—we will call them separatists to distinguish them from nationalists loyal to the Soviet regime—because it tended to eliminate genuine grounds for grievance. Under this constitution the Republic was endowed with a far greater measure of independence than it had ever known in pre-War days. Admittedly, the Moscow Government took over the control of military and naval affairs, foreign trade, posts and telegraphs, and several other important governmental functions. But if the Union was to be a reality, then considerable centralisation in government was obviously unavoidable—as it is in the United States of America, for example. On the other hand, the gain accruing to the Uk.S.S.R. in consequence of the Union is beyond computation. Even so a generous measure of self-government was provided through the Ukrainian Commissariats for finance, agriculture, health and social welfare, light industries, and internal affairs in general. It was also laid down that the languages of all nationalities living in the territory of the Uk.S.S.R. were to enjoy equal rights.

The separatists were thus driven to make complaints which betrayed their aim of complete separation from the Soviet Union—a perfectly legitimate aim had they represented a majority of the people. As it was they represented only themselves and a minority of sympathisers with the old Tsarist regime; bourgeois intellectuals, former capitalists, kulaks, and of course a number of *emigres* and exiles abroad. When they complained that the Uk.S.S.R. had no military forces under its own control separate from the Red Army, and was without its own diplomatic representatives abroad, they were clearly determined to be irreconcilable. They found it convenient to ignore the fact that a few years earlier the Tsarist leaders who fought against the Bolsheviks, as well as many eminent people abroad such as the late Lord Milner, had made up their minds that the only possible government for Russia would be a return to the despotism of the old regime, or alternatively the establishment of a ruthless military dictatorship.

The separatists were also annoyed because the Bolsheviks were successful in winning the support of the poorer peasantry. It is true that a number of peasants were persuaded to join insurrectionary organisations by means of

separatist propaganda disguised as genuine nationalism, but until later when a too rapid collectivisation roused widespread discontent the number was never large, and even then never constituted a majority. Mr W. H. Chamberlin, who has been a severe critic of the Soviet regime, has among others provided confirmation of the above statement. Wandering in Soviet Ukraine and neighbouring regions in 1924, he wrote: 'There seems to be little conscious disaffection in the regions where I travelled, except among the Kuban Cossacks, who mostly fought on the side of the Whites in the civil war . . . and in some Ukrainian regions where there are still embers of anti-Soviet separatist spirit.'<sup>20</sup>

It was the policy of the separatist intellectuals to blow on those embers in the hope of producing a general conflagration.

So far from the Bolsheviks discouraging genuine cultural nationalism, the Ukrainian governmental authorities took steps from time to time to increase the 'Ukrainisation' of the territory. In April 1925 they passed a resolution stating: 'The consolidation of the union between the working class and the peasantry, and the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Ukraine, necessitate the use

of the Communist forces of the whole party to ensure the domination of the Ukrainian language and the Ukrainisation of all work within the Party.' The resolution was given practical effect so fully and generously that in 1927 we find Kaganovich, himself by origin a Ukrainian leather worker, announcing to the Tenth All-Ukrainian Congress of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine: 'In every sphere the development of our culture has made in the last few years greater strides than have ever been dreamed of even by the most ardent nationalists. ... In our Sovnarkom, our highest administrative organ, out of twenty officials thirteen are Ukrainian, while the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee has 66 per cent. Ukrainians.' He also pointed out how extensively the schools were training the population in the use of the Ukrainian language.

Thus the prospects of the separatist movement looked very gloomy, and it is not difficult to believe that in desperation the separatists themselves redoubled their efforts to secure foreign assistance. There is ample evidence that they came very near to success in this regard. Here we may quote Brig.-General W. H.-H. Waters, C.M.G., C.V.O., who in

pre-War days was Military Attache to H.M. Embassy at St Petersburg. General Waters states that in 1928 'the Soviet Government had discovered a very real counter-revolutionary plot. The Polish Dictator, Pilsudski, and the French General Lerond, an intimate of Marshal Foch's, had been conferring in Bucharest. The idea was to break up the Ukraine, give part to Poland, part to Rumania, and the core, if there should be any core left, was to become an independent State. The French Government would assist very materially indeed with arms and money, while, as regards the British Government, Sir Austen Chamberlain, who could not, if he wished, involve the country, would observe a benevolent neutrality, so it was reported.

'The negotiations lasted for several weeks, but there was a snag. Rumania, in view of the antipathy displayed by her recently-acquired Hungarian subjects, wished first of all to make sure of Hungarian neutrality. As Hungary refused to commit herself, the plan fell to the ground. As far as I am aware, no English newspaper would publish anything on the subject.

'The negotiations could not, of course, have been instituted in the first instance without

the advice of and promises of support from sympathisers in the Ukraine. . . . Some of the counter-revolutionaries . . . paid the penalty with their lives.<sup>5 21</sup> \*\*

On the other hand the Ukrainian exile, Professor Isaac Mazepa, who makes no effort to conceal his hostility to the Soviet regime, is convinced that there was a Bolshevik plot against the Ukrainian intelligentsia. He states that at the trial which took place in Kharkov in 1930: 'The most important person was Efremov, a member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and those who stood their trial with him were professors, writers, doctors, schoolmasters, priests, and so on. The prisoners were charged with having formed a "Society for the liberation of Ukrainian which aimed at the forcible separation of the country from the Soviet Union. They were all condemned to exile and imprisonment.'<sup>22</sup> Professor Mazepa implies that the whole affair was a sham. But is it conceivable that the Soviet Government, at a time when it was straining every nerve to make a success of its colossal first Five-Year Plan, and was therefore desperately in need of far more men with trained minds than were then available, would deliberately choose to eliminate a number of

Ukrainian intellectuals merely on the score of their nationality? The suggestion is almost too preposterous for comment—like the equally absurd suggestion that the Basque people destroyed their own city of Guernica. It will suffice to say we have already seen that it is precisely from the intelligentsia with a bourgeois mentality, not from the great mass of peasants and workers, that nationalist leaders bent on complete separation usually emerge.

The Five-Year Plan launched in 1928 was indeed on such an ambitious scale that it called for the utmost effort from every section of the community working loyally together in harness. ‘The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan,’ said Stalin, ‘was to create such an industry in our country as would be able to re-equip and reorganise, not only the whole of industry, but also transport and agriculture—on the basis of socialism.’<sup>5</sup> The whole national economy was to be organised to provide first the means of producing goods, then the goods themselves; not for profit but for the benefit of all: whilst in addition social services and cultural facilities were to be greatly augmented. It is clear that such a task could not be undertaken on a nation-



wide scale without comprehensive planning and the loyalty of the great majority of the people. But the prospect of comprehensive planning still further roused the hostility of the separatists in Ukraine and abroad. For such planning implies a centralisation of authority incompatible with separatist dreams.

In other countries the Five-Year Plan was regarded with incredulity and derision. Yet it was only the logical outcome of Bolshevik policy. As far back as 1920 the first step in planning had been taken, on Lenin's initiative, by forming the Commission for Elaborating the Plan for the Governmental Electrification of Russia, known more conveniently as 'Goelro.' Since that time a great deal had been done to overcome the backward and chaotic state of Russian industry. But the first Five-Year Plan was intended to raise—and in less than five years definitely did raise—all Soviet industry and agriculture on to a far higher plane of technique and efficiency.

The reader will realise that without nationwide co-ordinated planning, covering all the manifold activities of the Soviet, there could have been nothing remotely resembling the progress which has in fact taken place throughout the Union, including Soviet Ukraine. The

collective farms are absolutely dependent upon enormous supplies of large-scale machinery. The machinery could not be produced without first building factories. The factories had to be equipped and supplied with power. The equipment and power plant had to be constructed or bought abroad, and means of transport had to be developed on a commensurate scale. As there could be no question of capitalist loans from abroad, by means of which other backward countries have been developed, funds had to be built up internally, thus greatly retarding the immediate advancement of the people. It will be seen that every branch of Soviet economy is intimately connected with every other branch, and one cannot be planned without taking all the others into account.

It would take us too far afield to discuss the first and subsequent Five-Year Plans in any detail here, but we propose to comment on certain reactions in Soviet Ukraine associated with the original Plan.

The production of grain throughout the U.S.S.R. in 1927 was still only 91 per cent., and the proportion sold for supplying the towns only a little above 5 per cent., of pre-War figures. This backwardness in agricul-

ture was largely due to the creation of a multitude of dwarf farms which, as we have seen, was at first inevitable though quite contrary to Bolshevik policy. If the process had been allowed to continue there could have been no socialist development of agriculture or industry. The mass of the people would have been condemned, like the peasantry in Poland and Rumania, to remain indefinitely at something like starvation level. When initiating the Goelro Plan for electrification, Lenin had emphasised the absolute necessity for large-scale production both in agriculture and industry. Thus he wrote: 'As long as we live in a small peasant country, there is a surer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism. This must be borne in mind. Anyone who has carefully observed life in the country-side, as compared with life in the towns, knows that we have not torn up the roots of capitalism and have not undermined the foundation, the basis of the internal enemy. The latter depends on small-scale production, and there is only one way of undermining it, namely, on a new technical basis, the technical basis of modern large-scale production, and it is only in electricity that we have such a basis. Communism is the

Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.’<sup>23</sup>

It was entirely in keeping with such views that Lenin also wrote: ‘ If peasant farming is to develop further, we must firmly assure also its transition to the next stage, and this next stage must inevitably be one in which the small, isolated peasant farms, the least profitable and most backward, will by a process of gradual amalgamation form large-scale collective farms.’<sup>24</sup>

In accordance with this policy as elaborated in the Five-Year Plan, steps were immediately taken from 1928 onwards to ‘collectivise’ the farms in the Soviet Union, reducing the total number from 25,000,000 to about 250,000 or 300,000. As might be expected in the wholesale uprooting of millions of human beings so fixed in their habits, and at that time still so ignorant, the peasants showed considerable suspicion and hostility in various parts of the country. This hostility was increased by serious mistakes made by the Bolsheviki responsible for organisation; the greatest mistake being the attempt to force the pace of collectivisation, and to carry collectivisation too far—efforts severely condemned by Stalin as ‘bungling exercises in socialisation,’ and

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‘comical attempts to overleap ourselves.’ The kulaks saw that the advantages they had reaped during the period of N.E.P. would be swept away by collectivisation, and therefore did their best to encourage the resistance of the poor and middle peasants. In Ukraine the kulaks were backed up by the separatists, who seized on the peasant discontent as a magnificent opportunity to further their own ends. There is little doubt that they plotted to ensure the failure of collectivisation by every means in their power. According to a speech made in 1933 by the secretary of the Ukraine Communist Party, the leaders of the separatist movement living abroad sent instructions to their associates in Ukraine to the effect that everything possible must be done to make the position of the peasants worse, and details were supplied of measures calculated to prevent the collective farms from functioning properly. Professor Mazepa, the Ukrainian exile who was associated with the revolt, affirms—one might almost say boasts—that ‘ a system of passive resistance was favoured, which aimed at the systematic frustration of the Bolshevik plans for the sowing and the gathering of the harvest.’<sup>25</sup> He makes it quite clear that the widespread failure of the

crops in Ukraine in 1931 and 1932 was not a famine arising from natural causes, but was due to deliberate sabotage instigated by the separatist leaders.

These machinations were sufficiently successful to ensure scarcity in many localities. In Ukraine all the available grain had to be used for consumption, and the Soviet Government at Moscow supplied the collectives of Ukraine with three million quintals of grain for seed purposes. A widespread campaign was undertaken to put an end to sabotage and to improve the efficiency of the whole collective farm organisation. Those who were guilty of such practices as stealing seed at sowing time, grain at harvesting time, or again, hiding grain in secret granaries, and, in general, adopting the wrecking tactics initiated by the separatists and the kulaks, were dealt with ruthlessly by the Soviet Government.

The kulaks were expropriated as a class much as the capitalists had already been expropriated in industry. The means of production of the kulaks, however, did not pass into the hands of the State but into the hands of the poorer peasants united in the collective farms. The leaders of the Ukrainian separatist movement were also unmasked. It was shown

that apart from hostility to the collective farm movement, bourgeois professors and others at Kharkov had (among other things) ‘displayed particularly great energy in choking the real Ukrainian language and terminology in such a way as to sever Ukrainian culture as much as possible from the Russian.’ The Commissar of Education, Skrypnyk, on being accused of aiding and abetting the separatist elements, committed suicide.

The severity with which the kulaks were dealt has been strongly criticised, even by many people otherwise sympathetically disposed towards the Soviet regime. Others, whilst regretting that such extreme measures were necessary, say that those measures were the only alternative to a crisis which, if it had been allowed to develop, would have meant the death of millions from starvation. However that may be, the position thereafter rapidly improved. The harvest of 1933 showed a great advance on previous years, and the hostility of the rebellious peasants diminished as they began to benefit by collectivisation far more than they had ever done by work on their dwarf plots of land. The adoption of the ‘artel’ form of collective farm, in which only the principal means of production are

collectivised, leaving individual ownership of dwelling, small garden and orchard, a cow and smaller livestock, including poultry, also materially helped to bring the peasants into the collectives. Mr Thomas D. Campbell, who runs a 95,000-acre wheat farm in Montana, U.S.A., and was called to the Soviet Union as an expert to advise the Government there, states that at this stage the peasants changed their views: ‘ With an outburst of enthusiasm which caught the Soviet authorities quite unprepared, there was a rush for the collectives such as had not been expected for years, far out-distancing the limits set as a goal by the Five-Year Plan.’<sup>26</sup> Mr Campbell, it may be noted in passing, turned down the first invitation to go to the Soviet Union. He tells us frankly that he was then very much prejudiced against the Soviet Government, and did not care to have anything to do with them. But eventually he went, and with the same honesty he records his astonishment at the boundless enthusiasm of peasants on the farms he visited.

There was another good crop in 1934, by which time the corner had been successfully turned and the collective farm system was finally stabilised. Victory made it possible for



rationing to be abolished and unrestricted sale of foodstuffs was introduced. The elimination of the kulaks, defeat of the separatists, and adoption of collective farming by the bulk of the peasants led to the complete consolidation of the Soviet power in the country-side.

In 1935 the collective farm lands were assigned in perpetual tenure to those who cultivated them, and this was confirmed in Article 8 of the New Soviet Constitution of 1936. By 1937, throughout the Soviet Union, 93 per cent, of the total number of peasant households had joined the collective farms, which in that year produced a marketable surplus of over 1,700,000,000 poods of grain. This was 400,000,000 poods more than the landlords, kulaks, and peasants together marketed in 1913. The collective farmers were compelled to build larger granaries and store-houses to contain the produce secured under the new system; produce not restricted in quantity or destroyed to keep up prices as in other countries, but distributed for the benefit of the whole community. Poverty, insecurity, unemployment became memories of the past.

## II

### Life More Abundant

Soviet Ukraine, one of the eleven Republics of the U.S.S.R., is now a land of rapidly advancing prosperity and culture. We can only give a very general indication of present-day conditions there in the space at our disposal.

Life comes from the soil. Let us begin with the material bases of civilisation, and then turn to cultural developments in Soviet Ukraine. Figures and facts cited will for the most part relate to 1937, the last year of the second Five-Year Plan. Considerable progress has already been made since then, so we shall not be accused of seeking to convey an over-favourable impression.

In 1937 the territory of the Ukrainian S.S.R. contained 27,344 collective farms, comprising 96.2 per cent, of all the peasant farms in the Republic. These farms have received for free and perpetual use about 35,000,000 hectares of land, and are served from Machine and Tractor Stations (M.T.S.) with up-to-date agricultural machinery. There are over 88,000 tractors and 27,000 combine harvesters at work on the fields of Soviet Ukraine. By way of

contrast with this we may note that Mr H. Hessel Tiltman, in his book, *Peasant Europe*, says: 'To-day [1934] it would be difficult to find a purchaser for a piece of farm machinery (outside Government experimental farms and co-operative bodies) from one end of Eastern Europe to the other.'<sup>5</sup> He further states that most of what tractors there were in Eastern Europe formerly have since gone out of use. His remarks exclude Soviet Russia, of course.

In 1937 the Ukrainian S.S.R. reaped a greater wheat harvest than Germany, Poland, and Hungary put together. The Dnepropetrovsk Province alone reaped more wheat in that year than the whole of Bulgaria. Besides wheat there are a number of other cereals grown, also technical crops such as flax, cotton, and tobacco. The area of potatoes and all garden crops has been doubled in comparison with 1913. Considerable progress has been made with the electrification of agriculture in the Dniepropetrovsk region, with the Dniepr hydroelectric power station as the source of supply. Here areas covered by electrical operation were in 1935: threshing, 865,000 acres; irrigation, 8600 acres; ploughing, 7400 acres. There were 16 machine and tractor stations, 4000 hot-bed frames, and

44,000 farm houses electrically equipped. The experience thus gained is now being applied in other parts of the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian Research Station for the Electrification of Agriculture has established model electrified collective farms; and provides facilities for experimental work, and scientific guidance in the practical application of electricity to the whole range of rural power requirements. Experiments in the co-ordinated electrification of vegetable gardening, stock-raising, irrigation, etc., are being conducted on an extensive scale. In these and other ways progress is constantly being made towards the stage, long ago foreseen by Frederick Engels, in which electricity will become ‘ a most powerful instrument for the elimination of the contrast between town and country.’<sup>5</sup>

Now glance at a typical Ukrainian collective farm village—Kutcha, for example, in the Novo-Ushitsky district. There are now five schools in this village, and a sixth school under construction. The village has its own electric power plant, club-house, model *creche* for 100 children, maternity home, medical and veterinary infirmaries. The farm possesses two automobiles, and there is not a single farmhold without a household cow, and poultry.

The children attend school and subsequently go to technical schools and institutes to complete their education.

Earnings on the collective farms have made giant strides in the past few years. In 1934 each collective farm family in Ukraine received 367 kilograms of cereals, in 1936 it was 975 kilograms, and by 1937 the quantity had jumped ahead again to 1408 kilograms. The monetary payment per 'workday' (the unit of labour on collective farms) in 1937 increased 25 per cent, as compared with 1936.

Turning to industry, we will begin with the heavy industries. Soviet Ukraine is still the prime coal and metal base of the U.S.S.R., though there is good reason to believe that the region will before long be rivalled by mining development in Siberia. The Donetz coal basin, after Bolshevik reconstruction, had an output of 67,103,000 tons of coal in 1937, this being three times the corresponding output for 1913, and exceeding the total output of such countries as Poland, Japan, and France. The iron works of Soviet Ukraine produced 9,000,000 tons of pig iron in 1936, or twice the pre-War quantity. The Kirov metallurgical works at Makeyevka alone produce as much pig iron as the combined output of

Poland and Italy, and seven times as much steel as Poland. Besides coal, iron, and steel, a whole range of new industries has been developed, including the manufacture of huge steam turbines, super-power railway locomotives, tractors, harvester combines; and the production of aluminium, magnesium, zinc, and high-grade steels. Among large new factories built during the first and second Five-Year Plans are the Kramatorsk (Stalin) Engineering Works, the Orjonikidze Tractor Works at Kharkov, the Dniepr Aluminium Combine, the Orjonikidze Iron and Steel Plant at Zaporozhye, the Azov Steel Plant, the Krivoi Rog Iron and Steel Plant, the October Revolution Locomotive Works at Voroshilovgrad, the Kommunar Harvester Combine Plant at Zaporozhye, and a cinema equipment factory at Odessa. In general the gross output of heavy, large-scale industry in Soviet Ukraine was seven times that of 1913. As an engineer the writer is impressed by the remarkable progress made in the design and construction of Soviet machinery.

The main source of electric energy is the great hydroelectric power station near Zaporozhye, which produces as much electricity as was produced in the whole of Tsarist Russia in 1913.

Among light industries may be noted the food industry which has increased three times, the canning industry twelve times, and the candy industry thirteen times the corresponding figures for 1913.

Between 1926 and 1936 the wages of factory and office workers increased 11-4 times. Average annual earnings of the factory or office worker have increased in the same period 4-1 times; of medical workers, 4-5 times; and of educational workers, 6-6 times. There has also been a steady improvement in the housing of industrial workers and their families. In many districts where the workers formerly lived in mud huts—and 40 per cent, of the workers in Ukraine lived in such huts before the Revolution—there are now excellent new apartment houses. So rapidly is the mud hut passing away that one has been preserved at Gorlovka as a reminder of living conditions in days not long gone by.

In 1937 there were 17,736 Ukrainian schools attended by 4,319,000 children. As already stated, there were no schools at all teaching in Ukrainian before the Revolution. Under the Government of the Ukrainian S.S.R. 5653 new schools have been built and many others reconditioned. The number of students in

universities and higher technical schools is almost five times the pre-Revolution figure.

There are 278 scientific research institutes as against only 28 in 1917. An enormous amount of scientific research is being carried out by men of science with world-wide reputations, as for example T. D. Lysenko (vernalisation), A. A. Bogomolets (scarlet fever and other diseases), Professor Filatov (ophthalmology), Professor Kamyshchenko (agronomy), and others. The Institute of Clinical Physiology headed by Academician Bogomolets is among other activities rendering noteworthy service in the study of cancer.

For schools, the study of science, literature, languages and so forth, Kiev is the best centre, as might be expected. In this city are the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, dozens of scientific research institutes, the Shevchenko Institute of Ukrainian Literature, the Language Institute, the Institute of Folklore, and so on. About 40,000 students attend the higher educational establishments of Kiev, and more than 200,000 are enrolled at the city's secondary schools. In addition there are many technical schools, workers' preparatory schools, schools for adults, and others. As everywhere in the U.S.S.R. tuition in all schools is free,



and the overwhelming majority of students receive stipends from the State. The city has a large network of hospitals, polyclinics, children's dairy kitchens, nurseries, and kindergartens.

It would, of course, be possible to fill a book with such facts and figures as we have cited here. But how are these facts and figures to be interpreted? Do they mean that you will find no slummy homes, no dilapidated tenements, no dirty courtyards in Soviet Ukraine? No, they do not mean that. There are still many such remnants of the old regime to be seen by those who look for them. One can also find overcrowded schools, inferior roads, faulty machine construction, amateurish plumbing, and many other defects. Indeed, if you like to play the part of the Man with the Muckrake you need do no more than comb the Soviet newspapers for the ample criticism which you will find there of just such defects. Then you may come back and write a book against Soviet Russia, as so many others have done, for those who condemn Soviet 'materialism' whilst invariably thinking of civilisation in terms of their own material comfort.

Sir Walter Citrine visited the U.S.S.R. and found spots on the Soviet sun in the form of a lack of plugs in baths and wash-basins. This

appears to have impressed him so much that he mentions it again and again in his book,

*I Search for Truth in Russia.* He apparently did not know that it is an old custom with Russians to wash in running water, which they consider more hygienic than our way. Yet he could hardly be ignorant of the fact that in Great Britain, for all its boasted civilisation and wealth and its long period of industrialisation, there are still thousands of homes not only without such plugs but also without baths and wash-basins to put them in. Maybe he will some day visit British India and write a book about his 'search for truth' in that country, describing the condition of the mass of the people there after over eighty years of British rule.

If the reader will turn back a few pages and remind himself once more of conditions in Ukraine so recently as 1920, he will see what our facts and figures mean. They mean, in the fewest possible words, that the people of Soviet Ukraine have now reached a far higher level of prosperity and culture than any they have ever known before. Not just a favoured few, living on the labour of others, but the people as a whole. *This they could never have done had they been separated from the Soviet Union.*

The great majority are well aware of this fact, and are prepared to fight to the death if necessary to resist any effort made to bring about such a separation.

There are in Soviet Ukraine to-day, as in the Soviet Union as a whole, no landlords, no capitalists, no unemployed, no great extremes of wealth and poverty. The rule in industry and agriculture is: 'Not mine for me, but ours for us.' Profit-making is classed with pocket-picking and is punishable as such. That is, no one is permitted to exploit the labour of others for personal gain, or to speculate by buying goods in order to sell them again at a higher price. The attempt made in other countries to keep up prices by restricting output, or by actual destruction of goods produced, is regarded as the acme of imbecility.

The desire for knowledge and culture is universal, and the facilities provided for satisfying that desire expand steadily. The general improvement in health is remarkable. Consider this one fact. Medical examinations of workers in Ukraine called up for military service show that during the past few years their average weight has increased by 1.5 to 2 kilograms, and their average chest measurements by 1.5 to 2.5 centimetres.

What of the future?

The future belongs to the young. Soviet citizens are deliberately building a house not for themselves alone but for the generations to come after them. Care for the children is a consideration second to none in the Soviet Union. There is a passage in Eileen Bigland's *Laughing Odyssey* that is worth quoting in this connection:

‘The prevalent idea in Europe was that the Soviet State was an ogre who tore infants from their mothers’ bosoms with a ferocity unparalleled in human history. Having accomplished this dastardly business the State then took pains to ensure that no form of family life was countenanced. Parents never saw their children: children forgot their parents: the youth of Russia was an army of State-owned robots who were ignorant of affection and kindness. . . . Not once but many times in books, newspapers, and conversations had I gathered these impressions.

‘Then I came to Soviet Russia and found that the children were called “The Flowers of Life.”

‘Surely no other nation ever invented such a beautiful name?

““They are our future,” Russians told me.

“They are the reason we struggle for security, because the whole fate of the Soviet Union lies in their tiny hands. They are the citizens of to-morrow, the forerunners of Russia’s peaceful greatness. Besides,” they added simply, “we love them so.”

This was written of Russia in general, but wherever you may go in Soviet Ukraine you will find just the same attitude towards the children there. Here is a typical example. The Ukrainian Government, which had for a number of years been centred at Kharkov, moved in the summer of 1934 to Kiev, which then became the capital city of Ukraine once more. The Government building in Kharkov, and the square in which it stands, were remodelled ; and the building was especially equipped for the delight and cultural development of the children. Bright paints, a sea of colour, sculptures, paintings, marble, palms, and special furniture; dozens of laboratories for aviation technique, natural science, agriculture, and physics; a special electric power station, a number of art studios, and other attractions such as a cinema and a theatre—all this on completion was put at the disposal of children.

The creative work as well as the rest and

recreation of the children, their latent talents, their artistic inclinations and scientific interests are nurtured by a staff of authoritative specialists. Art education is given in thirty-three rooms. Technical and agricultural training is given in seventy-five rooms. Loving care and attention, originality, invention, and generosity to the point of lavishness, surely make the Kharkov Palace of Young Pioneers and Octobrists thus far unique among the palaces of the world.

We can but wonder what life in Soviet Russia—for there are children's palaces in many parts of the Soviet Union besides Ukraine—will be like in ten or twenty years' time. Here is a people no longer, in Kipling's phrase, 'hedged in a backward-gazing world' but facing the future fearlessly; a people believing that for them 'no barrier will be unsurmountable, no gulf impassable, no task too great.'

During the Great; War a British sociologist wrote a book which, among other matters, discussed the future trend of social evolution. Two or three of his paragraphs foretold and expressed what is happening in\* Soviet Russia with such astonishing insight, yet of course unconsciously and with no thought of Russia

in his mind, that we cannot refrain from quoting them here:

‘ The method of leaving the development of society to the confused welter of forces which prevail within it is now at last reduced to absurdity by the unmistakable teaching of events, and the conscious direction of man’s destiny is plainly indicated by Nature as the only mechanism by which the social life of so complex an animal can be guaranteed against disaster and brought to yield its full possibilities.

‘A gregarious unit informed by conscious direction represents a biological mechanism of a wholly new type, a stage of advance in the evolutionary process capable of consolidating the supremacy of man and carrying to its full extent the development of his social instincts.

‘Such a directing intelligence or group of intelligences would take into account before all things the biological character of man, would understand that his condition is necessarily progressive along the lines of his natural endowments or downward to destruction. It would abandon the static view of society as something merely to be maintained, and adopt a more dynamic conception of statesmanship

as something active, progressive, and experimental, reaching out towards new powers for human activity and new conquests for the human will. It would discover what natural inclinations in man must be indulged, and would make them respectable, what inclinations in him must be controlled for the advantage of the species, and make them insignificant. It would cultivate intercommunication and altruism on the one hand, and bravery, boldness, pride, and enterprise on the other. It would develop national unity to a communion of interest and sympathy far closer than anything yet dreamed of as possible, and by doing so would endow the national unit with a self-control, fortitude, and moral power which would make it so obviously unconquerable that war would cease to be a possibility. To a people magnanimous, self-possessed, and open-eyed, unanimous in sentiment and aware of its strength, the conquest of fellow-nations would present its full futility. They would need for the acceptable exercise of their powers some more difficult, more daring, and newer task, something that stretches the human will and the human intellect to the limit of their capacity; the mere occupation and reoccupation of the stale and blood-drenched earth



would be to them barbarians' work; time and space would be their quarry, destiny and the human soul the lands they would invade; they would sail their ships into the gulfs of the ether and lay tribute upon the sun and stars.<sup>27</sup>

## *Chapter XII*

### THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

There is in the world to-day a marked tendency to emphasise differences of racial and national character, to magnify the importance of cultural distinctions, to revive the use of national costumes and half-dead languages. It is sometimes thought that exaggerated nationalism is entirely a post-War phenomenon, but this is not so. Over thirty years ago H. G. Wells stated that 'just now the world is in a sort of delirium about race and the racial struggle. . . . True to the law that all human aggregation involves the development of a spirit of opposition to whatever is external to the aggregation, extraordinary intensifications of racial definition are going on; the vileness, the inhumanity, the incompatibility of alien races is being steadily exaggerated.'<sup>28</sup> Twenty-five years earlier still Herbert Spencer commented on similar developments, quoting a friend who bewailed the fact that Germans 'overflow with talk of

Germanism, German unity, the German nation, the German empire, the German army and the German navy, the German church and German science/ referring also to the case of a German professor who desired to round off German institutions with a German costume!<sup>29</sup>

The truth is that intensification of nationalist feeling has synchronised with the advance of capitalism. Under feudalism the nationalist spirit was relatively unknown. The feudal landlords kept aloof from the common people, whilst the common people were split up into many separate groups by distance, differences of dialect, and illiteracy. There was little to bind the inhabitants of a country firmly together, to give them a sense of solidarity, to make them conscious of being a distinctive social unit. The greatest binding force of the time, Christianity, disregarded national and racial frontiers. But capitalism altered all that. It improved the means of transport, took steps towards the liquidation of illiteracy, brought people together in large groups, shifted them about from one part of the country to another. At the same time the increasing accumulation of wealth, the appetite of capitalism for raw materials, and other factors, increased the danger of war; increased also the scale of

warfare, and the *fear* of war which goes far to increase the sense of solidarity in a people. As capitalism developed to the stage of imperialism, the appetite for raw materials led to an intensified competition for territory containing raw materials and other forms of wealth—a desire to ‘ paint the map red ’ which necessitated still larger armies and still further increased the danger and fear of war. Astute politicians came to realise that fear was a basic human emotion; and just as the Church before them had sought to scare people with the thought of hell fire, and as quack medicine venders still stimulate their sales by advertisements referring to cancer and other diseases, so politicians sought by manufacturing new fears to ensure the support of the masses. Meanwhile the Church, also under the influence of capitalism, gradually abandoned its former internationalism, until at length we have been treated to the spectacle of priests blessing guns and tanks on their way to slaughter the nationals of another country.

We must be careful, however, not to generalise too freely in this matter. Allowance must be made for special forces at work on particular peoples and at particular times. For example, it may well be, as W. Trotter

suggested long before the emergence of Adolf Hitler, that the extravagant forms taken by nationalism in Germany are due at least in part to a peculiarity of German policy: that herd instinct finds expression in three distinct types; the aggressive as in the wolf, the protective as in the sheep, and the socialised as in the bee; and that for reasons which cannot be set out here the rulers of Germany were compelled to turn away from the more civilised ideal of a socialised society and thrust their people back into the anachronism of a community modelled on the wolf-pack with its aggressiveness and slavish obedience to leadership.

Again, so far as the people of Ukraine are concerned, it must be admitted that their nationalism has been a product of special circumstances. Here it is evident that the sentiment was roused by the prolonged repression to which the Ukrainians were subjected by both the Poles and the Russians. Under the old regime the national minorities within the Russian Empire were treated as colonial peoples to be exploited for the benefit of a semi-feudal ruling class. Every effort was made to ensure the thorough 'russification' \* of the minorities. Laws were passed

with the direct object of obliterating all minority characteristics, especially languages and cultures.

However the sentiment of nationality arises, it is a force for which statesmen have to make due allowance, even if that allowance is only the provision of officials with knouts or soldiers with machine guns. The Bolsheviks realised from the first that force only intensifies nationalism. They also realised that the ambition of a few selfish careerists to found a national State with themselves at the helm is one thing; but the desire of a suppressed people for freedom to develop its own cultural life, and to regain its self-respect, is quite another. They showed their sympathy with the latter motive long before 1917. In 1903 at a Conference in London, Lenin and some of his associates passed a resolution which, as amplified a little later, stated that: 'The Conference declares that it stands for the complete right of self-determination of all nations included in any State.' Again, in 1913, stress was laid on the right of national minorities 'to use freely their native language in social life and in schools.' In 1913 Stalin wrote a pamphlet on cultural autonomy for minorities, and in 1914 Lenin wrote: 'The Socialists cannot reach their great

aim without fighting against every form of national oppression.'

In October 1917 when the Bolsheviks came to power they were faced with the task of submitting their beliefs to the test of practice. Unlike many leaders they were not content with fine words but were almost fanatically determined to translate words into deeds. The minorities problem was handed over to Stalin, who was elected People's Commissar for Nationalities, a position he held until 1923. It would have been impossible to find anyone better equipped to cope with all the many difficulties involved. Stalin was himself a Georgian, and therefore a member of a national minority, and he had long taken a keen and sympathetic interest in the subject. As to his qualifications for undertaking such a formidable task, he was already at that time widely regarded as a man of outstanding personality and executive ability. For some obscure reason it is sometimes alleged in Great Britain that Stalin had scarcely been heard of in the early years of Soviet rule. It is interesting to note, therefore, that contemporary evidence to the contrary is to be found in a British White Paper [CMD. 1240] published in 1921. This document, compiled for the

British Government by a Committee with Lord Emmott as Chairman, stated that Stalin had 'a reputation for remarkable force of character,' and also referred to his great ability as an organiser and man of action.

The fact is, of course, that Stalin was capable of tackling, and did tackle successfully, a problem which demanded the highest order of statesmanship for its solution. The whole future of the Soviets was bound up with the treatment to be meted out to the hundred or so distinct nationalities within the frontiers of what is now the Soviet Union.

According to an article written by Stalin and published in *Pravda* in November 1918, the bourgeois revolution of February 1917 gave rise to an emancipatory movement among the oppressed minorities. The borderlands of Russia were immediately covered with 'all-national' institutions, the movement being headed by the national bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia. We have already referred to one of these institutions, the Rada, set up in Ukraine at that time. Self-determination was interpreted as the right of leaders of nationalist movements to take power into their own hands and form independent States. But the Government of Lvov-Miliukov-Kerensky continued



the policy of national oppression; and the 'all-national' movements in the borderlands, which remained deaf to the expressed desires of the workers and peasants, came between two fires—from the Central Government on the one hand and the discontented masses on the other.

But the October Revolution brought a radical change in the position, in the borderlands as elsewhere. The revolutionary wave naturally spread outwards to the borderlands, where it came in conflict with the various bourgeois national governments. These governments promptly declared war on the new Socialist Government and became centres to which flocked hordes of counter-revolutionaries who formed whiteguard 'national' regiments.

'However,' remarked Stalin dryly, 'in addition to "national" governments, the borderlands also have national workers and peasants.<sup>5</sup> The latter set up their own Soviets of Deputies, and eventually, as recorded in an earlier chapter, the counter-revolutionary forces in Ukraine and elsewhere were completely crushed by the Soviet power. It must be emphasised here that this could never have been done had not the Bolsheviks won over the majority of peasants and workers in the borderlands by

insisting on a generous measure of cultural autonomy for all minorities.

Stalin pressed on with his work, establishing in particular a number of autonomous republics and autonomous areas in the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. These were all given independent and equal representation in the Soviet of Nationalities on the same basis as the R.S.F.S.R. itself and other Republics which joined the Union. The nature of the Soviet of Nationalities may be gathered from Articles 33 and 35 of the Constitution of 1936, where it is stated that: The Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. shall consist of two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. The Soviet of Nationalities shall be elected by the citizens of the U.S.S.R. by constituent and autonomous republics, autonomous provinces and national regions on the basis of twenty-five deputies from each constituent republic, eleven deputies from each autonomous republic, five deputies from each autonomous province, and one deputy from each national region.

As time passed, the number of Union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous areas increased until a full list would now cover several pages of this book. The

various national minorities now enjoy a remarkable degree of freedom and self-government. The idea common to most capitalist States, that one particular national group should hold a dominant position, has been abandoned in the U.S.S.R. The numerical majority of the Russians necessarily gives them in practice a considerable share in Governmental activities. At the same time a genuine effort is made to put all nationalities in the Union on level terms in regard to laws, rights, duties, privileges, and opportunities. Even small local groups are given very considerable linguistic, educational, and other facilities. In Soviet Ukraine, for example, there are 25 national regions out of 380 regions altogether. Of these national regions 8 are Russian, 7 German, 3 Bulgarian, 3 Greek, 3 Jewish, and 1 Polish. There are also 16 Moldavian, 10 Czech, 4 White Russian, 1 Swedish, and 1 French national village soviets in Ukraine.

No one would contend that a perfect solution of the minorities problem has been found. There are no doubt many faults and deficiencies, and the system looks better on paper than it actually works out in practice. Let that be granted. Nevertheless no other State has yet solved its minorities problem with

anything like such success for all concerned. It is only necessary to know something of the condition of many national minorities in the British, Dutch, and French Empires to realise that. And again we must ask the reader to refer back to our record of former conditions in Russia in order to see recent progress in its true perspective.

How the Soviet nationalities policy does work out in practice has been so admirably summarised by Sidney and Beatrice Webb that we propose to quote a part of their remarks here. They say that: 'Nowhere in the world do habit and custom and public opinion approach nearer to a like equality in fact. Over the whole area between the Arctic Ocean and the Black Sea and the Central Asian Mountains, containing vastly different races and nationalities, men and *women*, irrespective of conformation of skull or pigmentation of skin, even including the occasional African negro admitted from the United States, may associate freely with whom they please; travel in the same public vehicles and frequent the same restaurants and hotels; sit next to each other in the same colleges and places of amusement; marry whenever there is a mutual liking; engage on equal terms in any craft or

profession for which they are qualified; join the same churches or other societies; pay the same taxes and be elected or appointed to any office or position without exception. Above all, these men and women denizens of the U.S.S.R., to whatever race or nationality they belong, can and do participate—it is even said that the smaller nationalities do so in more than their due proportion—in the highest offices of government and in the vocation of leadership; alike in the sovnarkoms and central executive committees of the several constituent republics and in those of the U.S.S.R., and, most important of all, in the Central Committee of the Communist Party (and its presidium), and even in the all-powerful Politbureau itself. The Bolsheviki have thus some justification for their challenging question: “Of what other area containing an analogous diversity of races and nationalities can a similar assertion be made?”<sup>30</sup>

If in addition to the foregoing the reader will bear in mind the advantages gained by the minorities through having the vast material and cultural resources of the whole Union to draw upon, besides for their protection an army and an air force which Herr Hitler has described as being the strongest in the world:

if he will think of the bonds formed by industry, transport, administration, etc., developed on a scale far beyond the range of any minority as an independent State: if further he will reflect upon the rapidly increasing prosperity in which all share alike: he will, we believe, share our view that there is not the remotest prospect of the people of Soviet Ukraine consenting to separation from the Soviet fatherland.

Separatist intellectuals, self-centred, saturated in literary romanticism, ignorant of all that great body of science on which the Soviet Union is immovably based, will rant in vain about 'our splendid heritage,' 'our historic destiny,' or, to quote Signor Gayda who indulges in similar empty language, 'our legitimate aspirations and the inflexible parabola of historic rights.' Such meaningless phrases may arouse enthusiasm among people elsewhere. The people of Soviet Ukraine they will not deceive. Together with their comrades in other parts of the Soviet Union these Ukrainians have left the old, low-vaulted world for ever. With their faces turned towards the future they go forth to life's power and beauty.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Markham, *The Man with the Hoe*.

<sup>2</sup> V. O. Klyuchevsky, *A History of Russia*.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia*.

<sup>4</sup> G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime*.

<sup>5</sup> Writing in 1888 and referring to official statistics of the time, 'Stepniak' (Sergius M. Kravchinsky) said: 'The Government of the two Alexanders is, therefore, fully and entirely responsible for the present sufferings of the Russian masses. . . . What an occasion of sorrow, tears, despair, and degradation is reflected in these dry figures, which prove that households have by hundreds of thousands been forced to sell by auction all their poor possessions; that millions of peasants who were at one time independent have been turned into hirelings, driven from their homes, have had their families destroyed, their children sold into bondage, and their daughters given into prostitution.'—Stepniak, *The Russian Peasantry*.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Graham, *A Vagabond in the Caucasus*.

<sup>1</sup> Stepniak, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Sergius Maslov, 'Opposition Movements in Russia/' in *Slavonic Review*, April 1934.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia*.

<sup>10</sup> 'If there was one thing that was consistent in the history of the Rada's career, that was its treachery.\*—

M, Phillips Price, M.P., *Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*.

<sup>11</sup> The Red Army men in Siberia had a popular song about Kolchak at that time:

‘Uniform British,  
Epaulettes from France,  
Japanese tobacco,  
Kolchak leads the dance.  
Uniform in tatters,  
Epaulettes all gone,  
So is the tobacco,  
Kolchak’s day is done.’

Quoted in *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*. Moscow.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Rhys Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution*.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth*.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Wasyl Swystun in *Ukraine, The Sorest Spot in Europe*.

<sup>18</sup> Sidney Smith, Review of Seybert’s *Statistical Annals of the United States*.

<sup>17</sup> W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Armed Intervention in Russia, 1918-1922*.

<sup>18</sup> Dr J. H. Hertz, *A Decade of Woe and Hope*.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Duranty, *I Write as I Please*.

<sup>20</sup> W. H. Chamberlin, *Russia’s Iron Age*.

<sup>21</sup> Brig.-Gen. W. H.-H. Waters, C.M.G., C.V.O., *Russia Then and Now*.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Mazepa, ‘Ukrainia under Bolshevik Rule,’ in *Slavonic Review*, June 1934.

<sup>23</sup> From the report of V. I. Lenin to the Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, December 22, 1920.



- m V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Vol. IX,  
p. 151.
- <sup>25</sup> Isaac Mazepa, *op. cit.*
- <sup>26</sup> Thomas D. Campbell, *Russia, Market or Menace?*
- <sup>27</sup> W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War.*
- <sup>28</sup> H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia.*
- <sup>29</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology.*
- <sup>30</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism, A  
New Civilisation.*