

The Ukraine

Peasant Life in a Fertile Land

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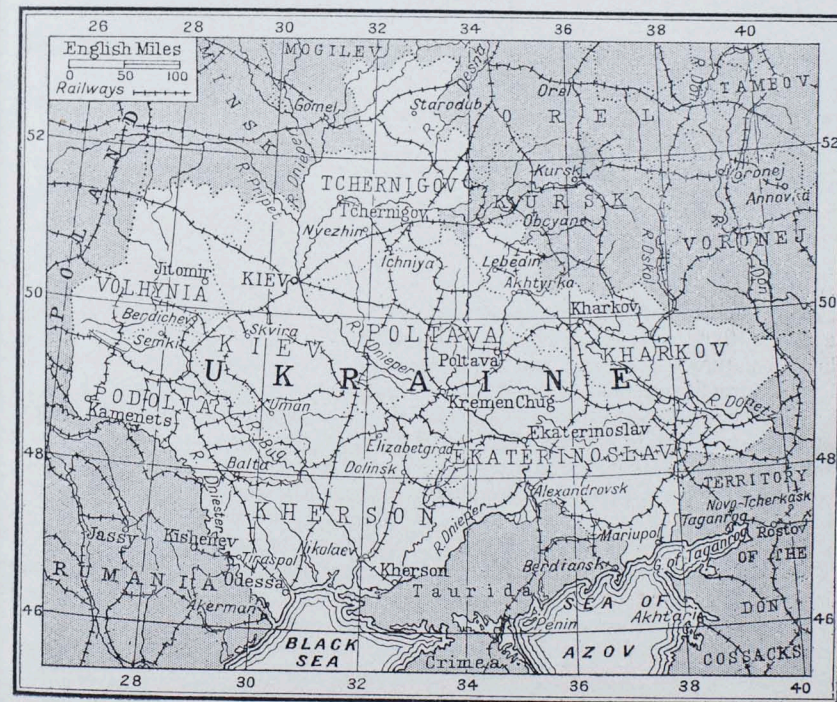
THE name Malo Russia, or Little Russia, also known by the Russians as the Ukraine, or the Borderland, is said to have originated many centuries ago, and to have distinguished the southern region of European Russia from Greater Russia, which lay to the north.

Until after the conclusion of the Great War very few people in Western Europe had heard of the Ukraine. As a Slav publicist deprecatingly puts it: "Caesar knew Gaul better than the Western nations know Eastern Europe." Those, however, who studied movements of opinion and disruptive tendencies in

the Russian Empire were aware that in the south an agitation was being carried on below the surface, with the aim of securing self-government for the race calling itself Ukrainian, and claiming to be an entirely different people from the White Russians and the Great Russians of the north and east, as well as the possessors of a language and a national culture distinct from those of the Russians and the Poles.

One could not spend any time in the various regions of the Tsar's Empire without being forced to admit these distinctions. Little Russia differed in almost every respect from Great Russia.

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THE SOVIET REPUBLIC OF THE UKRAINE



WHEAT FOR EXPORT IN A BUSY COMMERCIAL CORNER OF ODESSA

Odessa is an ice-free winter seaport of the Ukraine, and the chief business centre in the south of the country. Parks and public gardens impart a pleasant appearance to the city, which is picturesquely poised on an eminence considerably above the sea-level. The wealth of Odessa comes chiefly from the handling and export of grain, here seen on the docks fringing the harbour

Photo, Underwood Press Service

While the latter was characterised by gloomy landscapes and grey, cheerless days, in the former both nature and human nature seemed endowed with a bright attractiveness and all the warmth and gaiety usually in evidence in a land of blue skies and sunshine. The two zones, therefore, the bleak and sombre region of the north and the fertile and brilliant region of the south, formed a striking contrast.

Little Russia is accounted one of the most fertile countries in the world. The richness of the soil and the facility with which it yields its magnificent crops have been undoubtedly among the chief factors in promoting the prosperity of the peasantry; for seldom

is the intense and pitiful poverty that prevails among the rural population of north Russia to be met with in the south. The very appearance of the people is more attractive. They are better-looking and more ready to make friends; their disposition is more genial and cheerful.

The Little Russians, or Ukrainians, as they must now be called, have, in the past, endured the bitterness of bondage for a very long period. Prior even to the two centuries and a half passed under the Russian yoke, they had been subjected to Polish rulers. The first Ukrainian State was established, it is claimed, in the ninth century in Kiev. In the fourteenth century

the eastern portion of this state passed over to Lithuania, while Poland conquered the western portion. Finally, however, the whole of the Ukraine came under Polish suzerainty. But in 1648 the Polish yoke was thrown off, and six years later a treaty was concluded with the Muscovite Tsars, by which the territory east of the Dnieper was united with Muscovy; Galicia being ceded in 1795 to Austria.

In asserting their right to autonomy the Ukrainians declared that the ties existing between them and Russia were

purely dynastic, since the Tsar was protector of their state by treaty. When, therefore, Russia ceased to be an empire, they refused to acknowledge the right of the Russian people to arrogate to themselves privileges that had belonged to the deposed emperor. Intent on re-establishing their long dormant independence, they formed a provisional government, stedfastly refusing to recognize the Bolshevik regime. Accordingly, on Nov. 21, 1917, the independence of the Russian Ukraine was proclaimed. In 1920 a Soviet government was set up,



SCENE ON THE FROZEN DNIEPER AT A GREAT ANNUAL FESTIVAL

As the centre of ecclesiastical Russia, "Holy Kiev" was no inappropriate designation. It was in 988, in the Dnieper, that the Russians were first baptized, by Prince Vladimir, into the Christian faith. Annually the "Blessing of the Waters" commemorated this event—an occasion when vast crowds gathered about the Dnieper, many preserving some of the "sacred" water in bottles

Photo, Florence Farmborough

and the present Constitution is similar to that of Russia. In the Treaty of Riga, March, 1921, Soviet Russia and Poland agreed to recognize the independence of the Ukrainian State, which now comprises the following provinces of the former Russian Empire: Khar'kov, Poltava, Tchernigov, Kiev, Volhynia, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, and Podolia, an area estimated at some 174,000 square miles.

About 3,000,000 of the approximately 30,000,000 persons who compose the Ukrainian race live in Galicia, formerly Austrian territory, chiefly in the eastern

portion recently made over to the Polish Republic. They are known as Ruthenians, or Ruthenes, and it is a bitter disappointment to them that a frontier still separates their land from that of their blood brothers. Not only, however, does a political barrier separate them, but a difference in creed also; for, whereas the Little Russians of the Ukraine belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, closely akin to the Russian Orthodox, the Little Russians of East Galicia, Bukovina, and some of the sub-Carpathians districts are Uniats—Catholics, who acknowledge the Pope as



MILKMAIDS OF KIEV MAKING THEIR MORNING ROUND

Every morning similar processions may be seen entering Kiev by all its winding ways. The countrywomen transact much brisk business in their dairy produce with the townfolk, and through the streets they carry straight to the doors of their customers milk, eggs, cheese, curds and whey in innumerable earthenware jars, strapped on to the yokes which they bear on their sturdy shoulders

Photo, Underwood Press Service



IN A SILVER BIRCH GLADE OF THE UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE

The womenfolk of the Ukraine are thrifty and industrious; all the work of the house and much of that on the land is done by them, and in leisure moments they occupy themselves with their needlework. A love of pretty garments and bright colours prevails, and many village girls may be seen adorned with flowers, beads, and ribbons, even when performing the humblest duties

Photo, Florence Farmborough

their head but retain their Slavonic liturgy and many of the rites of the Greek Church.

The Ukrainians are pure Slavs, and have none of the Finnish or Teutonic intermixture which is so notable in the north. They are, they say, the true descendants of the founders of Russia, who began by founding Kiev (attributed to the year 864 A.D., but according to some records to the fifth century). While under Polish domination the Poles made the peasants serfs. Nevertheless, the Little Russian serf never became quite the same as the serf of the north. He served unwillingly; he

had no "little father" feeling towards his owner; and the family relation which did much to soften the barbarity of serfdom among the Great Russians was scarcely known in the south.

The country fared no better under the Tsars. Towards the end of the eighteenth century severe measures of Russification were introduced into the Ukraine. A Ukrainian movement of a nationalistic tendency, which first made its appearance in the nineteenth century, was immediately suppressed; the suppression being obviously based on a determination not to recognize the Little Russians as a separate entity.

As the Russian Minister of the Interior, Count Valuyev, vehemently asserted in 1863: "There never has existed, there does not exist, and there never can exist, a Little Russian language and nationality."

Russia certainly did her utmost to make this pronouncement good, and to compress the two branches into one nation, or into what the world would regard as one nation. For many years no books were allowed to be published or imported; no plays produced; no lectures delivered; and no sermons preached in the Little Russian tongue. Every grade of education from primary school to university was conducted in Russian. How slight the education was may be inferred from a Ukrainian Nationalist Professor of Lemberg, who stated in his "Geography of the

Ukraine" (1916) that the illiteracy in the Ukrainian provinces of Russia must be estimated at fully 80 per cent. of the entire population.

Whether Ukrainian is a distinct Slavonic language or merely a dialect of Russian is still a problem for philologists. It is certain, however, that whatever claim the language had as a dialect, has been more or less effaced during the last few years. The Nationalists have initiated many alterations, discarding several letters of the alphabet and introducing three not included in Russian, thus purposely making the orthography as distinct as possible from Russian. They have further created a Neo-Ukrainian literary language, dispensing with many of the technical terms of Great Russia. Among the peasantry certain dialects are found,



SELLERS OF DAIRY PRODUCE IN THE UKRAINE'S CAPITAL CITY

The milk-sellers are familiar figures in Kiev's streets, and very picturesque are some of the costumes which they are in the habit of wearing. There are girls and women in top-boots, long quilted petticoats, or in gay printed cottons, brodered aprons, and coloured head kerchiefs—all country folk, for whom the long morning tramp is not the most arduous of the day's duties

Photo, Florence Farmborough



PRIEST AND MONKS IN AN ECCLESIASTICAL QUARTER OF KIEV

Much interest is attached to Kiev as the oldest capital of Russia, and as the metropolis of the Mother Church of the Russian orthodox religion. The Petchersk is a district of the city especially venerated on account of the famous monastery and numerous churches—in rich, decorative Byzantine style—and the catacombs which enclose the embalmed remains of innumerable saints

Photo, Florence Farmborough

while in the Western Ukraine a peculiar mixture of Polish, Slovak, and Russian is usually spoken.

Across the country there stretches a wide belt of rich black soil called the Black Earth Zone. It is of the same dark, immensely fertile soil from which sprang the prosperity of Canada. Here is the granary of Eastern Europe, the great grain-growing district which enabled Russia to export wheat in such large quantities. Everything in this land of promise grows as if by magic; all kinds of grain are abundant, on every side fruits and vegetables are to be found; verdure of wonderful richness, flora of lovely variety, grow to perfection.

Nothing is dull in the Ukraine. Even the loneliest steppes are not without animal life, and some parts teem with fur and feather. Wild flowers grow in profusion; one enthusiast, for instance, collecting nearly two hundred different species from the open steppe alone.

Given peace and reasonably good government, the Ukraine—the richest of all the countries that went to make up the old Russia—should recover from the damage caused by the war-madness of Europe more quickly than any other region. Its wealth lies in the soil; all that has to be done is to work and to draw it out. It suffers from none of the disadvantages which the long winter inflicts on Russia proper. It has towns of considerable importance; Kharkov, one of the leading intellectual centres, with a fine university, before the Great War ranked as one of the largest commercial centres in Russia. It has ports on the Black Sea, with Odessa, which is never frozen up, as their head.

Viewed from the sea, Odessa has an imposing appearance. It stands on an eminence, some 150 feet above sea-level, and a fine flight of 200 granite steps, rising from the harbour, gives access to the town. Always the chief port for



NEIGHBOURLY GREETINGS ON THE WAY TO THE FIELDS IN THE GOLDEN DAYS OF THE UKRAINIAN HARVEST

The beauty and magic of the country districts of the Ukraine make quick appeal to the stranger's eye, and the picturesque little villages scattered about the varying landscape are life with colour and charm. Harvest-time, when a luxuriance of foliage, a wealth of flowers, and a profusion of fruit fill the air with mellow richness, is perhaps the favourite season of the peasants, who throughout the day may be seen gathering in the corn; none is idle, and even the small children take a share in gathering nature's offerings.

THE UKRAINE & ITS PEOPLE

the export of agricultural produce from the southern provinces of the Russian Empire, it will undoubtedly play an important rôle in the economic future of the Ukraine.

Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, extending for a distance of several miles along the right bank of the river Dnieper, with some 500,000 inhabitants, is an ancient city, which, even before Moscow came into being—in the shape of a settlement of scattered log huts—was already in a state of flourishing existence. Kiev was the first Muscovite capital, the most ancient city of the former Russian Empire. This proud distinction, has, however, in no wise debarred it from sharing in the amenities of modern life and civilization. Its imposing structures and broad thoroughfares are up to date, and present the prosperous, business-like aspect of a Western city. There is little here that is Oriental; no influence of Russian fatalism, no Russian melancholy as the mental environment.

In Russia, Kiev held the ascendancy as a Holy City. To every Russian "Holy Kiev" was the mother city and the Mecca of his Christian faith. It was in this town that Christianity won its first foothold in Russia; it was here, in the tenth century, that Prince Vladimir converted the people to the religion of the Christ by baptising them in the waters of the Dnieper. Since that time, to its myriad churches, monasteries, and convents, a host of pilgrims of the Greek Orthodox faith resorted annually from all parts of Russia, and even from Siberia, intent on prayer and fasting, or filled with the hope of a recovery of health that had been lost. In so far as cures of disease are concerned, Kiev had a reputation that vied with that of Lourdes in France.

The Petcherskaya Lavra, or Cave Monastery, the most revered quarter, contains catacombs, much used in days gone by as places of refuge. At certain of the church's festivals, vast crowds visit these catacombs, where the embalmed



UKRAINIAN VILLAGE CHARM

Flower-crowned, with bright garments brodered in many flashing hues, the Ukrainian peasant women are still faithful to their attractive national costumes, and in some districts feminine fashions have remained unchanged for generations

remains of many saints are still looked upon as objects of pious memory. The Cathedral of S. Sophia, a spacious handsome building of the eleventh century, with many additions of later years, and a considerable group of golden domes, and the University of S. Vladimir are among the most notable structures.

Of the older buildings of the town a great number were destroyed centuries ago. For Kiev has had a chequered past, not marked indeed by crime and

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calamity as in the case of Moscow, but subjected nevertheless, since its occupation by the Tartars in 1240, to invasion and pillage. Its history is inseparably associated with that of Mazeppa (the hero of Byron's poem), who, as Hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks, rebelled against the Russian rule, but was routed, together with the Swedes, at the Battle of Poltava in 1709.

Promising Industrial Conditions

The industries of Kiev are mainly agricultural; there is an extensive trade in grain, timber, and cattle; but the commercial prosperity of the town is largely due to the fact that it is the centre of the beet-sugar industry. Here, in Lipki, the aristocratic suburb, the Russian sugar kings of pre-war fame dwelt in peace and plenty, amassing fabulous fortunes from their enormous country estates which were given over solely to the cultivation of beetroot.

The Ukrainians have now fair-sized holdings of their own and live comfortably; they are clever at poultry-farming and cattle-breeding, and practise that thrift which seems everywhere to distinguish the peasant proprietor. Provided they make a proper use of the cooperative principle, both as regards the disposal of their produce and the provision of farm machinery for themselves, they should become as flourishing a community of cultivators as could be found anywhere.

Drawbacks to Peasant Prosperity

The old allotment of land, twelve or fifteen acres, was not enough, and schemes are under consideration for breaking up the large properties so as to allow for larger allotments. The promoters of these schemes hope to abolish the mud cabins in which the poorer Ukrainians have had to live, as well as to maintain the harvests of wheat and beetroot such as were taken off the big estates.

The Malo Russian was not infrequently charged with indolence by his

northern neighbours, and in truth he does not put overmuch energy into his work, but then his land does not require it from him. Still, there are hostile elements against which he has to struggle, and the chief of these is drought. This misfortune is happily but of rare occurrence; but when it does appear, its severity soon turns a rich, crop-laden region into a parched and stricken land, cut across with gaping fissures like great wounds, and there is no water either for man or beast. Care-free, improvident, making no attempt to cope with the evil, the Malo Russian suffers to the full. Another formidable enemy is the locust; the crops are ravaged, vegetation is destroyed, and the labour of months undone in almost less time than it would take to recount the tale; while some districts watered by the river Dnieper are inundated by the spring floods and laid waste.

Simple Charm of the Countryside

The Ukrainian summer is a beautiful season, but the time to see the country in its freshest and loveliest aspect is in spring. With a suddenness and a precision as astonishing as delightful, nature awakens from her winter sleep, and, in a day or two, the countryside is teeming with life, the whole rolling plain becomes one vast expanse of vivid green, while woods, meadows, and orchards are ablaze with colour and heavy with scents from spring foliage and spring flowers.

In many country districts the houses are built mainly of wicker-work, plastered with clay and washed over with blue, pink, or green colouring. The cheerful, homely aspect of the dwellings is enhanced by the trim gardens, and the tiniest, humblest cottage can boast of an orchard, which in spring is gay with pear, plum, and apple blossom, and in autumn is full of ripe, sweet-smelling fruit, destined for the market of the nearest town or even for Kiev, where excellent jams



WINTRY WEATHER IN THE VICINITY OF A BEAUTIFUL MONASTERY

Winter is shorter and less severe in the Ukraine than in Great Russia, and April, which does little to relax the grip of snow and ice in the north, discloses to view the brilliant green of the young crops in the south. Making his way over the wintry road, this peasant sees to his right the famous Petcherskaya Lavra, or Cave Monastery, of Kiev, ancient of origin and exceedingly striking in appearance



DROSHKI FOR HIRE IN A COBBLED STREET OF OLD KIEV

Kiev, "the Mother of Russian Towns," has many quaint characteristics, and in the old parts of the city the picturesque presents itself in great variety at almost every turn. This low, open four-wheeler, without a back, is the prevailing type of light carriage which plies the streets, manned by burly drivers, invariably possessed of the verbiosity and the genial disposition of the Ukrainians

Photos, Florence Farmborough

and preserves are made. There are also numerous flower borders, where, invariably, the sunflower rears its majestic golden head.

This flower predominates in the gardens of Little Russia, for the dried seeds are in high favour, especially among the lower classes in rural and urban districts. In some parts of the country entire fields are given over to

sprinkled over many of the breads, cakes, and pastries that are found so abundantly in the pastrycook establishments of the Ukraine.

Dreariness and monotony seem almost unknown words in the vocabulary of the Ukrainian. Even the steppe is not flat. At intervals there are interruptions caused by ravines, not very steep, not very deep, but big enough to enclose



AGED JEWRY FINDS COMFORTABLE QUARTERS IN A HOUSE OF REST

Prominent parts were played by Jews in the commercial life of the Ukraine. The moneyed magnates of Jewish nationality, despite sumptuous surroundings in the fashionable suburb of Kiev, were not unmindful of their poorer brethren housed in the squalid tenements of the Podol quarter, and provided many a home in which the aged and infirm could spend their declining years sheltered from distress

Photo, Florence Farmborough

the cultivation of the sunflower. Wondrous scenes of beauty are these plots, glaringly audacious with their vivid gold, accentuated by the dusky, deep-toned centre of the flower head, and by the fresh, leafy luxuriance that adorns the tall, slender stems.

Another strangely beautiful flowering plant, transforming many a dull corner of some peasant holding into a sea of animated colouring, is the poppy. The little black seeds of this plant are

villages or even small towns, and sheltered enough to allow the slopes to cover themselves with fruit trees and flowering shrubs. These snug little villages, scattered about the softly undulating landscape, or surrounded by fields of grain and rich pasture-lands, alternating with belts of dark forest or woodland trees of silver birch, oak, and chestnut, make pleasing pictures.

All natives of the Ukraine show a partiality for bright colours and pretty

surroundings. Their national costumes vary in different villages, but all are colourful and attractive, some very fantastic, with a plentiful display of multi-hued embroidery. Even in the thoroughfares of Kiev many old peasant costumes are visible, put on, not for show, but as everyday wear. The decorative talent of the Ukrainian is conspicuous in the weaving of carpets, and these, in consequence of their beauty and the moderate sum for which their owner is induced to sell them, find their way into distant parts.

In needlework of large design and striking effect, as well as in the finer and more exquisite kinds; in woodwork and all manner of village crafts, the same talent declares itself.

Influence of Music on Everyday Life

As becomes a fertile country where nature is bountiful and assists the people with generous hand, the Ukraine is full of beautiful old rural customs and ancient traditions. This land, too, is the home of music and song. The delicious melodies which Tschaikovski constantly introduces into his music have in them the spirit of the gracious, smiling landscapes of the south, full of colour, charm, and surprise. Many of the workers on the land, men and women alike, are fine singers, and the still hours of a summer evening resound with distant voices, singing plaintive old songs—and none so sweet or so inexpressibly sad as the folk-songs of Little Russia.

The peasant travelling companies of the Ukraine were well known all over Russia. Their musical plays, in particular, were finely melodious, and, with respect to variety of incident, full of resource. The folk-songs have sometimes been divided into Doumki, or "little thoughts," and Shoumki, or "little noises." The former of these usually fall into a minor key, while the latter have a lively lilt about them not unsuitable to dancing. Many songs emphasise a didactic or moral tone, and

it was this class of song that chiefly comprised the repertoire of the popular bards, known as "Kobzars" or "bandourists," who were wont to sing them to the accompaniment of the lyre. It must not be overlooked that these hymn-like songs contributed in no small measure to the religious and moral development of the Ukrainian people.

Folk-Song, Dance, and Legend

Some of the Christmas carols, or "Koliadki," delightful songs, full of primitive naïveté, are of pagan origin, having drifted down to our time from the days when the ancestors of the Ukrainians still worshipped the sun god. With singing goes dancing. It is from this country that most of those dances came that have so delighted the world in the performance of the Russian ballet. And it is the fairy-tale country. Folklore in all its branches flourishes in the Ukraine as nowhere else. Legends, local traditions, stories of saints and of wonder-workers, all seem to cluster thickly here, and certainly influence the nature of the people.

Active Reconstruction of the State

As it is the most fertile country towards the East in soil, so it is in imagination, excelling in skill of hand and eye, in the spiritual as well as in the material sphere. One finds on reviewing "Russian" specialities, as they were known to the rest of Europe, that it is from the south that most of them came. The complaint that the Ukraine has hitherto been swallowed up in the Empire of the Tsars, or that its national characteristics have not been recognized, can be made no longer. The Ukrainians are now one of the great peoples of Europe, and with everything in their favour. The tides of war and of revolution that have swept over the countries of the Near East brought suffering and wrought injury upon this nation, but they possess ample means for recovery and are making use of them with energy. Their future seems assured.



NEW YORK'S COMMERCIAL MASTERPIECE: THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING

Originating in the topographical necessity of vertical expansion of buildings in large cities, the American skyscraper is a marvellous product of architectural and engineering genius stimulated by a native inclination towards the spectacularly grandiose. A common height for these edifices is three hundred feet. Most remarkable of them all is the Woolworth Building which has no fewer than fifty-five storeys

Photo, Major Hamilton Maxwell

