

What About Ukraine

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THREE EDITORIALS ABOUT UKRAINE

On January 3, 1920, the NEW ORLEANS TIMES PICAYUNE printed the editorial which follows:

What About Ukraine?

There are times when one fairly hungers for facts regarding the situation in the territory that was Russia. We have so much of statement and counter-statement, claim and counter-claim, that one's only relief is to cover eyes and ears, like Japan's monkeys, and await in silence development that time eventually must bring to those harried lands. The trouble is, however, that our minds will continue to function and they tell us that somewhere in the East European chaos there is a right which, if we but knew to a certainty what is was, would arouse in us the necessity of giving encouragement and assistance to the side of justice.

Particularly would we like to know, beyond any uncertainty, just what the government of Ukraine stands for, whom it represents, what are its actual as well as ostensible purposes, and whether or not the establishment of a Ukrainian republic would hold any under-the-rose significance in connection with the Teutonic "Drang nach Osten."

For several centuries the rich plains of that region were claimed by the followers of Pet-

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lura have kept so well out of public notice that little has been heard of them beyond an occasional romance that has had the people of that land for characters and the steppes as setting so that when it was announced that this territory had set itself up as a republic and laid claims to a population of forty millions—larger in numbers than before-the-war-France—it seemed quite unbelievable to the rest of civilization. Then there were plenty who claimed that Ukraine was but another name for “German influence” and that if allowed to establish itself this new government would mean a powerful wedge into Slav lands for the penetration of Germanism and German industrial supremacy. It was not forgotten that many months before the armistice German soldiers and high German officers had been received in Ukraine with something like very open arms.

Nevertheless, the Ukrainian army has been operating vigorously against the Bolsheviks of Muscovy, and seems genuine enough in its opposition to Sovietism. Meanwhile, on another front the provisional republic is quite as antagonistic to Denikine and his anti-Lenine-Trotsky efforts—the fight being somewhat like the three-cornered duel of Captain Marryat’s story.

As to ourselves we would be more than pleased to see the Ukraine emerge a full-fledged republic, free of all entanglements and prepared to take up her obvious duty of supplying a large part of Europe with wheat and

other food products. If ever there was a land that required peace and quiet for its development it is that one, and furthermore, the compact geography of the region, its easy access to the sea, its fairly homogeneous population, all seem to give her a splendid start on the road to nationality and towards an extremely useful status in the circle of European nations.

As yet the victorious Allies have failed to place complete confidence in the new land and their mistrust can not but affect our own opinions, since it is more than probable that the authorities of the big governments have means of spying beneath the surface that we do not possess. Nevertheless, we have seen so many mistakes made, even by those who should have been well informed, that we can not accept any verdict as final. We still hope that the Ukraine may prove herself worthy, may win recognition and a raising of the blockade which has prevented the land from receiving even the medical appliances she so sorely needs because of an epidemic of typhus that has added its horrors to her double war.

(THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE of January 26, 1920, printed the following editorial, summarizing the Ukrainian situation.)

The Case of the Ukraine

One of the most important problems in connection with the Russian settlement is presented by the fate of the Ukraine, also known as South or Little Russia. This vast country, covering an area like that of Germany and France combined, and with a population equaling that of Italy, has since the middle of the seventeenth century been incorporated in the Muscovite Empire. Its inhabitants form an independent branch of the great Slavonic family and are not, as frequently supposed, a mere subdivision of Russians. They have distinctive national characteristics—in contrast to the submissive and communistic Great Russians they are individualists; they have a separate national tradition steeped in the memories of the Cossack military democracy of old; their language is recognized as a distinct entity by most leading authorities, including the Petrograd Academy of Sciences; above all, they possess that articulate consciousness, that will to live their own life as a group which is, on the whole, the most satisfactory test of nationhood. The Ukrainian country is by far the wealthiest section of the old Russian Empire; it is the greatest grain-producing area in Europe, and contains most of the mineral resources of what before the

revolution was known as Russia. Altogether, the country is endowed with all the physical possibilities to become one of the richest commonwealths of Europe.

If constitutional democracy had been restored to Russia the claim of the Russian centralists—whose ranks include not only the Czaristic restorationists, but liberals like Miliukov and even Socialists like Kerensky—that the Ukraine should be reunited with Great Russia as an integral part of the Russian state would have carried certain weight. Even then the probable solution would have been, not reunion, but federation. As things stand today, with the Bolshevik government firmly installed at Moscow and Allied recognition of the soviet a by no means remote possibility, it would be sheer madness on the part of the Western democracies to force the violently anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian nationalists, whose aim is an independent democratic republic based on small freehold proprietorship, back into the Russian fold. On the contrary, it is most obviously in the interest of the Allies that the Ukraine should become a strong independent state and a member of the alliance just formed by the Baltic states and Poland. By recognizing Ukrainian independence the Allies would act in conformity with the principle of self-determination and at the same time most effectually promote the reign of that general justice which is the basis of general peace.

(THE NEW YORK TIMES, of January 22, 1920, published the following Washington correspondence.)

“Should the cordon sanitaire policy prevail, it would, in the opinion of the Russian Nationalists here, mean that the defeat of the Bolsheviki by the Border States, would lead to the dismemberment of Russia, and they say that Russian patriots would be driven by such a policy to a position where their only hope for saving Russian unity would be realized by the triumph of the Red régime, whose military movement regardless of its motives would assume for all Russians the character of an endeavor to preserve the country’s integrity.”

(On January 25, 1920, the TIMES contained an editorial in which this attitude of the Russian Nationalists was commented upon.)

Neighbors of Russia

Russia is once more in the hands of a conquering and autocratic Government, supported by an army less formidable than that of the Czars, but still powerful enough. This Government believes in a creed whose first article is world conquest; its ambitions are accordingly wider than those of Pan-Slavism or any other form of Russian expansionism in the old days, and wherever its armies appear they are likely to find some support from persons of similar beliefs. Anti-Bolshevist Gov-

ernments at war with Bolshevism may experience, in a minor degree, the difficulties which confronted Austria-Hungary with its huge Slav population when it encountered the Power which was looked upon as the leader of the Slav world.

Whatever else Russia is at present, it has lost for the time being the spiritual leadership of Slavdom; if that can be found anywhere today, it is at Prague. The danger of expansion by the new Russia menaces first of all the other Slav peoples. But it menaces in the end every government in the world, as is demonstrated by the somewhat floundering efforts now being made to head it off. Anti-Bolshevist Russians have a justifiable grievance against the allied Governments whose work they are doing, who promised them support without stint and gave it to them in very inadequate measure. When statesmen in the allied countries talk of the desirability of weakëning the power of Russia by whatever measures, these Russians feel a natural and justifiable reaction. To this extent we have done something to lessen the sense of identity of interest which Russians opposed to Bolshevism once felt with the citizens of other nations whose Governments are now menaced by the Bolsheviki.

But this is not, of itself, sufficient to account for some of the statements of leaders of this group which have lately been made public. When Russian moderates protest against paying the States of the cordon sani-

taire for their work against Bolshevism by allowing them to annex slices of Russian territory, they are raising a quite justifiable complaint, though it has not yet been made clear that the Allies have anything of the sort in mind. The Poles, to be sure, are today far in Russian territory, and a faction of the Poles would be glad to see extensive annexations to the east, in territory where Polish nobles own great estates. But that faction is not all of Poland. That policy has been expressly disapproved by the United States, and has never been openly advocated by responsible statemen elsewhere; and, for the time being, the present position of the Polish Army is defensible on purely military grounds. Retention of that line in peace would be a different matter.

However, the Russian moderates, or some of them, go even further. They deny the genuineness of the national movements in the Baltic States, the Caucasus, and the Ukraine—a question on which perhaps there is room for considerable argument on both sides; and consequently they insist that these territories must be part of reunited Russia—not only economically but politically, subject to some very vague and unsubstantial talk of local autonomy. What opinion may in future be held in these States toward a united liberal Russia is beside the point; at present the Baltic States are in fact nations, with Governments that are working, with armies that are successfully defending the national frontiers against Bol-

shevism. Those who doubt the genuineness of the national movement in Esthonia, for example, should consider that the Esthonian Army might have given decisive help to Yudenitch if the Esthonians had not been afraid that victory for him would have meant the destruction of Esthonian independence. In the Ukraine conditions are far more unstable, yet at several critical moments Petlura's army might have been able to give Denikin help enough to enable him to reach Moscow. Petlura fought against Denikin instead of for him, because he was convinced that victory for Denikin would end the hope of independence for the Ukraine. Denikin has had his troubles, too, with the Kuban Cossacks over the same question. Denikin and Kolchak and Maklakoff might be in the Kremlin today, and Lenin in flight, if they had not convinced the border nations that victory for the Russian moderates meant the integral restoration of the old Russia, with the exception of Finland and Poland.

The allied Governments agreed with the Russians on this point, until lately at least; Mr. Lansing showed his disinterestedness by proclaiming our insistence on a united Russia at a time when the Russian unitarians had already been defeated and the border States held the next line of trenches against the Bolshevik advance. Now Russian moderates begin to threaten dire things if any more encouragement is given to the border States. Recognition of the independence of the Bal-

tic peoples, we are told, will throw all Russians into the arms of the Bolsheviki. The Bolsheviki themselves recognize this independence—tongue in cheek, to be sure, and in full confidence that the apples will eventually drop into the Bolshevist basket; yet they recognize it. The Russian moderates would turn Bolshevist in order to support a policy which the Bolsheviki profess to abhor. Lenin talks self-determination and the Denikins threaten to go over to Lenin in order to destroy self-determination.

It is a curious inversion of policy, characteristic of the confused ideas of a confused time. For these gentlemen have for the most part, proved their hatred of Bolshevism on the battlefield, and they talk much of their enthusiasm for democracy. Yet they would go over to Bolshevism, if we believe some of their assurances, to prevent democracy from being put into practice. It is highly probable that they do not mean all that they say; likewise probable that when Russia is purged of Bolshevism agreements measurably satisfactory to both parties can be made with the border States. In the meantime the border States are in fact nations, and nations with a vital interest in the defeat of Bolshevism; annexations with no sound ethnographic basis should not be sanctioned, but it would be neither just nor wise to refuse to recognize and aid them.