

THE VIRSKY DANCERS



The 80 strong Ukrainian State Folk Dance Company has come from Ukraine to perform before lovers of music and dance in Britain and also, as has been reported in a London newspaper, "to pay a special tribute to the Royal Wedding".

No doubt that music lovers in Britain will enjoy Ukrainian music and the wonderful Ukrainian folk dances. But at the same time it would not be too much beside the point to put you into the picture and tell you something about Ukraine and its people. Here is a brief outline of some facts which may interest you.

UKRAINE — THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

1. About 50 million people live in a territory immediately north of the Black Sea, in the east bordering with Russia, in the north with Byelorussia, in the west with Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, and in the south Hungary and Romania. Famous for its fertile black earth, it is also rich in minerals and other resources. Ukraine alone is the fourth largest producer of steel in Europe. Before the Soviet-Russian occupation and forced collectivisation, which came as a result of the occupation, Ukraine had the potential to become the "bread-basket of Europe".

2. Ukraine is not Russia nor a part of Russia, as we are still led to believe by some in the West. The Ukrainian language is a distinct Slavonic language.

3. Almost a thousand years ago (988 AD) the Ukrainian Grand Prince Volodymyr was baptised and introduced Christianity into the whole of the country. Ukraine (then called 'Rus') was strong and prosperous, the Kyivan ruling House was held in great esteem in Western European countries. Princess Ann, daughter of Jaroslav the Wise, married in 1049 Henry, King of France and their son Philip became later King of France.

4. As in the histories of most countries, there were periods when Ukraine and its people were able to enjoy independence and stability, whereas at other times Ukraine found herself in grave difficulties. In the 17th century Bohdan Khmelnycky, the then head of the Ukrainian State struggling against powerful foes, turned to Russia, Ukraine's northern neighbour, for help. The mutual treaty was signed in 1654. This treaty, however, turned out to be the biggest blunder and disaster in the history of Ukraine. Instead of an ally, Ukraine found herself faced with yet a greater foe. Russia (then as now) was not interested in helping but in occupation. From then on Ukrainians had to be always ready to defend their freedom before their aggressive and imperialist northern neighbour. But yet again tragedies occurred which were decisive in the course of the history of Ukraine and its nation. One such tragedy was the battle of Poltava in 1709 when the Ukrainian army led by Hetman Ivan Mazepa suffered defeat. After this battle Ukraine and her people were gradually shorn of their rights to live as an independent nation and country and became incorporated into the Russian Empire (until 1918).

5. After the collapse of the Czarist Russian Empire at the end of the First World War, Ukraine yet again proclaimed her independence, but the new Russian Czars — the Bolsheviks — did not leave Ukraine in peace for long. The Russian Red Army 'invited itself' into Ukraine as it did in later years into Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia and Afghanistan. Two and a half years of bitter and bloody war followed against insuperable odds, defeat only came at the point of a Russian bayonet and once more Ukraine found herself in a new empire, the so called 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics'.

6. Because the Ukrainian nation did not submit so easily under the yoke of the new Russian Red Czars, the rulers in Moscow saw to it that any resistance would be broken by the most barbaric method possible — starvation. In the artificial famine created by Moscow in 1932-33 over six million people were starved to death. In history this will go down as the "Ukrainian Holocaust".

7. For external propaganda, the USSR is now being presented in the West as the only country in the world where all nations are free and equal. In practice, however, the non-Russian nations are being most brutally annihilated in "the Russian melting pot". All manner of means are being devised to force them to abandon their national language, their culture and their national identity to be ready for the time when they might be completely absorbed into a Russian nation.

8. The so called 'USSR' is a country of concentration camps, at least 60% of which are filled with Ukrainian political prisoners. In Ukraine alone there are over 120 concentration camps, 42 prisons and 17 known psychiatric institutions which are used to crush any form of political opposition. But the Soviet Russian tyranny does not stop there — thousands of Ukrainians (and other nationals) languish in concentration camps not only for voicing political opposition but also for defending their national language (in schools and other institutions), their culture and national identity.

9. Unfortunately, the Virsky Ukrainian State Dance Company does not represent a free Ukrainian people and a free Ukrainian culture, as this is misleadingly being presented. Their music is solely for the purposes of export abroad. Moreover, they do not come here of their own free will, this decision was made for them in Moscow. Of course, the blame does not lie with the individual dancers, but willingly or unwillingly their presence and the tour in Britain are being used by the Soviet Russian government as a deliberate smokescreen for their brutal policies elsewhere in the world, notably to take one's attention away from the still smouldering situation in Afghanistan and Poland, not forgetting the Middle East.

10. To say that their appearance in this country is a "a special tribute to the Royal Wedding", when in fact they represent a Russian totalitarian regime, can only be seen as a mockery of what a true and honest tribute should be.

11. To all music lovers, who intend to see and enjoy the Ukrainian Folk dance and music, we ask not to be misled by Soviet-Russian lullabies.

Remember that the words: "peace", "friendship" and "freedom" have a different meaning in Moscow than they have in the West!

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