



*For the fifth time in twenty years this Ukrainian Lawyer changes the language of his "plate"*

REPUBLIC  
FOR A  
DAY

*An Eye-Witness Account of  
the Carpatho-Ukraine Incident  
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## INTRODUCTION

FOR one day in March, 1939, the day of the final break-up of Czechoslovakia, there was an independent Republic of Carpatho Ukraine. This tiny district, tucked away in central Europe at the eastern end of the Carpathians, is scarcely larger than Norfolk and Suffolk or the State of Delaware. It is a beautiful land, in which mountains covered with great forests of beech and fir slope down from snow-covered peaks to a narrow plain devoted to maize and vineyards. Yet, owing to its extreme poverty, the constant warring of the outside world for the soul of its inhabitants, the variety of its minorities and its violent hatreds and prejudices, there is in Carpatho Ukraine something of the grotesque. Historically, it has always been a part of Hungary. Then in 1919, when the map of Europe was being redrawn as a result of the War, it became part of Czechoslovakia.

The declaration of the Republic in March was the end of five months of international limelight. During this time Carpatho Ukraine, as an autonomous province of the new Czechoslovakia created after the Munich Agreement, was nursed by the Germans as potential core—as a New Piedmont as it were—for the creation of a Great Ukraine. It is of this period in Carpatho Ukraine's history that I have endeavoured to give some picture. The outward manifestations often resembled comic opera, and at times were so

comic that a visitor from another planet, dropped suddenly into Chust, might have thought he was witnessing *opéra bouffe*. But the end was tragedy. For at the supreme moment, when Czechoslovakia broke up, the Germans lost their interest in Carpatho Ukraine and it was left to its fate. The Hungarians marched in and recovered it.

Although until 1938 the world at large had heard little of Carpatho Ukraine—or of Ruthenia as it was, and is now called—it has for the last sixty years figured largely in the secret dossiers of the various central and eastern European powers. In the old Hungarian days and during the War, to the great concern of the French, Russia conspired to get possession of it. She wanted it as a foothold south of the Carpathians. Then, too, the province has always, and especially since the War, been one of the centres of the Ukrainian movement. This movement, recently sponsored by the Germans, aims at the union of all the Ukrainians, of whom there are thirty-eight millions in Russia, seven and a half millions in Southern Poland, one and a half million in Rumania and half a million in Carpatho Ukraine, in an independent Ukrainian State.

To say, however, that Carpatho Ukraine has been a centre of the Ukrainian movement, does not by any means imply that the half-million inhabitants are all believers in the Ukrainian idea, nor even that they are all Ukrainians. It may be asked: "What then are they?" This is a question on which opinion differs widely. In the last century Russian agitators were telling the people that they were members of the Russian race, speaking a Russian dialect; while, on the other hand, Ukrainian agitators began to tell them that they were Ukrainians speaking Ukrainian. The

Hungarians, afraid of both movements, told the people they were neither the one nor the other, but Ruthenians, that is to say autochthonous Slavs speaking a Slav language of their own. During the Czech domination the Government policy was one not of suppression but of *divide et impera*. Both the Russian and Ukrainian groups were subsidized throughout, but the Government, largely for reasons of international policy, at first seemed to favour the Ukrainian group, making Ukrainian the language of instruction in the schools, and then later, when it became clear that the Ukrainian idea might still develop into a live political issue and lead to territorial change, showed an increasing tendency to favour the Russian group, which then cherished little hope of territorial change, and made Russian the language of instruction. During the last five months of German-Ukrainian agitation every method of persuasion was brought to bear to make the entire population forget the word Ruthenian and consider itself Ukrainian. The peasant, bewildered by so much interest, has always inclined most frequently, it would seem, to the Hungarian view, which is perhaps the easiest for the simple mind, namely, that he is a Ruthenian, a "man of the place" with no allegiance beyond the frontiers. The dialects which he speaks, and usually calls Ruthenian, are, it seems clear, very closely related to Ukrainian.

In the politico-racial dispute the Churches, the reader should note, have always played an important rôle. The Orthodox Church has favoured the Russian group, while the Greek Catholic Church—to which the majority of Ukrainians all over the world belong—has favoured the Ukrainian group.

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The reader will see that I have throughout referred to the land in question as "Carpatho Ukraine" and not as Ruthenia, and to the inhabitants as "Ukrainians," not as "Ruthenians". I have adopted this method for simplicity, because these were the names by which land and people were known during the period with which this book deals. The words Ruthenia and Ruthenians, when they appear, are used to emphasize the purely local feeling.

*July, 1939.*

# 1

BEFORE leaving Prague for Chust in January I had two significant conversations, one with a German diplomat, the other with the permanent representative of the Chust Government in Prague.

The German corrected the slip when I referred to "Ruthenia".

"Carpatho Ukraine," he said, adding that Father Volosin, the provincial Prime Minister, had been told to call it that by the German Legation. Father Volosin, in fact, was at that time in closer contact with the German Legation when in Prague than with his own central Government, and the next day it was the Germans, not the Czechs, who told me that he was in town and suggested that I might like to see him.

The representative of the Chust Government said that the future of Carpatho Ukraine was in Hitler's hands. I set out for Chust feeling that I should almost have had a German not a Czechoslovak visa.

Chust at that time was not easy of access. The railway that connected the two extremities of the Republic had been cut by the cession of territory to Hungary after the Vienna Award, and the only way to reach Chust was by travelling from the new railhead at Presov, some 150 miles by omnibus.

We arrived at Presov early in the morning, had some breakfast in a café and at twelve o'clock exactly our omnibus started. There were in fact two omnibuses

outside the office. Round the omnibus belonging to the State railways some seventy people had collected. A crowd of peasants in homespuns and astrakhan hats, dark-coated clerks from the town, and Jews with long caftans and ringlets over their ears, was trying to force its way through the narrow door, while a few people, bolder than the rest, were trying to climb in through the windows. Eventually the driver in desperation said that he would take only those whose luggage was on the roof. This sent everyone struggling upwards. People rolled over in the mud as others jumped on to their shoulders, and soon the roof was covered with people, each person trying to hold his basket or bundle there so as to qualify for an eventual place inside. The comfortable life of the train was clearly over. Our omnibus, however, which was an express reserved for travellers to Chust was somewhat less full. We got in with several engineers, a cinema camera man, a Senator and an old woman with a huge basket out of which geese craned their necks. The geese hissed incessantly.

The road ran through hilly country all day. The main roads in Ruthenia run north and south along the river valleys that bring the water down from the Carpathians to the Hungarian plain. We, travelling from west to east spent our time climbing up out of one valley and down into the next. Beside the road were open sepia-coloured fields divided into a chequer-board of tiny peasant-owned strips, and beyond them scrubby woods, held in common by the peasants and poorly worked, rising up to the mountain crests where the real forests began. Here and there were peasant villages. In each valley there was a different style of architecture, but in general the impression was one of low-built wooden huts, usually painted a deep blue

and always with steep thatched roofs. Those villages that lay at a distance from the road, their houses packed close together with little semblance of order and only the brown thatch of their roofs showing, reminded me sometimes of a great herd of sleeping bison. Isolated houses and especially outbuildings, with their rotten thatch coming almost down to the ground, had the appearance of heaps of hay or even of parts of the ground itself. Everywhere there was teeming life. The peasants' clothes were in marked contrast to the sober dress of the Bohemians. The men had on thick white frieze trousers while some of them, and all the women, wore coats of long-haired sheepskin.

There was little snow about but plenty of mud, and sometimes when the wheels spun round we all had to scramble out and push the omnibus up the hill. However, the difficulties of communicating with Ruthenia, about which so much had been written in the international press, seemed to have been exaggerated. Military lorries, of which we passed fifty during the day, were hurrying in both directions with the post and supplies for Carpatho Ukraine. But, in spite of this abnormal traffic during the three worst months of the year, the roads, which had been well engineered in the first place, were not in too bad a condition.

In the main valleys were small towns, unremarkable at first sight save for the fact that they seemed to grow more and more squalid as we proceeded east. At Svalava, having driven for four and a half hours without a stop, we were allowed twenty minutes' rest. We all filed into a little Jewish restaurant where we were amused by an aged deaf-and-dumb woman selling dolls to Czech soldiers.

When we arrived at Chust it was half-past seven

and quite dark. A large notice erected by the Motor Club first announced that we were there, and then, after two long rows of thatched peasants' houses similar to those we had seen all along the road, came one- and two-storied houses of somewhat more town-like appearance. By the light of the flickering lamps I could distinguish little except mud, huge holes in the street and a few Jews with sacks on their backs. It was curious to reflect that in a few days this place would have become a part of our lives, and that we should be returning there from expeditions with a comfortable sense of homecoming. At that moment it felt very little like home.

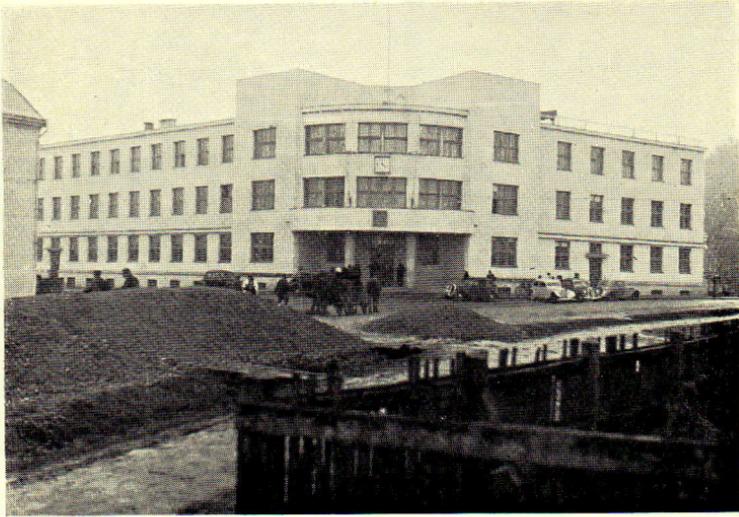
The omnibus stopped in a dark square and left us and our luggage to the mercy of a herd of small boys. Everything was written in the cyrillic alphabet so that we could not even read the international word "Hotel". The little boys, however, took charge of us, and forming a long cavalcade we proceeded into the hotel and right up to our room. There a great argument started over the charge, but in the end everything was happily settled, for one of them thinking we were Germans, started *heiling* Hitler and welcoming us as friends of the Ukraine. There were so many Germans there at that time that I think all visitors were taken for Germans. The hotel, said to be the best in the Ukrainian capital, was a simple affair arranged on the first floor. There was no carpet in our room and no furniture except two beds, a table and a washstand. I asked for a cupboard in which to put our clothes, but there was no such thing in the hotel. The hotel which was run by the Sitch, the "S.A." of Carpatho Ukraine, had only just been taken over from a Jew, the porter said, and that seemed to explain everything. Of course, he added, it had been

in a "hopeless condition—what else could one expect?"

Whatever the condition of the room, however, we should have been satisfied. For we had it to ourselves, and in Chust that was something of a luxury. With the sudden influx of officials and others the population of the town had risen in the course of a few weeks from eighteen thousand to twenty-six thousand. Serious overcrowding resulted and many persons who were complete strangers to each other were obliged to share rooms. Everyone who arrived from Prague unannounced had curious stories of their first night. A representative of *Völkischer Beobachter* found both hotels full up. One of the boys who awaited the arrival of the omnibus offered a room, and the journalist and his wife, tired and confused, shouldered their luggage and followed him down the street. Only next morning did they discover that they, the most militant of Nazis, had spent their first night in Chust under the roof of no less a person than its former Chief Rabbi! On another occasion a Czech friend, finding everything full up, went to an inn in a town a short distance down the valley. Shown a room with three beds, he inquired the price per bed, and, to ensure privacy, paid for them all. At midnight he was woken up by a man who lounged into the room, lay down on the floor and went to sleep; at intervals throughout the night the process was repeated. At about six o'clock, badly bitten and somewhat irritated, he decided to get up. Before leaving he complained to the landlord, pointing out that he had paid for the whole room. "You hired the three beds," corrected the landlord, "these people were sleeping on the ground." Most of the long-term visitors to Chust took rooms in private houses. The best and at the

same time cheapest of these was surely that found by a high Czech military official. A room was commandeered for him in the villa of the President of the Law Court. Asking the President what would be the rent, he was requested to return later. When he did so the President, with a delightful legal precision, told him that he had measured up the flat and found that the cubic content was  $x$  metres, while that of the room to be let was  $y$  metres or a fourth part of the whole. The monthly rent therefore, would be a quarter of the total rent of the flat, namely eighty crowns (eleven shillings).

Our arrival, I learned afterwards, caused a tremendous stir. Owing to a prominent nose, and to a cast of features which in a highly susceptible anti-Semitic eastern Europe seems to give rise to doubts, I had been taken by the porter and the loungers in the passage for a Jew. Even worse was my companion's Polish passport. It almost caused a riot. Czeslaw, or "C", into which most English people soon abbreviated his unpronounceable name, was a young Polish photographer who had been working with me for nearly two years. I had realized that he would not be the ideal travelling companion in Carpatho Ukraine, where, as a Pole, he would be regarded as a potential enemy of all Ukrainians and particularly of the Great Ukraine idea. But I had not anticipated anything like this. The hotel, I subsequently discovered, was staffed almost exclusively by Ukrainians from Eastern Galicia. Having just escaped from Poland by slipping across the frontier in the night without a passport—maybe after some revolutionary act that had got them into trouble with the Polish authorities—the last person they wanted to be confronted with was a Pole. For several days they



*The Government Building, Chust*



*Opposite the Government Building (see p. 20)*



*Father Volosin, Prime Minister of Carpatho-Ukraine*

innocently believed that C's only purpose in coming to Chust was to track them down and disclose their presence to the local Polish authorities.

The little restaurant was amusing. The menu, written in Ukrainian in cyrillic characters, was quite unreadable. In the corner a cracked but lusty band played dance music and Ukrainian melodies, while members of the Sitch, in sky-blue uniforms, hailed each other with much clicking of heels, outstretching of arms, and "Slava Ukraini" (Hail Ukraine). We seemed to have been flung right into the middle of things already. One of the recent changes, I was told, had been the introduction of the resplendent head waiter complete with white tie and waistcoat. He was the only really clean thing in the room. Chust, they assured me continually, was going up in the world. Later we were not so sure. C returned to our room with a glum face and sopping pyjamas. The china part of the lavatory had been so insecurely fixed to the floor that the whole thing had fallen over as he was sitting on it. For weeks afterwards one had to take care not to repeat the accident. Repairs were only effected when a German consul arrived. He left a memorandum about it with the Prime Minister's secretary on the first morning of his arrival.

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Next morning we were woken early by the sound of marching and singing in the street. A long column of Sitch members was passing on the way to drill. Some of them had on uniforms, others, evidently new recruits, had only the blue cap and an arm-band in the blue and yellow Ukrainian colours, or the trident badge. They looked a tough lot and their singing sounded harsh and peremptory. The crowd welcomed

them with tremendous enthusiasm. The trident specially recalls the Ukrainians' former grandeur. It was the badge of Vladimir the Great, a national hero, who received Christianity in 980 and was known as the "Lord of the Three Seas"; the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea and the Baltic.

At the end of the main street leading out of the square was a big sugar-loaf hill topped by a ruined castle which, in the darkness of the night before, we had not seen. We took a path that wound slowly round it. Soon we came to the first of three unfenced cemeteries, where in the shade of a big crucifix that looked down on a piece of open hillside, the Roman Catholics buried their dead. A little further, beneath tall pine trees, was the cemetery of the Greek Catholic Church. Two little boys with a dog were playing about among the graves, and it seemed a haphazard damp place in which to be buried. Beyond, again, was another burial ground peculiar to adherents of the Orthodox Church and distinguished from the others by its triple crosses. In these three Christian cemeteries the town's dead, buried in the same place but yet not together, seemed still to maintain in death at any rate the appearance of that bitter rivalry which had characterized them in life.

From the top of the hill there was a splendid view. The whole of Chust and its surroundings was spread out before us like a panorama. The town, we saw, lay at the side of a broad valley running down from the north at the point where it joins that of the Tisza, a river flowing from the Carpathian watershed southwest through Carpatho Ukraine and down into the Hungarian plain, where it eventually joins the Danube. Chust doubtless owed its early existence to the castle, which is said to have been built about the

year 1100 to protect the salt that came down the Tisza on rafts from the salt mines at Akna Slatina, and from the now exhausted salt pits at Sandrovo near Chust. Hills, clothed with grey-brown beech woods, rose up steeply from the valleys, except to the north-east where there was a view over low rolling uplands to distant snowfields. Beside the Tisza, which twisted down the valley like a silver serpent, ran the railway and main road. The railway was quite deserted, the road full of hooting lorries. A convoy passed along bearing motor-bicycles, which suggested that the Czechs were still strengthening their military force against possible adventures by their Polish and Hungarian neighbours.

The buildings of the town provided a clear picture of the various influences, political, religious and economic that have been at work there. On the south side was the built-up area; overdecorated one- and two-storied houses put up by the Hungarians in the 'eighties and 'nineties of the last century, and here and there, rising up above them, the simple modern administrative buildings of the Czechs, which seemed so typical of the flourishing democracy. It was perhaps significant of the Czech policy, which weighed so heavily on the province, that the largest and most noticeable buildings should be the Czech High School and the prison. Czech constructive work was typified by the recent canalization of the little stream that meandered through the town, by the airport, and by a group of buff-coloured buildings with neat red roofs on the outskirts of the town, that form the new co-operative society's headquarters. Religious influences were exemplified by the spires of two Catholic churches, the blue onion domes of two Orthodox churches and the roof of a large synagogue. On the north side the

town tailed away into the country, with long rows of purely peasant houses built along a series of irregularly patterned roads. The blue or white walls, and the red tiled or grey thatched roofs of this area formed an attractive pattern against the brown background of the winter fields.

It was a mild morning, and all the water in the level brown fields of the valley, sometimes in little sparkling runnels, sometimes in great patches, together with the little black trees scattered in the fields, and the long line of snow-clad peaks just visible in the blue distance to the north, gave the landscape something of a Chinese appearance. When I reached the top of the castle rampart bells in the town started ringing furiously and I was soon attracted by the sound of a mass being sung in the open air. It was the feast of the Waters, and the Greek Catholic Bishop in all his robes had gone down to the little river to bless it. I could just see the censer being swung out across the water. Then they all trooped back to one of the churches and the bells stopped.

It was curiously illustrative of the general character of Chust that the sound that then came up from below was not the mixed burr of most towns but only the clucking of many chickens and the occasional quacking of a duck. Chust was a capital, but it was still predominantly a peasant town.

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From the castle we went down to the Government Building, where I was to meet some of the officials. The Government Building, which was originally the home of the local administration, is a good modern corner building in the latest steel and concrete style. Its modernity, I later discovered, was limited to

appearances. Chust has neither a drainage system nor main water, and the pumps of the Government Building, like those of the Koruna Hotel, could often produce nothing but mud. On that day, however, I was only aware that the road outside was unpaved and rutted.

Two gendarmes stood on guard outside the main entrance and at the foot of the main staircase a Sitch lad, who was doing porter's duty, took a card and asked us to wait. We sat down on a bench in the hall. Hundreds of people were waiting and others kept crowding in; for at Chust, as everywhere in the east, a visit to an official of whom one happens to know the name will settle a matter after a short conversation, whereas a letter is never answered at all. The hall looked like a market hall, for nearly all the petitioners were peasants. Most of them wanted to see the Prime Minister himself, or at any rate, the head of a department. Some had on all-linen clothes with beautifully embroidered shirts, others the more modern but less attractive clothes of the West. Headgear was very varied, tall astrakhan hats, little caps made of shaggy sheepskin and old black homburgs with a flower or a sprig of box stuck in the ribbon prevailing. Half the people seemed as if they had been waiting all day. One old man next to me said that he had been there three days already, and he seemed quite prepared to wait another three.

At last I went upstairs. I found Komarynsky, the Propaganda Minister, with Kleiss, the representative of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and Oldofredi, the German State Secretary, who is charged with looking after the interests of the German minority. Oldofredi looked like a yeoman farmer, in whipcord and high boots, and he wrote in a large round hand with great concentration. He seemed genuine but not par-

ticularly quick. He was not a local man but had been sent down from the neighbourhood of Eger, in the Sudetenland, where the Germans were more race-conscious, with the task of "making the Carpathian Germans realize their destiny".

For a long time Komarynsky and Kleiss were talking as one plotter to another; the Czechs and the Poles were reviled in turn, and members of the central government in Prague constantly referred to by both as "swine". Various secretaries and clerks, all in the early twenties and with the air and big hands of peasants, came in, clicked their heels and *heiled*. Everything seemed very efficient, and the German smartness and thoroughness had already been acquired at any rate outwardly.

Downstairs one of the common Ukrainian-Czech scenes had been taking place. A man had come in with a Czech tricolour badge in his buttonhole. Directly he reached the foot of the stairs the three Sitch men rushed at him and seized him by the arms. They said he was not going upstairs with a Czech badge on, and tried to tear it off. He protected himself, and a long argument ensued.

"You are in Carpatho Ukraine here," they said.

"I know," the Czech replied, "but it is a part of the Czechoslovak Republic."

"Maybe," they admitted, "but the Government Building is our building and our rules apply."

"No," replied the Czech, "it is the property of the State."

He made no headway, however, and left the building. The Sitch lads looked as proud as punch.

In five minutes, the man returned with a gendarme. (The majority of the gendarmes were Czechs and the command was entirely in the hands of the Czechs.)

He walked straight up the stairs with the gendarme behind him. The lads looked on. When he came down the fun started again.

"I have full right to wear what badge I like," said the Czech, taking a new line, "you Ukrainians do and no one interferes with you, and no one even interferes with your uniforms."

"But this is our land," they started shouting again, "here we rule."

"Yes," said the Czech, "but you and the Slovaks do not wear your uniforms only at home. You come to Prague in them, and no one molests you. Your Ministers even wear them when they come to meetings of the central Cabinet. If you wear what you like in Prague, you must admit that I have the right to wear what I like here." Eventually he left. We wondered what happened to him in the evening when no one was about.

During lunch the younger porter in the hotel, who I had thought was probably a spy the night before, came in and said that the police wanted to speak to C. A furious fat man from the police-station said that he had been taking photographs in the street; this was strictly forbidden. C said he had been in Czechoslovakia for eight months and had never had any difficulty about taking photographs before. This made the man more furious than ever.

"Eight months in Czechoslovakia," he snorted, "but you are in the Ukraine now."

He knew exactly whence we had come and when, and where we had been recently, and I saw that the fact of C being a Pole and having come from Hungary was a most unfortunate coincidence. The troubles which I had anticipated had come even sooner than I had expected—only it was C, not myself, who was

suspected of being a spy. In the end the films were taken away, and it was agreed that C should be allowed to take photographs if the headquarters would give him a permit, but only on my responsibility.

After lunch, as it was a holiday and everything was shut, I went out for another walk. This time I set out westwards along a street bordered by what were more or less peasants' houses. Chust seemed a sinister place. People peered furtively out from behind their curtains and the policemen grasped their wooden batons firmly all the time. I came to the end of the town by the river. On the south were hills with a rugged skyline topped by beech-trees silhouetted against a mottled evening sky; while far away on the other side, across the wet plain, were mountains and in the distance two snowfields. Children in fur caps were playing along by the river. One group was amusing itself highly by putting each of its members in the middle of the group in turn and giving him big slaps on the seat. Further on six tiny boys were playing a water game. Three had formed up on either side of a small pond armed with long flexible sticks. They beat the water with the sticks, trying to splash it over their opponents. They enjoyed it so much that they spent half their time rolling on the ground with laughter, and their merriment filled the whole field.

In the evening I was invited to dinner by Komarynsky in the large restaurant of the hotel, which had been reopened only that morning. The hotel used to belong to a Jew, but the Sitch had forcibly pushed him and many others into Hungary. Between the fourth and the ninth of November, when the Czechoslovak forces were evacuating the districts that had to be ceded

under the Vienna Award, they had rounded them up, packed them into lorries and forcibly dumped them into the area that was to become Hungarian. Some of them were sent back when the Hungarians came in, others willingly or unwillingly stopped there. Having got rid of the owner of the Koruna, the Sitch took it over themselves, to provide, so they said, a suitable hotel for visitors to Chust and a social centre where the officials and others could meet; in other words, one Ayran café and restaurant in Chust where the new anti-Semitic ruling caste could meet without sacrificing their principles. The restaurant soon became the centre of "Ukrainianism" in Chust. Foreigners were forced to go there by a form of moral blackmail. If they did not, they were listed as enemies of the régime and their position immediately became difficult.

The restaurant was a large bleak place with wooden tables and hard wooden chairs. At the far end was a stage with a picture of Father Volosin, the Prime Minister, over it, and the windows and doors were draped liberally with crinkled paper in the yellow and blue colours of the Ukraine. All the officials came to take their dinner there or, later in the evening, to talk over the events of the day. There was Komarynsky himself, who had come from Kiev as a child; Bilej, the Chief of Police, who until October had been a teacher in an elementary school for deaf and dumb children; Dmitro Klempus, Commandant of the Sitch, a former peasant and, as leader of the Jasina revolt against the Hungarians in 1919, a national hero; Vasil Klempus, Dmitro's brother, still in the embroidered clothes and thick sheepskin coat of Jasina, his native Hucul village; Rohac, a plump self-satisfied young

man with pince-nez and a blinking smile, who, until he felt the call of the Sitch, had been in a priest's seminary; Lissiuk, a wealthy Ukrainian from America, who had come over to make a patriotic film; Colonel Lukas, the representative of the Czech army who, hated but yet essential, had perhaps the most difficult position in all Chust, and many others. The higher officials, the kings of the little Chust world, would tend to collect round the dance floor at the entrance end, while the rest of the world trailed off towards the stage, until at the end sat the lower officials who played bridge. When one of them played an ace the whole room could hear it being banged down on the table.

The only woman who came regularly was the "opera singer". She was one of the leading lights of Chust society, a lady whom fortune seemed to have dumped there for no particular reason, and who, having been dumped, seemed determined to stop. At what opera she sang, no one seemed exactly to know—probably it was at Uzhorod. Being the only lady of high society there she was much in demand as a dance partner, and enjoyed herself highly with a number of people, including a young lieutenant, apparently the only officer the Ukrainians had produced, who seemed particularly attracted by her bulk and winning smile. A seal was set on her position by the fact that whenever Komarynsky gave an evening party—six people invited in after supper—she went and entertained the company with a few charming ballads.

Chust society on the whole did not worry to remain exclusive. One would see a man who had been dining with Bilej in the restaurant get up after a time and go to spend the rest of the evening behind the bar

with the barman, who was also his friend. Often the porter from one of the Government offices came in for a drink, and the head waiter, on his evening out, always turned up in an exquisitely-cut suit, accompanied by his wife—an attractive person who was always the best-dressed woman in the room—and dined there himself. In the evening there was a band; but it did not play much, for the bandsmen often sat down to a game of cards between the tunes. The dancers were mostly self-conscious and stiff. Some waddled like ducks, but most indulged in exaggerated ballroom steps that took them into all manner of curious gyrations. The guests moved from table to table talking—or conspiring—and in the end more time was probably wasted in the restaurant than in an English club.

On that first night Kleiss and his wife, and Volosin's chief secretary were also dining with Komarynsky. Kleiss was a real Prussian. His eyes and his mouth, with lips that curved up from beneath the nose, and then turned right down again to the ends, were intensely hard and cruel. With the Ukrainians, with whom he kept making joking bets for bottles of wine which I noted never got paid, he was roughly jovial; with anyone who might conceivably be a rival or even consider himself an equal he was roughly overbearing. To a French woman journalist who apologized for her bad German he was openly and quite unjustifiably insulting. "I don't trouble to learn French," he said, "the Slav languages are the only ones that matter to-day." His wife was a fresh healthy Berlinerin of about thirty. She was polite, winning, and all smiles, but all the time she was showing the Ukrainians the way they ought to go, even if it was only how they ought to cook an egg.

I wondered how long the Ukrainians would like the Germans.

The Kleisses were, of course, playing a rôle, and it was soon evident that he was much more in Chust than merely the representative of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. He was, in fact, the unofficial diplomatic representative of one section of German opinion.<sup>1</sup>

At that time there were two distinct German policies with regard to Carpatho Ukraine; just as previously there had been two distinct policies with regard to Slovakia. There was the official policy of the Wilhelmstrasse, which was to use Carpatho Ukraine as a centre for a Ukrainian irredentist movement, but not to let this movement develop too quickly, or risk any rash adventures before the plan would fit in with the Wilhelmstrasse's general plan for foreign developments. The other policy was that of the National Socialist party leaders, and particularly of the advanced group centred in Vienna, which wanted to push on with the scheme for the further disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the creation of a Greater Ukraine as soon as possible.

The second group was actively supported by the Vienna wireless station. The official Chust news was broadcast three times a day in Ukrainian and German from the Slovak station at Bratislava. It was read over the telephone from Chust and directly relayed, and on the whole the bulletins preserved a moderate tone. The Vienna station, on the other hand, which gave unofficial Ukrainian bulletins, was violently anti-Czech and anti-Polish in tone, and every day painted

<sup>1</sup> Kleiss, who gave the Ukrainians valuable advice on the planning of the Sitch, was, I learned later, a recognized German authority on the organization of Freikorps. During the summer he turned up in the Baltic States and then in Danzig.

the Ukrainians as heroes struggling for some intangible rights in a world of darkness and injustice. "Der Kampf geht weiter" (the battle continues), was their frequent end. These Vienna bulletins were regularly blocked by someone, but by whom exactly it was hard to tell. It was generally believed to be the Poles; though the Czechs, it was said, had not learnt a lesson from October and were still "capable of anything".

In the autumn I had had the theory of the two policies for Slovakia confirmed by a German diplomat. The party leaders, he said, wanted to foster a separatist movement and detach Slovakia from the Republic as soon as possible. The Wilhelmstrasse, however, maintained that it was not possible to treat with several leaders in any one country and that the developments in Czechoslovakia, whatever they might be, could only be negotiated through Prague. Now, history seemed to be repeating itself. Furthermore, when I saw conditions in Chust, I understood fully what the same diplomat had meant when he had said in January that Karmasin, the German State Secretary (representative of the German minority in the Government) in Slovakia and Carpatho Ukraine, and Oldofredi, his deputy in Carpatho Ukraine, were "rather rebels". They were both working with the Party group, and thus with Kleiss, rather than with the Wilhelmstrasse and its offshoot, the German Legation in Prague.

The position in Chust, however, had been further complicated a few days before my arrival by the appointment of General Prchala, a Czech, as third Minister in the Ukrainian Government. The story leading up to the appointment goes back to the re-formation of the Government in November, which was necessitated by the election of Dr. Hacha as

President of the Republic, and indirectly to the troubled times connected with the first autonomous Government in October.

This first Government, appointed on 11 October, was a coalition formed by the so-called Great Russian and Ukrainian groups with Brody, a Great Russian, as Prime Minister, and Volosin, the leading Ukrainian, a member of the Cabinet. A ridiculous position arose, however, when it was discovered that Brody had apparently been making use of the hard-won autonomy to conspire with the Government of Hungary, the old enemy, for the reincorporation of Carpatho Ukraine as an integral part of the Hungarian State. On 26 October General Sirovy, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, demanded Brody's resignation and appointed in his stead Father Volosin. It was stated that £30,000 in *pengos* and full Hungarian instructions for future action in Carpatho Ukraine were found in Brody's flat, and he was immediately taken to Prague and thrown into gaol. There was clearly little time to waste on ceremonies, and Father Volosin created a precedent by taking the oath of office down the telephone.

After this unfortunate experience the Czechs felt that their previous doubts about granting autonomy had been justified, and every development in the province became an occasion for suspicion. At the moment, however, there seemed little chance of their regaining their old control and they were obliged to bide their time. Meanwhile it was felt that Volosin, although he might make demands that would weaken the internal cohesion of Czechoslovakia, would at any rate, being of the Ukrainian group, not flirt with the Hungarians or Poles. But the Czechs soon found that they were little better off with Volosin than with

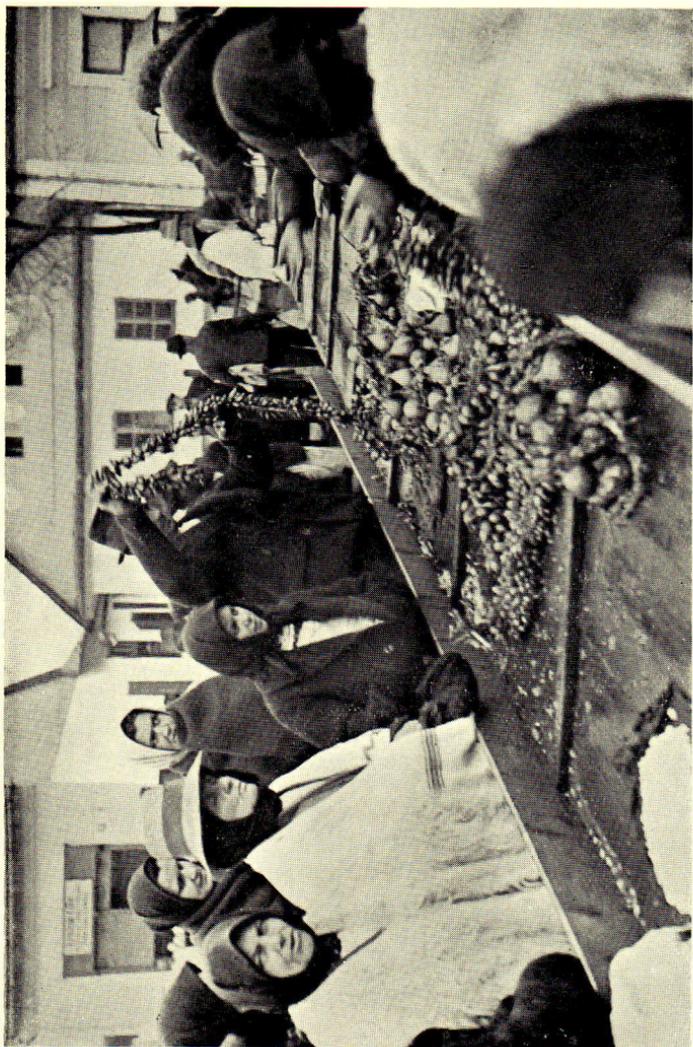
Brody. For Volosin almost immediately started working with the Germans, who had suddenly shown great interest in the province. His activity was not treasonable, as Brody's had been, nor did it aim at immediate territorial change, but territorial change was nevertheless its ultimate object. Then came the election of Dr. Hacha and the formal resignation of the Government. The Great Russians made a determined effort to recover complete control, but in the end the President, somewhat unwillingly, was obliged to nominate two Ukrainians, as before, namely, Father Volosin and Julian Revay, and one Great Russian, Kosse. The Ukrainians, however, would not hear of even one Great Russian, and refused to accept him. The President who had already signed the decree withdrew it before publication. Volosin and Revay were nominated alone, while the third member of the Cabinet was to be nominated at some future date, subsequent to the approval of Father Volosin. For two months the question was left dormant. Then on 17 January the President had nominated a Czech, General Prchala.

In Chust the appointment was received with fury. With some justification it was claimed that the third Minister should have been a Ukrainian, and that the appointment of a Czech meant the return of the old servitude under another form. The position was aggravated by the fact that Prchala was a soldier who had at one time commanded the garrison in Carpatho Ukraine, and that his wife was a Russian. When Father Volosin, who had been in Prague when the appointment was announced, arrived home, he found himself obliged to side with the majority. Julian Revay, the second Minister, a thirty-two-year-old Ukrainian fanatic who had the theories of a school-

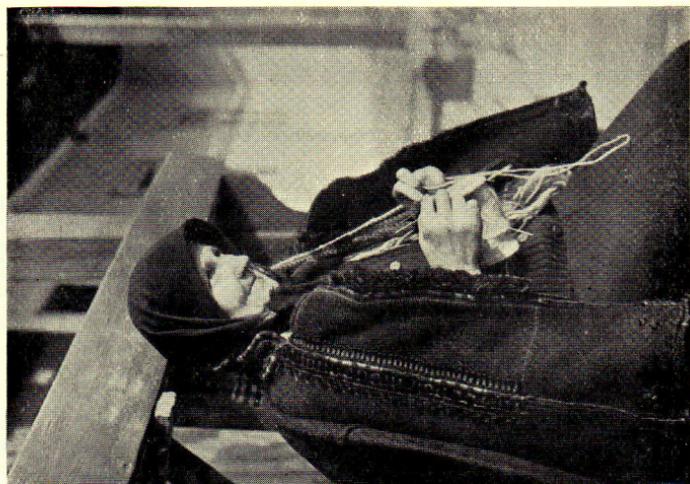
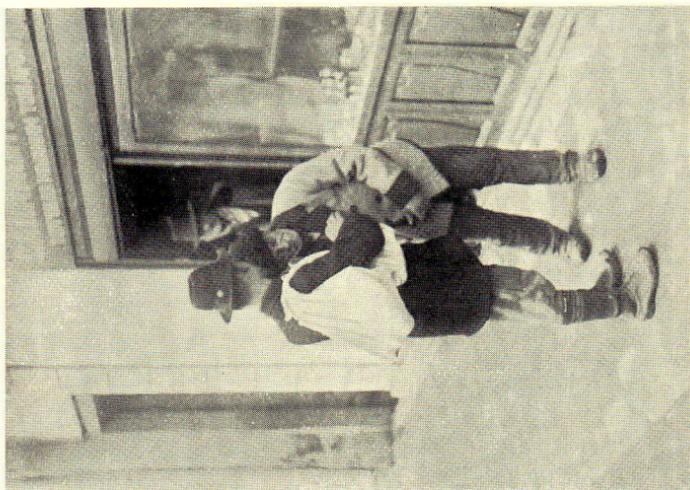
master coupled with great organizing ability and energy, Komarynsky, the Propaganda Minister, the Sich leaders, and Komarynsky's close friend Kleiss, were violently up in arms. Every day the Sich were sent marching through the streets, demonstrations were staged, and incidents magnified out of all proportion or even directly invented.

Was there any connection between the official German policy and the appointment? It has, of course, been suggested that there was none; that the appointment was in fact made in accordance with the strongly represented wishes of the Poles. The appointment certainly served the Poles well enough, for any move which would mean a brake on the Ukrainian extremists, who were aiming at an ultimate move against the big Ukrainian territories in Poland, was to their advantage. It was suggested that the Polish action had been precipitated by the recent attack on the Polish Consulate and the smashing of windows, which had made the Poles wake up to the "immediate danger" of their situation, as the Ukrainian hot-heads put it. But on the whole the theory is a weak one, for the stronger did the Czech position in the province become, the less chance was there that it would ever fall into the hands of Hungary, which was what the Poles still hoped would happen.

On the other hand there is serious ground for believing that the Czechs had inquired through the German Legation in Prague whether Germany would object to the appointment. The Germans are said to have replied that the matter was one in which they could have no opinion and that it should rather be discussed directly between the President and Father Volosin. But whatever the Germans may have replied officially, it seems fairly clear that no appointment of



*Chust goes shopping in the market*



*After market the peasant goes to the wine shop, his wife waits outside*

such importance as this could have been made at that time if the Czechs had not been sure of German approval. The general opinion is that the Wilhelmstrasse was very well pleased with the appointment, and that it served the official policy perfectly, at any rate for the time being. Everyone except the Ukrainians, the German Foreign Office included, realized that the constant frontier bickerings and incidents with the Hungarians and the Poles could not be allowed to continue, and that there was no one of sufficient calibre in Carpatho Ukraine to stop them. The Hungarians who, it will be recalled, had tried hard to acquire the district during the stormy weeks preceding the Munich Award in the autumn, had never given up hope. Their official press and wireless campaign, referred to by the official Ukrainian press as "Tartar-like", only ceased intermittently. If a frontier clash were to occur of sufficient seriousness to justify the Hungarians marching in and seizing the whole province, the German plans for the development of the Great Ukraine, with Carpatho Ukraine as their base, would come to an automatic end. It was therefore only in their interest that the Czechs should keep a firm hand on the district. It would save them a lot of trouble, and incidentally a lot of money.

When we arrived at Chust, General Prchala was still in Bratislava, where he was attending the opening of the first Slovak Parliament. He was due in Chust on the day on which I dined with Komarynsky and Kleiss. The atmosphere was electric. Telephone communications were so bad that no one knew definitely if he had left Bratislava that morning for Chust, as had been planned, or at what time he should be expected. Kleiss and Komarynsky dis-

cussed the appointment in violent terms. If he really had the cheek to come to Chust, they said, it would certainly lead to bloodshed. In the end he arrived in the town late at night and went straight to the military headquarters, where he slept in the officers' mess. Father Volosin did not receive him. He was merely handed a letter in which he was greeted not as a new Minister but only as a Czech General. The next day armoured cars patrolled the streets, and General Prchala, who could fulfil no ministerial functions as he was completely cold-shouldered, was to be seen riding round and round the town in his car accompanied by gold-braided staff officers. On the following day he left again for Prague.

The Ukrainians were determined that he should not return. Three days later Kleiss and Komarynsky slipped across the Rumanian frontier in the afternoon to Marmoros Sziged and telephoned thence to Berlin. Their talk, I learnt, was not with Kleiss's newspaper but with the Wilhelmstrasse. Presumably they wanted to bring their own story of the recent happenings to official ears, and it was certainly much more highly coloured than that sent by the German Legation in Prague. For the moment the moderates seemed to have been defeated. The Party group and the Ukrainian hotheads had won the first round.

In Chust the intensity and self-importance of the Ukrainians made it impossible to remain serious for very long.

Before going to bed I asked Komarynsky what time he usually went to his office in the morning as I wanted to see him next day.

"I usually get there at eight o'clock, but don't come until after half-past eight to-morrow, as I really must get shaved," replied the Propaganda Minister. In-

wardly I heartily agreed ; he had the appearance of a convict.

Then the Prime Minister's *chef du cabinet*, in his splendid green and gold uniform, leant across the table.

"I," he said wearily, "have hardly been able to get shaved since last October. I have been so *dreadfully* busy planning the new Ukraine."

## 2

WHEN I had been in Chust a few days I was taken to see the headquarters of the Sitch.

The Sitch was the uniformed and armed force of the Government party—similar to the “S.A.” or “Brownshirts” in Germany. It was at once the pride of the Ukrainians, and by far the most important influence in the land. Its members were the torch-bearers of the Great Ukraine idea.

All members were obliged to attend training courses twice a week, but certain *corps d'élite* was given permanent employment. This corps was to be found at the headquarters in Chust, a large white barrack-like building in the centre of the town, and it was there that I was first taken.

The atmosphere was one of secrecy and militarism. The boys, who were mostly in the early twenties, and looked a rough burly lot, were receiving instruction in Ukrainian history and culture. As we entered each classroom they rose to their feet in noisy military fashion and gave the outstretched arm salute. On the walls were maps showing the Great Ukraine of the future and a plentiful supply of moral and patriotic catchwords, such as “Desire alone won't win freedom,” or “I honour him who honours me.” Later in the day the boys were going out to receive training in the use of arms and in military matters on an improvised parade-ground hidden away behind the

railway station. In other towns and in the villages, where there were no permanent barracks like those in Chust, the boys were trained at the week-ends. We saw them everywhere, marching, shooting, drilling with tremendous energy.

The primary aim of the training was to build up the nucleus of a Ukrainian army. Some said that this army was to be the first force to cross the frontier into Poland when the moment came for the Germans to release the Ukrainian brothers there; others that it was to replace the Czech army when the Czechs decided that their precarious hold on the province was no longer worth maintaining. Instruction was given in all branches of fighting and members had to choose whether they would specialize as infantrymen, as members of mechanized units or as airmen. The training of the airmen presented the authorities with special difficulties. No one in Carpatho Ukraine knew how to fly. A training centre was started in Vienna, therefore, and specially selected leaders were sent there for attendance at instructors' courses. A new difficulty arose, however, when they arrived home. For the Sitch had no aeroplanes. In the end they partially solved their difficulty by buying two old motor-cars, and the intending airmen could be seen tinkering with their engines, or driving round the parade ground. The speed of the cars was anything but aeronautical.

Training was also given with a more immediate aim; to provide policemen, gendarmes and other public servants to replace the Czechs who were being gradually sent back to Bohemia. In the afternoon the lads destined for this kind of work were sent out as understudies to the policemen on point duty, or to whatever other persons they were eventually to replace.

The number of persons receiving training was kept a strict secret. Officially it was stated to be 8,000, but it was more likely to have been in the neighbourhood of 18,000. The number of those already in permanent employment was 2,000. Each received ten crowns (one shilling and fivepence) a day, which in Chust represented quite a considerable figure.

On the whole the Sitch were an attractive lot. Their enthusiasm I always felt to be misplaced, and their methods, which were those of ruthless force and violence, I abhorred. But the naive enthusiasm, of the rank-and-file rather than of the leaders, made them individually attractive. Many of them had previously been Communists. A typical instance was a lad of scarcely twenty-two, whom I met in the Koruna nearly every evening. He was one of seventy refugees from a village that had passed to Hungary by the Vienna Award. His parents were peasants and his father a convinced Communist. At school the boy had got captured by the Ukrainian idea and had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the Czechs for distributing leaflets of the secret Ukrainian association headed by Konawaletz, who was murdered in Holland, and he was only released after five weeks on account of the general mobilization. In the stormy days of October he had been the personal watchdog of Revay and had followed him through the streets, sat by him at meal times and slept outside his room with a loaded revolver in his hand for a full three weeks. His reward had been a good post in the new administration. His belief in the Ukrainian idea was fanatical and he dreamt of a Ukrainian army day and night. He was going to Berlin, he said, to study military strategy, and to Rome to join the Italian Navy; and then, in almost the same breath, divulged that he

was hoping to be cast for a big rôle in a film that Ufa was going to make in Chust in the spring depicting Ukrainian history. He hoped that it would be a tragic rôle. His father, who, he alleged, was still a Communist, had sworn to shoot him when Communist Russia ruled eastern Europe; while he himself had sworn to shoot the father when the Great Ukraine existed.

Other rich recruiting centres were the parts of the Ukraine beyond the local frontier. Young Ukrainians were constantly filtering over the frontier from southern Poland, while a certain number made their way in from Russia or from the Bukovina province of Rumania.

Those from Rumania were very few in number. One, whom I met, was a teacher in a high school and an officer of the local Sitch. "The whole world has forgotten us," he lisped continually. Personally, I did not think the world had ever known very much about them. For in contrast to the highly-organized, Ukrainian minority of some seven million in Poland, that in Rumania numbers only one and a half million, and its national feelings, which have never been very pronounced, are denied all form of expression. Before the War, in the old Austro-Hungarian days, there were five Ukrainian high schools in the district and Ukrainian parallel classes in the University of Czernowitz (Cernauti); but since the Rumanians have been in possession these privileges have disappeared and, for a year, there has not even been a Ukrainian newspaper. In Czernowitz, in fact, it is now the German minority that is the most active of the non-Rumanian elements, and the town is said to be the most important centre of underground German propaganda in south-eastern Europe.

The emigrants were perhaps the most fanatical of all Sitch members, for they knew that in crossing the frontier they had cut themselves off definitely from the past. The servants in the Koruna were recruited exclusively from this class. They slept in a dormitory under the tiles, and only their number made up for their complete lack of knowledge, and for the fact that as soon as they were beginning to learn something they would be taken off to another job. When I rang my bell a tousled head, topping a dirty shirt and pair of trousers, would poke round the door. A new arrival would usually remark that he thought I could speak Polish, and add that that was splendid as we should understand each other splendidly. They liked nothing better than to recount their experiences. All had tales of Polish "oppression" to tell, and enumerated willingly the familiar stories of attempts at denationalization. No Ukrainian peasant in Poland, they said, could buy land unless he gave up his Greek Catholic religion and became a Roman Catholic (which has always been synonymous with Poles); no Ukrainian could get employment in any of the public services or Government undertakings; Ukrainian schools had been closed after a falsification of the number of entrance applications and so forth. The families of those that escaped had a bad time afterwards. They would be taken into temporary custody, their houses searched and their lives made miserable by the authorities in every possible way.

The emigrants slipped across the frontier at night. The venture can never have been difficult for it was impossible for the authorities to keep anything like a close watch on the miles of forest and mountain. Either they would reconnoitre the land alone and then wait for a moonlight night, or else they would

come in a group and put themselves in the care of a guide who knew all the by-paths. The latter method was less popular for it would cost from fifteen to twenty zloty (fourteen to eighteen shillings), which to the peasant mind seemed an astronomical sum. To what extent their individual stories were true it was impossible to gauge. But when a man said that he had been turned out of the high school "because he was a Ukrainian," and that he had also been given notice by the State Railways "because he was a Ukrainian," it was hard to believe that he had been the completely innocent victim that he made out. One of the officials in the Propaganda section had served for a year in the Holy Cross prison in Poland, which is reserved for the worst criminals, for an offence to which he admitted, and the shaven heads of some of the porters suggested that they too had not come straight from home.

What exactly happened to the emigrants when they got into Carpatho Ukraine it was hard to tell. From fear of the Polish authorities both the numbers and the movements of these people were kept as quiet as possible. In Chust there were usually about 100. Most of them, apparently, were sent for a few days to the concentration camp at Rachov, and then, if their story was found to be true, were released, and of course made their way straight to the Sitch headquarters in Chust. There they were put through a course of training and subsequently given work either there or else in some other town, on condition that they should keep in close touch with the local Sitch organization.

Whence the money for the maintenance came was also a question it was hard to answer. The general belief among foreigners was that it came exclusively from Germany in the form of secret subsidies. This,

however, seems doubtful. Much of it was undoubtedly taken from the funds subscribed by the Ukrainians in America, and much of it was collected on the spot. The chief collectors were the Commissars.

These Commisars had been nominated in all townships and villages to take over the combined functions of the Mayor and the Notary. In normal times the Mayor had been elected by the people, while the Notary was a Government-paid official whose job it was to see that the Mayor did not overstep his powers, and to help him draw up legal documents. The power of the Commissars was supreme and they did not hesitate to use it. The Commissar in a certain mountain township for instance, ordered the Jewish community to find 5,000 crowns (£35) by a certain date for the relief of poor Jews. Before the date arrived the Commissar had raised his demand to 10,000 crowns. Of course the money was found, for the Jews were too afraid to do anything else. There were some fifty Jewish families in the place so poor that they could scarcely eke out a living, but not one of them ever saw any of the money. Presumably it went to the local Sitch, which never published any financial statement but which never lacked means. Another favourite method of these Commissars was the sale of such contracts as they had to give, or the sale of residence permits to Jews. In a town in western Carpatho Ukraine for instance, notes were sent to five prominent local Jews in November by minor Ukrainian officials ordering them to leave. The Jews decided it would be better to go, and left with their whole families. From four of them nothing more was heard, but the fifth was sent back by the Hungarians. This was a chance for the Commissar. He offered a permit of residence and immunity from further molestation in return for

a subscription of 15,000 crowns to the Sitch. He received the money within twenty-four hours.

. . . . .

The morning was bright and sunny when we embarked on our first expedition. It was a short one—to Sandrovo, a village some twenty miles to the north-east of Chust. Sandrovo is famous for its salt-water wells, and the peasants of the district use the water both for cooking and as a substitute for salt on the table. With us, in one of the ancient taxis from the market square, was the camera man with whom we had travelled in the omnibus. A blond, gay Viennese, with an easy manner that enabled him to twist any obstructive official round his little finger, he was only seventeen years old and, he claimed, the youngest camera man in the world. At the age of thirteen he had been apprenticed to his father, whom he had seen killed next year by a shell in Spain, and at the age of sixteen, having inherited a flair for photography and the expensive apparati which are part of a camera man's stock-in-trade, was appointed representative of one of the largest American newsreel companies in central Europe. For him the journey to Chust was but one of an endless series of expeditions by train, taxi and aeroplane, and at the age of seventeen he already knew the whole of central Europe as well as the average Londoner knows Piccadilly.

We started off along the Tisza valley to the east. The perspective of mountains on the south side of the river was lively. It consisted of a long chain of steep cones like little volcanoes. Behind the first row others stretched away into the far distance of Rumania. On an isolated cone at the junction of the two valleys behind us stood the castle of Chust, its main forti-

fications facing east from which direction the Tartars, Turks and other raiders had swept along the valley. After some eight miles we left the main road and were soon in hilly country. It was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and in one of the villages we saw the Jews—all men, for women rarely take part in communal worship—trooping back from the synagogue. All were in the traditional Jewish Sabbath dress; long, padded coats of black satin, cut on straight lines and fixed round the waist with a black cord, and exotic-looking round black velvet hats with flat brims and a band of sable from which projected sable tails. Round their shoulders they had draped pieces of homespun linen with black-and-white stripes at the end. The camera man wanted to photograph them, but on the Sabbath this is forbidden. They rushed at him with a great shout and, shaking their fists and sticks, threatened to throw his camera to the ground if he persisted.

The cottages, strung out in a long line on either side of the road, were of an attractive design I had not seen before. They were built entirely of wood and were of the usual oblong shape. But verandahs had been cut into them on the narrow end towards the street and on the front door side, and the roofs which covered these, running straight down from the apex, were supported by delicate posts decorated with beautifully carved bands. No colour wash disguised the natural grey of the pinewood walls, but a pleasant contrast was provided by the rich orange maize that was hung out to dry on the pole beneath the eaves. This pole appeared all over Carpatho Ukraine and served the peasant as laundry line and storeroom in one. Access to the farmyard was by a big five-barred gate. These gates were unusual. Although evolved entirely by the peasant mind and built in rough-and-ready style, they

were just as practical as many patented self-shutting gates in this country. The top bar of the gate was made of a huge tree trunk that projected over the post at the hinge end. On the gate proper the wood was cut down to the normal size, but where it projected it was left as it had originally been, the bole of a tree some four or five feet in diameter. This heavy block acted as a weight to pull the gate shut.

The chief salt-water well, topped by a tall post and pole for drawing up the water, lay in an open grass field beside the road. Round it was a group of peasants in shaggy sheepskin caps, and one with a round laughing face was slowly drawing water, pulling the pole up hand over hand, and distributing the water among the others. Some had brought wooden tubs, held together by twisted sticks—of a kind often displayed in the ethnographical museums of big cities—carried on a stick over the shoulder, others wooden buckets, but one old man still remained faithful to a biblical-looking water-skin. Then two creaking carts, drawn by tired little horses, and with huge barrels roped on to them, came slowly up. The driver of one of the carts and his wife, a big-eyed peasant woman nursing a baby, had been travelling for two days from a place far up in the hills near the Polish frontier, while the second cart, borrowed from a friend, was in the care of the man's son, a young boy fast asleep in the hay. Their visit was an annual expedition, they explained, and the water they carried away would last them the full year. In winter when there is no work to be done in the fields such expeditions from afar are by no means uncommon; for the privilege of drawing the water is valuable, salt being one of the few necessities of life that the peasant cannot produce

himself. The privilege was granted, they say, by Maria Teresa three days before her death in 1780 to the peasants of an area that now includes ninety-three villages. There is no charge, although all salt beneath the earth belongs to the State, except a nominal sum for the upkeep of the well, the track leading to it and the guardian's cottage.

From the well we went to a near-by cottage, where the camera man persuaded the owner to arrange a table in the yard and sit down to a mock meal with his family. Everyone crowded eagerly round the table and, in the approved style, with great energy dipped their potatoes on the end of their knives into a central pot containing salt water. It did not look like any meal that could ever have taken place, but the film doubtless entertained audiences throughout the New World for a few minutes all the same. The interior of the cottage's two rooms was of the simplest; earth floors, rough wooden furniture and, on a shelf, six maize loaves almost as big round as small cart-wheels. It was distinguished, however, by a long row of holy pictures and by two huge piles of some forty feather pillows on the low wooden beds. Holy pictures and pillows, the latter made from the down and feathers of the family's geese, are a common measure of the family's wealth. When the geese are killed for the market or home consumption, pillows are made and put in fine cross-stitched cases. In good times they are all kept and later, if bad times come, can be gradually sold off for the price of the down and feathers. A group of cottages at the end of the village belonged to Jewish families who had been living there for many generations as peasants. The Ruthenians did not seem to have a very high opinion of their qualities as farmers. Many of them, I was told, went

“messing around after money” and hired someone else to work their fields.

In a village on the way back a large crowd of gendarmes was standing round the Town Hall—a simple cottage with a battered notice “Town Hall” attached to it. There had been a typical little disturbance there on the previous day. A motor omnibus belonging to the Czechoslovak Railways had been attacked by the peasants, who had broken the windows. The passengers, bending double, had all escaped injury, except one unfortunate Jew who had been stabbed in the shoulder with a knife. At almost the same time a motor-omnibus taking peasants to a village in the hills had been held up and attacked at Iza some five miles out of Chust. The passengers were Ukrainians, while the Izans were widely known as members of the Orthodox Church and supporters of the Great Russian political group. The omnibus passengers may perhaps have suspected an ambush, for they turned out to be liberally supplied with hand-grenades, and two of the Izans were taken to hospital in a serious condition.

# 3

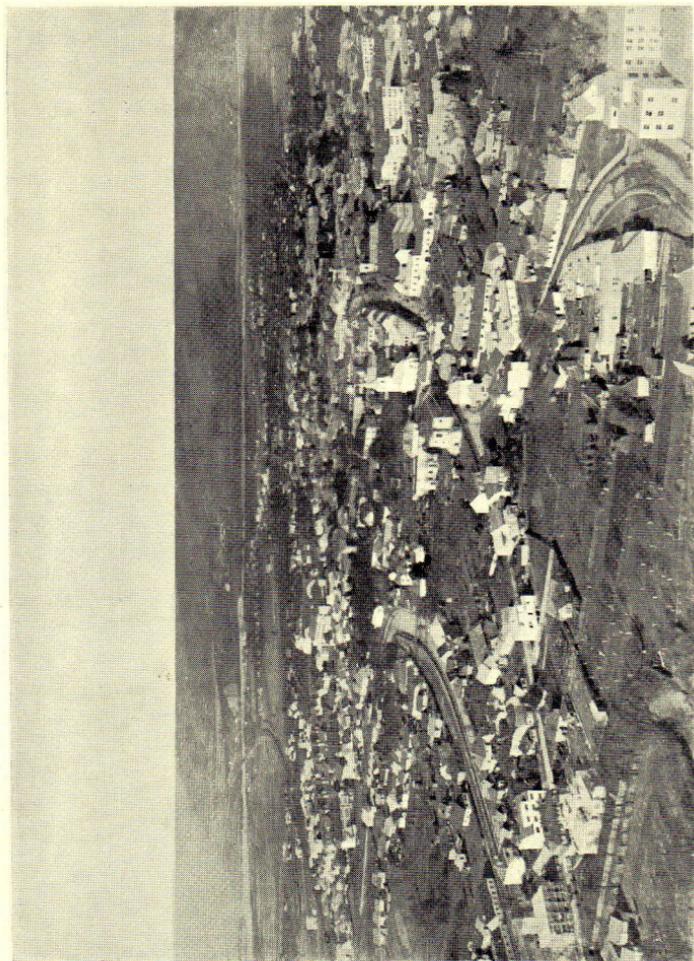
ALL over Czechoslovakia, Jasina, which lies in the north-east tip of Carpatho Ukraine high up in the mountains and close to the Polish frontier, was known for the dresses of its peasants at Mass on Sunday. I had long wanted to go there, and when I was offered the inspector's room in the Woodwork School I decided to go at once. C, having fallen a victim to local food conditions, had retired to a hospital in Sevlus, where he remained five weeks.

The journey was an expedition in itself. I caught the afternoon train from Chust. People crowded into the carriages at each small town along the valley, and then gradually emptied out until we got to the next town. Unfortunately, it was misty, but the hills, when visible, looked very grand and one high massif had steep cliffs and snow on the top.

At Teresva the line turns south across the river, runs along the south bank through Rumania for some forty miles and then crosses back into Czechoslovakia. Rumanian soldiers with brass eagles on their helmets entered the train at the frontier station and remained there until it left Rumanian territory. Through passengers need no passport but are not allowed to leave the train. The short journey through Rumania which I could watch from the window, but with which circumstances allowed no chance of contact, made me feel constantly that I was enjoying the experience of a



*At Sandrovo they cook with salt water instead of salt (see p. 45)*



*Chust from the castle hill*

scenic rather than a real railway journey. We stopped for a few minutes at a station just over the frontier. It was pleasant to see notices in a language that I could read again and which, from its apparent resemblance to Latin, seemed much more comprehensible than the Slav languages. Two soldiers in a train which pulled up next to ours, swarthy fellows with finely-cut and rather aquiline features, were passionately kissing one another. The suggestion that Rumania is the pederasts' paradise seemed justified. In the countryside, although the peasants had built their houses in the same style as those of Czechoslovakia, houses, fences, gates and outbuildings were all whitewashed which gave them a uniformly clean look. Otherwise everything was the same; the same poverty, the same peasants with grey coats and high astrakhan hats shouting at each other in sudden impulsive gusts and for no apparent reason, and with the same far away look in their eyes.

We passed through Marmoros Sziged, where the famous trial was held, and then railway line and river converged in a narrow gorge-like valley. There used to be a lot of smuggling here, but with the fall in the value of the *lei* it has almost disappeared. Cattle and spirit were brought into Czechoslovakia, while large quantities of linen and other textiles, which are both cheap and good in Czechoslovakia, were smuggled into Rumania. The goods were consigned by a Jew on one side to a Jew on the other, the actual transport being effected by a peasant who for one hundred crowns was willing to risk wading the Tisza. When it was already dark we passed out of Rumania with the same ease as we had entered.

As far as Rachov, a little mountain centre some way before Jasina, I slept. Then a crowd of peasants in

Hercul dress got in. There was no more sleep; their sheepskin waistcoats smelt too much. All the older ones were in pure national dress; the younger men wore the embroidered shirts and sheepskin waistcoats but had abandoned the short brown hand-worked overcoat for others of loden or even leather, more modern and factory-made. Two aged peasants, tall and aquiline, each aged about seventy-five, came and sat down next to me. They had long pipes, and pointed sheepskin hats with the ear-flaps turned high up so that they reminded me of the eastern raiders who had once overrun the country. At first they whispered to each other, emphasizing important points by the gentle wagging of their long fingers. Then they both sat back with their hands crossed on their walking-sticks, and with that look on their faces, which only peasants can assume, of absolute detachment from the world and at the same time disdain of it and of everyone in it. What was their secret, I wondered? Next to them was a girl with the typical Slav face; broad, wide-set eyes, a straight short nose and a straight, regular, and not too narrow mouth. She had her scarf rather crooked over her head and like most peasant women looked slightly pitiful. All the women had the habitual linen bags over their shoulders with wooden pots or bowls of food in them, for a journey of any sort is a venture and they never have any idea when they may get home again.

At a wayside station where we stopped for some time the snow already lay in patches. Through the darkness of the winter evening one could just see, far away above everything, the great sweep of a snow-covered mountain shoulder. Somewhere down the train a flute was being played. Then a group of peasants started singing in chorus,—two or three Ukrainian peasants

who are sitting together will always start singing sooner or later. Another carriage took up the refrain, and another and another, until finally those in my carriage started too. There was such a noise that I could hardly hear anything. The melodies were typically Slav, but they had not the quality of extreme melancholy with which I had become familiar in eastern Poland. Then the train started puffing off again into the mountains. At last it ran more freely, and there before us, all over a broad valley, were the electric lights of Jasina.

At the station I was met by a youngish man with a pointed black beard.

“Journalist Winch?” he almost shouted when he saw me coming. It was Nikendaj, the new director of the school. We walked off down a path through the snow and soon came to the school, a collection of white barrack-like buildings in an enclosure. Nikendaj led me to my room in one of the outhouses, a pleasant place with straightforward furniture made in the school itself and a huge china stove. He said there were two possible places for dinner, the railway station and an inn in the main part of the village. He added that the station, where the cooking was Czech, was probably the best. This should have given me his clue. He was a Czech. He had already told me that he was going to a meeting of the Sokol, the Czech Gymnastic Association, that was being held that evening in honour of the retiring school director, and had it been later in my visit to Carpatho Ukraine I should have known at once that he could only be a Czech. A Czech was to a Ukrainian like a red rag to a bull. On the doorstep he turned back and told me that Inspector Capla had asked him to introduce me to Hurka, the Director of the Jasina Village School.

I thought I had better hear what he had to say, so we set off at once and came to a wooden house in the main street. Nikendaj threw me into the house and left.

I felt at once that the atmosphere was bad. The director, who was a leading Ukrainian, was, I discovered, both jealous and suspicious because I had been with a Czech. He suspected me immediately of an anti-Ukrainian bias and was afraid that I had been receiving anti-Ukrainian information.

"Yes, Nikendaj is a Czech," he snapped in reply to my question, "and if you want to take your information from him you won't get any from me."

For the moment I was a full-blooded Ukrainian, so he took me through the kitchen to a living-room where three men were sitting round the table. In one corner was some music on a stand but from the look of the piano I did not think the director and his wife could be very musical. Then there were family photographs on the wall, crocheted cushions, many coloured d'oylies and a huge wireless set. I saw at once that Hurka would know nothing about the local peasant art in which I was particularly interested. Also he stank—far worse than the peasants in the train—so that it was painful to be anywhere near him. We listened to the Vienna wireless news about Carpatho Ukraine with rapt attention and then the three men left. Hurka, with true hospitality, had immediately asked me to supper. He and his wife, who was a Sudeten German from Reichenberg, and I sat down together. The evening had begun to look up a little.

I told the wife that I thought Reichenberg a pleasant town and one of the most beautifully situated manufacturing centres I knew. It lies at the foot of

the Giant Mountains, and is surrounded by beautiful unspoilt hills and beech woods. All that she could find to answer was, "Yes, Reichenberg is a nice place; so near the German frontier". And people used to think that the Sudeten Germans could settle down happily with the Czechs!

Hurka was an ardent patriot, perhaps one of the most ardent that I met. He was, of course, like all the élite of the party not a local man at all but an exile from Galicia. He had fought in the Ukrainian army against the Poles in 1918 and 1919, when the Ukrainians were trying to set up their own State; had been driven over the Czechoslovak frontier with his detachment, and then interned in Reichenberg for a year while the Poles and the Czechs were settling their frontier disputes. He had qualified as a teacher just before the War, and when all the trouble was over the Czechs had given him a post as teacher in Carpatho Ukraine.

In retrospect the Czech policy of giving teaching-posts to Ukrainian emigrants, as they frequently did, appears to have been very unwise. At the time, however, the Ukrainian idea was not in the ascendant and the Czechs were faced with a difficult technical problem. Well over half the population in Carpatho Ukraine was illiterate, for the Hungarians had built few schools and even in these the teaching had been in Hungarian, with the result that while the need for schools was immense, the local supply of teachers was very small. No Czechs understood the language at all. So if Ukrainian was to be taught who else were the Czechs to employ as teachers save the emigrants?

Hurka, on his own admission, had never put the Czechoslovak Republic above the Ukrainian idea. He had been unpopular, he said, because he had

always preached Ukrainianism, had talked to the people of their past and of hopes for the creation of a Great Ukraine in the future, had founded branches of the Prosvita, the Ukrainian cultural association, and Ukrainian co-operatives, which would free the people from the control of the Jews and the Czechs. He had had many posts, and had once been moved three times in a month—and each time they had had to pay the cost of the move, added his wife. One of the moves, he said with a fierce laugh, was due to the fact that at an end-of-term reunion, when all the parents were present, he had called for the singing of the Ukrainian national hymn first and only afterwards of the Czech hymn. The Czechs had got up in a body and left the hall. One of them had gone straight off and telephoned to the educational authorities, with the result that in three days Hurka received a telegram ordering him to another post. He admitted that he should really have lost his job altogether for such behaviour.

Both Hurka and his wife inquired eagerly and a great many times what I thought the prospects were for the Great Ukraine. I told them what I genuinely thought at the time; that the Great Ukraine would probably come into being some day, but not in the next two weeks nor even the next two months; that, backed by the dynamic power of Hitler, and in a part of Europe in which France and England had “disinterested” themselves, I did not see how it could fail to do so. Hurka then grew so enthusiastic about Hitler, and about the help that Hitler was going to bring to Carpatho Ukraine, that I asked him whether he did not think that German help was in a way a dangerous thing. For it always seemed to me clear that Hitler would not help out of pure altruism, but would want a lot in return.

"Of course he will want things," Hurka said angrily, "and we are ready to give a friend all he wants."

"Then won't it only mean changing one form of slavery for another?"

"Nothing could be worse than slavery to the Czechs," he said. "Perhaps we shall be in the grip of the Germans for a bit, but it will not mean the suppression of our national feeling as our association with the Czechs does. There will be no policy of denationalization with Hitler. He appreciates our desire to unite the Ukrainian nation, for he is himself a promoter of the nationalist idea."

This cry of "Out with the Czechs at all costs", which I found in almost all Ukrainian circles, seemed to show the irrationality of childhood. For Czech money and the Czech army were clearly essential for the continued existence of Carpatho Ukraine even as an autonomous province. Without Czech money there was no chance of balancing the Budget, and without the Czech army there would be little hope of keeping the Hungarians from overrunning the province and so obtaining the desired common frontier with their old ally, Poland. Carpatho Ukraine, I was always told, with a slight air of mystery, had "other friends", that is to say, of course, the Germans. But a definite German financial loan always seemed problematical, and it was never clear how German troops would be able to reach the district as the rest of Czechoslovakia still intervened. To make any suggestion of this sort, however, meant being immediately cold-shouldered and regarded as an "enemy". So it was wiser policy to listen in silence.

On the school question Hurka had some first-hand information to give. It illustrated clearly the Govern-

ment's policy of denationalization through promotion of the Czech language, which many Czechs admitted to have been unfortunate. In broad outlines this policy, as I knew from personal experience, was effected by the same methods in all the districts inhabited by minorities.

Czech officials, perhaps a postman or a station-master, would be appointed to some tiny village where the inhabitants were all Slovaks, Germans or Ukrainians, and their presence would then become the excuse for building a fine modern school, in which the language of instruction was of course Czech. Afterwards every effort would be made to induce all parents to send their children to the Czech school. The new school, when compared to the existing and often defective structures, was in itself an attraction, and children of mixed parenthood could be got into it without much difficulty. To catch the others some measure of encouragement or intimidation often had to be used. Thus in the existing school the number of teachers and books would be kept to a bare minimum, while the Czech school would be liberally provided with both. More effective than this, however, was the pressure that could be brought to bear by the Government in its capacity of employer, or by other local employers who happened to be Czechs. They would put before the employee two alternatives; he must send his child to the Czech school or lose his employment.

At the time of my visit to Jasina, which had a population of about 15,000, the Czech colony there included fifty officials, policemen, gendarmes, frontier guards, foresters, etc., while there were also a Czech baker, and Czech employees in the local branch of the Bata shoe shop. To minister to the needs of this little

Colony the Government had found it necessary to build three elementary schools and one higher elementary school, staffed by twenty-two Czech teachers. The woodwork school had also been staffed exclusively by Czechs. In the Czech Elementary schools there had been on an average two hundred children, of whom only about forty were Czechs. In the higher elementary school there had also been about two hundred children, of whom usually not more than fifteen were Czechs.

Since the granting of autonomy, said Hurka, two of the Czech elementary schools and the higher elementary school had been dissolved. The remaining elementary school was staffed by two teachers and had an attendance of forty. Most of the other children attending the Czech schools had been Jews, while some were Ukrainians and Hungarians who had forgotten their nationality. In future only Czechs were to attend the Czech school. The number of teachers, he added, had not been altered since the Czechs were given notice, and there was now a serious lack of Ukrainian teachers.

The lack of trained teachers and of other officials was naturally one of the most serious problems that the Ukrainians had to face in their work of reorganization. I heard of many cases in which elementary schoolteachers had been appointed straight off to be masters, even directors, of high schools. In Jasina they were expecting to be helped out by emigrants from Galicia. They were at present in Chust, I was told, preparing themselves for teaching, according to Ukrainian notions, by undergoing a course of preliminary training in ideology under the care of the Sitch.

A matter which gave almost as much irritation

locally as the Czech school system was the lack of knowledge of Ukrainian on the part of the Czech officials.

Czech officials had recently been given three months by the Ukrainian authorities in which to learn Ukrainian. At the end of the period there was to be an examination, and those who could not qualify were to be dismissed. They all had to learn regardless of the nature of their job. One day I passed Hurka and another Ukrainian driving up into the mountains in a chaise to give a lesson to the Czech foresters. They looked as proud as punch, their enemies in their grip, the Czechs forced to eat out of their hands and learn their language at last. Although the object was understandable, the method of approach by which Ukrainian officials gave the lessons seemed to me a slightly unfair one. For as the Ukrainians wanted nothing more than to get rid of the Czechs as quickly as possible and make room for their own friends, it was hardly likely that they would take much trouble to teach them Ukrainian quickly. But perhaps it did not matter very much, for many of the Czechs had given up learning Ukrainian already. At a great demonstration organized at the time of the appointment of General Prchala to the Ukrainian Cabinet there had been cries of "Out with the Czechs; we want Berlin." Ever since then there had been a violent anti-Czech campaign and a constant shouting that it was too late for them then to learn Ukrainian, that they must go anyhow.

When I got home I at once fell asleep and only woke up after midnight. I got into bed in darkness, for the electric light in Jasina is only turned on from four till midnight. The air was thin and sharp and through the darkness I could see wraiths of white

cloud round the mountain tops. The absolute silence of the mountains had fallen on the village. It was broken only now and then by the fierce barking of dogs.

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Next morning I was woken up by the technical teacher who brought me a tumblerful of water in a large flat pan. Then I went along to the main buildings, and was given breakfast at a little table that had been laid out for me in the cook's bedroom adjoining the kitchen. Breakfast consisted of a mug of coffee and two long thin rolls; no butter or jam. The rolls were so unpalatable that I could scarcely swallow them, but when I asked for butter I was told there was none in the place. In Jasina butter is an extravagance even for officials. Chust, in comparison, seemed quite luxurious, breakfasts in England vulgarly copious.

After breakfast we went for a walk through Jasina. The village lay in a broad valley just to the south of the Carpathian watershed and only a few miles from the Polish frontier. The main street, broad and straight and shaded in places by lime-trees, terminated in a square and a bridge over the Tisza, which here is a rushing mountain stream. It was bordered by wooden houses, sophisticated editions of peasant huts, backing on to fields. There was also a big white church in vaguely baroque style, and next to it an attractive wooden storehouse built of pinewood, weathered grey, in the pure style of the late eighteenth century. In olden times the foresters were paid in kind, and here it was, in the middle of the community, that the maize, corn, sugar and other commodities were stored. Next door, the fire-station and the Sokol hall, where films were shown on Sunday evening, shared

a building. The whole village crowded to the cinema performances, for love of the films was the one thing in Jasina that could transcend racial passions.

As everywhere else in the Czechoslovak Republic, Bata, the great Czech shoe firm, was handsomely represented, while many of the small shops were organized for the benefit of the tourists who crowd the village in summer. The small shops seemed almost entirely in the hands of the Jews, and so, too, were the small trades. The Ukrainian Jew is not afraid of manual labour, and in Jasina he provided nearly all the wheelwrights, smiths and carpenters and even the makers of the peasants' leather coats and sandals. On the order of the Commissar, the former Yiddish or Czech shop signs had recently been painted out and replaced by others in the Ukrainian language written in cyrillic characters. For the benefit of the illiterate, or those who could not read Ukrainian, these were supported by little illustrative pictures. Thus, a restaurant showed a happy man enjoying a good meal of fat round sausages, the local midwife a stork with a bundle in its beak.

It was Sunday morning, and the peasants were coming in from the surrounding district to attend Mass. Some drove in carts or sleighs, and for a time there was a merry cracking of whips up and down the main street, but most tramped through the snow on foot, for in this mountainous country carts are of little use. After the Mass they formed little groups on and about the bridge, Jasina's traditional meeting-place. Their dresses, which were famous throughout the Republic, seemed to have conserved something of the barbaric splendour of the Tartars who, many hundred years ago, burst through the pass leading over the mountains from Poland and swept down into the

plains of Hungary. Both men and women wore the widespread embroidered shirt, but these were topped by waistcoats made of sheepskin turned inside out and heavily embroidered and decorated, and topcoats made of a thick brown felt-like material richly embroidered with red and orange wool, and decorated with big orange-coloured pompoms. The women wore heavy aprons, back and front of their skirts, in which much silver thread had been used. For a time we stood watching the little groups form and reform, and then warmed ourselves by running up a low hill, past the Czech cemetery in which the tombstones had been smashed by Ukrainian rowdies in the night, to a big stone obelisk that stands on an eminence dominating the village.

This obelisk, put up some five years ago when the Ukrainian idea was beginning to gather weight, commemorated the Jasina revolt of 1919. In that year the people of Jasina and the surrounding districts rose against the Hungarians, and were so successful that for six months they were able to maintain a tiny free Jasina Republic. Their eventual object was to unite with the Ukrainian Republic that their fellows in Galicia were endeavouring to set up, but when this was squashed by the Poles, it was evident that their own tiny State must collapse too, and they were, in fact, soon overrun by the Rumanians. The events of last autumn lent the story particular significance and by the time of my visit it was beginning to be regarded as a national saga. The obelisk was naturally a favourite meeting-place for Ukrainian societies. The people would go there and gaze up the low pass towards Poland. All through history the movement of peoples has been southward; they have come from Galicia into Carpatho Ukraine. Now, faithful Ukrain-

ians were counting the days until the process should for once be reversed.

In the main street I visited a house where a Jew was making sheepskin coats. Seated in a small room, hung round with sheepskins, braid, tassels, coloured wool and beads, were the red-haired Jewish owner and an apprentice. Both wore hats, but they seemed to have abandoned the traditional dress. Coat-making was an old tradition in his family, the master said, and both his father and grandfather had worked in the same shop before him.

"There are eleven coat-makers in the village. Ten of them are Jews and only one Ukrainian, and even he can't make the coats properly," he said laughingly.

The making of these coats is a rare art and a time-taking one. Almost the entire front is covered with decoration, and a band of decoration runs round the back. Bands of white leather with three rows of thin black leather threaded through them, and bands of black or dark red leather, ornamented with holes set with metal eyes, are applied to the coat near the edges. Elsewhere there is rich ornamentation carried out partly with applied leather and partly by means of embroidery with thick wool, relieved here and there by silk or gold thread. A coat, which costs 400 crowns (£3), takes about a week to make; two days to prepare the ornamentation, all of which is made at home, and six days for the sewing; eight days of a man's work, I was told, not eight days of a woman's who keeps jumping up every few minutes to go and do something else. These lavishly decorated coats are worn only on Sundays or on other important occasions, and a man usually buys a new one for his wedding and keeps it all his life. Everyday coats are of the same shape but lack the decoration.

Afterwards we went down to the end of the village to look at Jasina's famous wooden church. The church, which stands isolated on a hillside is said to be four hundred years old and the oldest place of worship in the district. It was tiny and built entirely of wood in the form of a Greek cross. The roofs were shingled, and a curious frill, or pent-house roof, was built out from the walls half-way down, so as to protect them from the rain. Inside everything was of wood too. The chancel was completely cut off by the ritual Orthodox screen. It was richly carved and painted and bore the three ritual rows of pictures, the bottom row showing the life of Christ, the middle one the twelve apostles and the top the prophets. These screens also have three doors, that in the centre being topped by a gilt crown and known as the royal gate. In the old Orthodox days only the Tsar, as Supreme Head of the Church, would have been privileged to use this door. Now, when the Church is in Greek Catholic hands, this privilege is reserved for the priest. There were also a wooden font, wooden candelabra and some early paintings on wood in Byzantine style, mostly of Saints Cyril and Methody who brought Christianity to Czechoslovakia. The priests' vestments were hanging on the wall. They were of sky-blue damask, and the braid that bordered them inside was yellow. There has often been talk of the creation of a national Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, similar to the national branches of the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria and Rumania, and this looked strangely like a tentative outward expression of it. I subsequently found the same combination of colours used in many other churches and the choice was apparently not accidental.

Jasina, it is said, owes its existence solely to this

church. When it was built small traders began to take root nearby, in order to minister to the needs of those who came there on Sundays. Why the church was built just there nobody knows, but according to legend the church was the result of a miracle. It is said that there was a clearing in the forest there, and that the forest was of *esin* (ash) trees. One night in the middle of a bad snowstorm, a shepherd arrived with his flock. He was obliged to leave the sheep and go on alone into Poland. When he came back in the spring he expected to find all the sheep frozen to death. But God had saved them and they were all nibbling away happily at the grass. He built the church as a thank-offering.

Sky-blue and yellow are the national colours not only of the Ukraine but also of Sweden. Two years ago a small group of Swedes headed by a university professor, made a prolonged tour of Carpatho Ukraine. They pointed to the national colours as one of a group of characteristics common to the two countries which, they maintained, was sufficient to suggest a common ancestry, or at any rate very close contact at some time in the past.

Based on this flag similarity alone the theory could hardly be justified, for at that rate it could be suggested that the Danes had a common ancestry with the Austrians and the Turks, the English with the French and the Russians. But there are also other and more important common characteristics. One, for instance, is the appearance of such names as Rjuryk, Askold and Dyr, or close variants, in both places. Another is the similar design to be found in many of the churches (I am told that there is a church in Sweden which is almost an exact duplicate of that at Jasina),



*For those who cannot read Ukrainian, signs are hung in Jasná. This is the midwife's (see p. 60)*



*The Jews make even the peasants' leather coats (see p. 62),  
and control all the small trades*

and in wood-carving, especially where this is applied to door-posts. Yet further affinities, shown in the motives used in embroidery, have been pointed out both by Swedish and Czechoslovak<sup>1</sup> experts. Finally, it is claimed that nowhere between Carpatho Ukraine and Sweden does one find the custom of giving a dead man a wake, drinking and singing round the body all night, while this custom was once universal in Sweden and is still found frequently in the mountains of Carpatho Ukraine.

To what extent the theory is valid it is hard for the layman to estimate. Close contact between Swedes and Ukrainians in the very remote past is by no means excluded; for if the Finns and the Hungarians had a common origin in central Asia, as has already been definitely proved, it is not improbable that their neighbours, the Swedes and the Ukrainians, should similarly have had, if not a common origin, at any rate very close relations. On the face of it, however, it would seem likely that many of the similarities in artistic expression may have been the result of common materials and similar surroundings.

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Evidence of the Tartar invasions in the fourteenth century, which we had seen in the dresses of the peasants by the bridge, is abundantly clear both in Jasina, and in its surroundings. Not only is it seen in the rich splendour of the coats, and the frequent appearance of gold and silver thread in the aprons, a material which finds no place in peasant work of eastern Europe save in the Hucul districts of Carpatho Ukraine and Galicia, but also in the frequent occurrence of Tartar place-names. One of the most fre-

<sup>1</sup> Marjan Makovskij, *Peasant Art in Sub-Carpathian Russia*.

quent of these is *majdan*, a word used widely in Asia to describe a flat open space. In each of the valleys down which the Tartars passed there appears to this day a village known as Majdan. Then, although no complete Mohammedan Tartar settlements crop up as they do round Vilna and Nowogrodek on the eastern frontiers of Poland, one sometimes sees the influence of the Tartar-type in the local physiognomy. It is particularly noticeable in the neighbourhood of Verecky, where some of the Tartars are believed to have remained encamped while the main body passed on down the valley into Hungary. The type was also clearly present in an elderly lawyer who frequented the Koruna Hotel in Chust. Had he been dressed in appropriate clothes, his slightly tilted almond eyes, dropping moustaches, dark thick arched eyebrows and bald head, like a polished ostrich's egg, would, I felt, have made him the perfect Tartar, or at any rate the perfect Tartar as represented in eighteenth-century prints.

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On the way through the village we met the Klempus's. The three brothers Klempus were the kings of Jasina. They were, however, known far beyond the confines of their native village by reason of their ardent devotion to the Ukrainian cause, and more especially for the leading part they had played in the Jasina revolt of 1919. Dmitro, the eldest, was Commandant of the Sitch (as the result of his death in the Hungarian attack of last March he is remembered now not only as a patriot but as a martyr), Vasil was head of the Sitch in Jasina, and Ivan, the youngest, looked after the family's two timber yards, both of which, incidentally, had been built up with Czech subsidies.

I had gone to especial trouble in Chust to get introduced to them, and had had an amusing talk with the two younger brothers. I had sat between them talking slowly in Polish, and either one or the other had understood what I said and translated it. However, when they had found that I was going to stop in the woodwork school when I came to Jasina they had become distinctly chilly. At the time I had not understood why, but in Jasina it was all quite clear. Nikendaj was a Czech and I had been in contact with him. The fact that Nikendaj was surely one of the fairest Czechs that ever existed, or that I had been sent to the woodwork school by a Ukrainian official in Chust, counted little with Ukrainians of the calibre of the Klempus's and Hurka. I felt I was under a cloud of suspicion. For some time the brothers looked me up and down from head to foot with not so much as a word.

At last Dmitro said in a hostile tone, "Will you come and have lunch with us? Do come, that is to say, if you can manage to sit for an hour at a table with two Germans without starting an acid discussion with them."

Dmitro, who led us to a villa across the road, looked a real villain, squint-eyed and sharply cruel, and did not seem willing to trust even those of his followers in Jasina who were regarded as the most "sure". Also he showed a restless pride in his new uniform by posing willingly every time the Germans showed any inclination to photograph him, and after lunch asked us all if we would not like to take some more photos of him. But the villa was pleasant for Jasina and the lunch excellent—five courses and so much local brandy and beer that my head turned. The Germans, incidentally, who said that they were buying peasant

handicrafts for a German firm, were charming and we talked all the time, almost to the exclusion of our unfortunate host who could speak no German.

After lunch I set off, with one of the boys from the school as guide, to look at another wooden church, and also to try and find someone who still does wood-carving or makes wooden instruments, for which the Jasina district once used to be famous. The boy, whom I subsequently discovered was the "comic" of the school, talked a great deal, but I could scarcely understand five words in a hundred. Eventually he got very excited and started poking me in the ribs when he told a really good story. I could only gather that he had a profound lack of respect for Jews, and that he thought the present wave of anti-Jewish feeling one to be taken advantage of. The boys from the school had climbed out of the dormitory one night and cut down Jewish wireless aeriols, he said. They had also removed the wires which the Rabbi had suspended above the roads at exits from Jasina as a reminder to any Jews who might be about on the Sabbath that they must not carry money in their pockets that day. The Jews had set them all up again, but when the destruction was repeated a second time they had, as I saw for myself, decided that it would be best to leave them lying on the ground. Apparently other Aryans in Jasina had been up to the same trick. The boy was an enthusiastic Ukrainian and our walk was punctuated with "Slava Ukrajini" whenever we met anyone. I noticed that the others answered enthusiastically enough, but that they never took the initiative.

To find anyone engaged in woodwork proved impossible. But I did in the end find someone who wove. A woman directed us to a cottage lying on the side of the hills not far from the village. We were

welcomed at once in a darkness that was relieved only by the flickering flames of the fire. The woman was pottering over the stove, the man having a siesta on the bed. They did not seem at all surprised to see us, and at once made us welcome. While the woman went off to get some of her woven materials I had time to look round the room. It was typical of the district. A door led into it from the narrow hall which divided the house in half. It was low, scarcely more than seven feet from floor to ceiling, and lit by two small windows in the front of the house. On the window side of the door there was just sufficient room for a simple dresser. Beneath the windows, and continued on the side of the room opposite the door, was a wooden bench, with a table placed in the angle. On the back side of the room was a primitive wooden bed placed along the wall, and then in the corner the most important object in the room, the stove.

The stove was made of baked earth plastered over and whitewashed. It was really a kind of large platform, some seven feet square, with a chimney built up in the middle of it that emitted the smoke through a hole in the wall into the hall. The hall was open to the roof, and the walls only went as far up as the ceilings of the rooms on either side. The smoke was thus free to circulate under the whole roof, and had to find its way out somehow through the shingles or else by the eaves which are often left open. In other cottages I often saw that the beams were black and charred, but apparently it is only very rarely that the cottages catch alight. Across the hall was the best room, furnished with two beds and a cupboard, but very cold and cheerless and apparently little used.

When the woman came back she had over her arm a large collection of the aprons that are worn back and

front of the skirts. Some were in a red herring-bone pattern with only a little silver thread; in others silver had been used liberally. The diaper pattern, typical of the Hucul country on both sides of the Carpathians, also frequently appeared. Then, after due persuasion, she brought out some splendid lengths of the thick woolly material that serves for carpets, bed-coverings, horse-coverings, rugs for use in the carts and the like. This material, when it is first woven, is often in quite wide strips. But it is not left in this condition. It is submerged in a stream, allowed to remain there for a week, and on the last day, beaten the whole time with a large wooden hand. The water shrinks the material together and the beating makes it hairy. It is then much warmer. The basic colour of these pieces of material was brown or grey—according to the original colour of the sheep from which the wool was procured—but bright stripes in which orange predominated ran across them. The woman also produced some embroidered shirts. They were not very good. The best designs round Jasina are purely geometrical like those that one finds in Galicia. Her embroidery, however, like so much in the district, had been spoilt by the replacing of the narrow geometrical bands that should have come above and below the main block of embroidery on the sleeves by a pattern of flowers sprouting out of a wavy stalk. Also the embroidery had not been done tight enough and the colours were too bright. Black, red and orange were the favourite traditional colours; but now the embroiderers often like to include light blue and yellow, a reference, it is said, to the national colours. The man and woman, who had twelve sheep and a small plot of flax, had made all the materials for themselves right from the beginning. The only thing they had to buy was dye,

for dyeing the wool used for the aprons, and silver thread.

Outside, in a storeroom reached from the verandah that ran all along the front of the house, they had a tall distaff with a hunk of wool still tied to it by a big red cotton bow, while beside it in a wattle basket were balls of coarsely spun thread. In the corner was a beautiful home-made spinning-wheel for spinning the thread more finely.

After we had looked at the textiles we all sat down round the table. It was the man's turn to talk. The woman brought me some honey on a plate—it was sugared and so exceptionally sweet that I could only swallow it when washed down by many glasses of water drawn ice-cold from the well—and then relapsed into a smiling silence.

The man, who was smallish, rather elf-like in his manner and had two very bright and lively dark eyes, talked with relish and smiled perpetually. He said he was a Ukrainian with great definiteness and talked willingly of the prospects for the Great Ukraine.

“All nations are free except ours,” he said, “and why should not ours be too? We have coal mines and oil wells, and plenty of timber, corn, maize, cows and pigs. So we could be a very rich land. Why are we not free? Just because we have got all these things on our territory and the Czechs, Poles, Russians and Rumanians do not want to lose them. They are all like wasps. The wasp starts by collecting honey industriously from the flowers, but when his legitimate collecting is over, and he can find no more, he starts to take the honey from the nests of other wasps. That's what our oppressors are like.”

I asked him how it was that he spoke such good Polish. He had been born at Sambor in Galicia, he

said, had fought in the Ukrainian army and then been forced to emigrate to Czechoslovakia. The land on which he was living belonged to his wife. He had brothers and sisters still in Sambor, where he himself had a plot of land, a brother in France, who kept a shop, and still another brother in America. He was reading Ukrainian propaganda literature printed both at Lwow and in America.

As we left the house our host was still telling me that Galicia would be united with Carpatho Ukraine in a few months.

# 4

WHILE at Jasina I was determined to see something more of the way the peasants live and what kind of handicrafts they still practise. The best way to do this seemed to be to take a peasant's cart and drive up into the hills. There were two difficulties; the first, to find someone who was *persona grata* with the peasants and could act as my interpreter, and the second, to find a cart. I decided against one of the local "fiakers", as they are not pliant like the loosely-built peasant carts and are thus unable to negotiate side tracks. Holesowski, the departing director of the school who was still in residence, and whose acquaintance as a Czech I had made with some trepidation, promised to arrange both for me. As guide he recommended me a young lad, Ivan Popaduk, the son of a rich peasant, who had been working for some time in Prague.

On the first morning it took a long time to get off. Ivan, when he turned up, said that the family cart was being mended, and then it turned out that the father had gone off with the horses too, to bring in wood from the forest. He promised to get a friend's cart.

In the meantime, Holesowski took me round the school, which was splendidly equipped. In the courtyard we found a German striding about with knapsack and camera. He was determined to take a photograph of a boy doing woodwork in national dress. Nothing would convince him that none of the

boys had national dress with them, that they were in fact of a much too sophisticated type to wear it at all. Holesowski, I noticed, did not allow him to get anywhere near the boys—for fear presumably that they would have started *heiling* Hitler! Eventually he gave us each a firm martial handshake and strode off. The number of Germans in every odd corner of Carpatho Ukraine seemed to be increasing every day.

The friend's cart which Ivan eventually brought had the luxury of a seat placed across it, but I have never known a horse go so slowly. It rarely did more than walk and continually stopped to relieve itself. It did not seem to be able to do even that very quickly. The day was bitterly cold. Snow had fallen in the night and the whole landscape had changed. Big flakes were still falling now and again and managed to get past even the tightest scarf.

We drove some five miles along one of the broad valleys leading from the bridge, through open fields, and past houses so tumbled down and gaping that I wondered how they ever kept the snow out, to look for Spasuk, a master builder who was said to know which peasants still carried on with their handicrafts. Spasuk proved to have a good collection of things himself, and, protesting to Ivan all the time that they could be of no interest to anyone, slowly produced them one by one. There were long wooden flutes and pipes made by a local man, double salt-cellars, distaffs and the inevitable sour-milk containers. In Carpatho Ukraine, where sour milk and maize meal form the staple diet, one finds these everywhere. They are of a simple straightforward construction, consisting of plain pinewood jugs with lids to them, the sides held together by two wooden bands. Their craftsmanship is not skilled but they always impressed me

by their exactitude and their generally clean finish. Perhaps the most interesting thing Spasuk had was an instrument I had not seen before. It consisted of a stick about eighteen inches long tapered at one end and with a hook at the other. A woman holds the stick between her knees when she is doing embroidery, and the hook is used to hold the linen; or else it is stuck into a hole in the bench or table and the hook used for plaiting the bands that surround the aprons. Both this instrument and the distaffs were ornamented with exquisite knife work; the motifs, circles, pincers, diamonds, were arranged in encircling bands.

Spasuk was not very helpful about craftsmen, but in the Jasina district it is very hard now to find people who make anything at all. In the olden days each peasant family made all that it needed. The women spun, wove and stitched, the men made the simple agricultural implements, wooden ploughs and shovels, as well as spoons, bowls, furniture, beehives, and anything that was needed about the house or farm. Nowadays nearly every woman still spins, but she does not always weave. She will often give her material to another woman to make up for her and pay for the work in kind. The Jews, too, are also taking over more handicrafts—the making of trumpets, for instance. The reason given for this decline of home-crafts is a common one in all countries to-day; the people “have no time”. In the olden days a man working in the forests earned more in a day than he does now, and accordingly did not have to work so many days. In his spare time he made his own things. Now they are worse paid and have to go into the forests more often. They find it better to buy the things when they can, and be sure of a cash income first.

In a little newly-built brown house just above

Spasuk's we found a peasant with one of the local trumpets. These are quite unlike any others I have seen; about twelve feet long and very thin. Originally they were made by the peasants themselves of leather drawn over a framework of wood; now the Jews make them and find it easier to use tin, a change which unfortunately sharpens the note. The man was putting up a stall when we arrived, but he asked nothing better than to come and play to us—a warbling melody that kept repeating. The trumpets are used for calling the sheep in summer, when they are on the upland pastures, and also blown at the farm so as to tell whoever may be looking after the sheep up in the hills that it is time to milk them. In the latter event each farm has its special tune or series of notes. They are also used traditionally at Easter. On the night of Saturday-Sunday, when Christ is supposed to have risen from the tomb, the peasant stands in front of his hut and plays the warbling melody that we had heard. This is answered from another hut, and then from another further on, until the tune is running all round the hills.

By this time I was so cold that I decided it would be best to go back to Jasina. Ivan and I got into the cart again and started off at a slow walk. Long narrow carts, loaded down to breaking point with peasants sitting in great piles of hay, kept trotting past, but even competition would not inspire our horse. The peasants were all jolly, or else asleep, for it was Monday, and they were all going to their homes up in the mountain valleys after spending Sunday and Sunday night in Jasina. Two men were so drunk that when they passed us, gesticulating violently, they lurched off the cart and went rolling down the hill in the snow. The rest of the party picked them up, placed one of them firmly

in the hay and drove off sitting on him, two girls and an old woman with woollen shawls drawn tightly over them on his chest, two old men on his legs. Far away up the road we could still hear his drunken singing, "I want to go a-hunting and kill a little black sow——"

Ivan, though born of a peasant family, was far away from all this. He had been working in Bohemia and Prague for five years in a bakery, and in the last year, as a master baker, had earned and spent 750 crowns (£5 7s. *od.*) a month, which was a large sum for Czechoslovakia. Thoughts of cafés and cinemas and of the contacts with people from the great world who had lodged with his family in the summer, or whom he happened to have met in Prague, were constantly in his mind, and if he whistled a tune, it was always a dance tune. He, I am sure, had no desire to kill a little black sow. He did not even like getting his shoes dirty, and, as we lurched along in the cart he sat all dressed up in his town clothes complete even to spats. In dress he had a certain taste and managed not to look vulgar, though had he only known it, he was a much more attractive and natural figure in the old cream coloured corduroy trousers and home-made linen singlet buttoned up on the shoulder in which he had first appeared. He was a good fellow and had acquired the characteristics of punctuality and generosity which few Ukrainians have. Now, with the advent of the Hungarians, his career, like that of many Ukrainians, will presumably have been cut off short—at any rate until the Great Ukraine idea comes forward again. He will never own the bakery which he hoped to set up in Jasina with Sitch money when the Czech baker was chased away, nor get the safe job in the Post Office for which he had also hoped.

Arrived back in Jasina we went to lunch at Nedoma, the little restaurant by the bridge. In this tiny bare room with its eight wooden tables were collected together every day representatives of all the communities in Jasina whose hatreds and jealousies were causing the existing unrest. In one corner sat the Czech forestry officials, in another the Germans, in others the Magyarized Germans, the Ukrainians and the Jews. No one spoke above a whisper and then only directly and with the air of a real conspirator into his neighbour's ear. Ivan and I, sitting in a corner by the fire, felt obliged by force of example to whisper too. In the middle of us all sat the Ukrainian Commissar, a great burly fellow in dirty striped office trousers topped by a peasant's sheepskin coat. At his hip was a huge pistol which was constantly dragging his trousers off. He and his three cronies whispered even more persistently than the rest, and spied out of the corner of their eyes every movement of the other guests. The seal was set on the absurdity of the scene by the fact that the Commissar was waited on daily by Nedoma himself who, as everyone knew, had been given notice by the Commissar to quit Jasina within twenty-four hours. All Ukrainian officials were rogues. But there were two sorts of rogues; jolly rogues and villainous rogues. The Jasina Commissar was a jolly rogue.

In the evening I went to call on the Popaduks who had bidden me insistently. When I arrived the whole family was assembled in a room identical in arrangement to that of the weaving woman whom I had visited on the day before, but very much larger and richer-looking. The best room, across the hall, which is let to summer visitors, had quite a civilized appearance. Ivan, who had gone back to his old

clothes, was sitting running his fingers through his fair hair and writing exercises with a long spiky nib. He was teaching himself French from Chardenal. "I am a Frenchman—a German—a Bohemian—a Slovak—," the lesson ran. Everything except "I am a Ukrainian."

"What is 'I am a Ukrainian'? That's the only one that really matters," Ivan asked eagerly.

The mother was sitting on the top of the stove putting on her shoes, while various other members of the family were sitting about talking or doing nothing in particular. One would get up and go over and dip a mug into a huge pail of milk standing on the bench and drink it, another would throw a log on the fire or adjust a saucepan lid. Groups would form by the bench, or on the bed and two people usually liked to sit astride the stools. A brother-in-law came in with tales from the village, about a Hungarian who had broken windows, about various nationalist quarrels; the father, with a weather-beaten face and a long clay pipe, came in from the forests, and the younger children climbed about his lap and shoulders while he talked politics to the older ones. Then the mother, who had been making two headdresses for a neighbour's wedding, came over and tried them on her daughters.

All the while one of the younger boys and his niece Maria, both aged about nine, were playing at love-making in the corner. They had obviously seen their elders at it, and I almost wondered whether we were going to see a rape such as that which had been perpetrated in the forest two days before by a boy of fourteen on a little girl of twelve. Maria, the child of one of the Popaduk daughters, was herself a bastard. Her father, who was sitting there talking to us, had

married the child's mother, but only after an interval of four years during which, as all the village knew, he had managed to have children by five other girls in the neighbourhood. This may seem excessive, but at another farm which I visited was a woman who had had six illegitimate children, all of whom were living with her, while her eldest daughter had already had five, making a grand total of eleven bastards in one house. In Carpatho Ukraine, illegitimacy is not regarded seriously, and women who have unwanted children—whether because they are bastards or because the family is too large already—have their own simple but effective methods of getting rid of them. They give them either sour milk or else a few doses of the water that pickled cabbage has been boiled in.

The generally careless treatment of children, and the low value that is put on them, often surprises foreigners, but a nurse, who remonstrated with a peasant in the mountains for taking more care of his cattle than of his young children, had the matter simply explained to her.

“If I want a child I can make it myself without any effort, but if I want a cow I have to buy it,” he said.

In spite of his attitude, however, and of the existence of cabbage water, the families usually reach astronomical figures. Families in which ten children were born in twelve years are common, while Bilej, the Police Director, had twenty-two brothers and sisters all by one mother. In comparison with this the Popaduk family, where there were eight children, seemed a very moderate sized one.

Suddenly the mother brought me some boiled milk, and one of the daughters came in with two cakes on a



*Dmitro Klemfus, Commandant of the Sitch (see p. 66)*



*Wooden Church at Jasnia; exterior and chancel screen (see p. 63)*

plate which she laid before me. They were like little scones, but absolutely hard and with an ice cold moisture on them as if they had just been drawn out of the well. By this time the whole family was engaged in a noisy discussion about local affairs, which I unfortunately could not follow, and I decided it was time to be going. I walked down to Hurka's where I was to hear Hitler's Reichstag speech.

Hurka, who had been celebrating Hitler's favourable speech even before it had been made, was very drowsy. For an hour and a half we all sat glued to the wireless. References to the colonies and to Germany's need for economic outlets were met by my hosts and fellow guests with understanding, and a few disagreeable remarks were made about the selfishness of the British policy. But as the speech went on and mention was made of friendly relations with Poland, but none of the Great Ukraine, the faces of the listeners steadily fell. At the end all that they could say was that it was not what they had hoped for. As soon as I said I must be going Hurka, who had not been at all welcoming, got up, gave me my coat, did not ask me to come again and left me to grope about for the courtyard door in complete darkness.

The next morning I learnt the reason for his rudeness. The priest who had been there the first day had suggested that I was a Jew. This would have been condemnation enough, but Hurka himself had thought that I was also a Polonophil—presumably on the grounds that I had talked Polish to one of my fellow guests with whom I had no other language in common. They had immediately inquired about me from Nikendaj, who reassured them. The question was not settled, however. When Capla, the School Inspector, arrived later from Chust, they worried him too and

there was more questioning. Unfortunately Capla saw a telegram I had written in Polish, and which Nikendaj was to translate into Ukrainian for dispatch to Czeslaw. ("It won't arrive if you send it in Polish," he had said.) This quite upset things. I decided that in future I should not say even a few words in Polish. I would only speak German and then we could all smile dumbly at each other, and all would be well, for I should be a Germanophil.

Next day I decided to go out into the hills again. Ivan came early with a "fiaker" which I hoped would be better than the cart. It was a miserable contraption driven by a red nosed trembling old Jew with a tumbledown horse that looked like Sancho Panza's. It was a lovely day; twenty degrees of frost but very clear and very sunny. We rattled along the same road as we had taken on the previous day, and soon came to Spasuk's. The horizon had widened and over the low hills on the north and east of the valley we could see the great peak of Heverla and the sharp screes, half bare grey rock, half snow, that were already in Poland. The foreground was glistening and lively, and everyone had taken advantage of the hard snow to go into the forests and bring out timber. In places the snow was seared with the tracks where trees had been shot down the valley sides. Then one saw horses dragging long shivering trunks along the valley bottom to the river. Just beyond Spasuk's we turned up out of the main valley into a narrower one that ran steeply into the hills.

Here the scene was quite different. Each peasant had a complete little homestead, often railed off from the neighbours, by a neat fence of high posts and rails.

The cottages, and outbuildings, and especially the neat fences, all built of brown timber, had a unity of sombre colour which, in marked contrast to the white and blue houses of the valley, made a quite distinctive impression. The whole valley was rather like a child's model. The centre of each homestead was a brown log house with deep eaves. In the middle of the longest side was a door flanked by tiny windows, while a long narrow platform or verandah ran from end to end. The roof came out to protect these platforms, but here the supporting pillars had been dispensed with. Beneath the eaves was the inevitable pole. In the mountains there was no orange-coloured maize to hang on it, but the people had found plenty of other things, bean pods, flax and hemp thread that needed bleaching, gaily coloured carpets, big red pillows and bedding that were being disinfected in the freezing air. Grouped round the house and all built of wood, were a stall, a small Dutch barn, four ragged poles and a shingled roof, a well head and the projecting roof of the potato hole. Sometimes there was a small round railed enclosure with a few black or brown sheep in it. The potato hole is a comparatively recent innovation. Not so long ago the village used to choose a suitable piece of ground on the side of a convenient hill and all the peasants made their holes in the same place. Now this has usually been given up. Times are getting harder, and with the consequent increase in thieving each peasant likes to have his potatoes closely under his own eye.

The number of varieties of construction to which even wooden houses lend themselves often surprised me. They can be made of planks, overlapping or fitted close together; of whole tree trunks, left unplanned, and the interstices between them filled in with moss

and plaster; of tree trunks roughly squared; of huge sheets of wood consisting of the centre cut of a tree, in which case three or four alone will suffice for a whole wall.

Each valley, or sometimes each village, has its own traditional style, and usually there is some technical reason for its development. The same applies to the roofs, which are usually covered with tiny shingles, square or cut into points, or else with five rows of long laths. In this particular valley the latter style prevailed. The long laths are usually preferred, but it is only in a few places such as this, that the wood is hard enough to allow of their being cut.

As I had suspected, the fiaker could not go far up a side road and we soon had to get out and walk. We started to climb up the side of the valley through the snow to a little cottage where a pipe maker was said to live. On the way I saw big balls of wool at a window. It suggested weaving. We went in and found a youngish woman sitting by the window spinning. The tall distaff was stuck into a hole in a bench, and while her left hand worked deftly guiding the wool from the bundle into thread, her right hand smoothed it out with an even stroking motion and spun it on to a wheel which she worked with her foot. The even motion of her hands and the rhythmic whirring and tapping of the turning wheel produced an extraordinary peace in the room. We sat down by the fire and watched her work. The woman was broad and fair haired, and had the rather wide set eyes, and slightly golden complexion of the true Slav. Her hair hung down her back in two plaits. Strands of dark red wool had been worked into them, and beyond the end of her hair the wool alone was continued in plaits for fully another foot. Her eyes were puffed and she

looked very ill. No wonder. She was expecting a child almost on the morrow, and there were five children all under six in the room. They sat up on the stove and peeped at us over the top like birds in a nest.

The room was very low and simple. All the wood-work was plain unstained pine, turned brown with age. The blue-washed stove was of the old-fashioned open type, with logs crackling away cheerfully in a large opening. A big pot was simmering in the mouth of the opening, and it did not appear possible to cook more than one pot at a time. But probably this was no disadvantage, for the normal diet of the peasants is extremely simple. Sour milk and potatoes, and bread or meal made of maize are the staple food. This is varied occasionally by a hen or, if they have pigs or cattle, by some smoked meat. Tea costs too much, so they drink milk—or spirits. On no occasion did I see any other food about, except at the Popaduks', where there were usually several saucepans and both meat and vegetables cooking. But even there everything was tipped into one big pot when it came to a meal time. We all used to sit round the table, digging into the pot with a spoon in one hand and the other held out to catch the drips.

The pipe maker, an old forester told us, was away. The old man could speak Italian, and hearing that I was a foreigner was sure that he had found an opportunity of airing it. He never realized that I could not understand a word. Meetings with older State employees—like this man—often reminded me in a curious fashion of the former existence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Buried away in Carpatho Ukraine, with three frontiers between Chust and Venice, it was hard to believe that they had once both been within the same State. This man had been

employed at Merano, but on one occasion I even met a man who, as groom, had been with the Empress Elisabeth and the old Emperor Francis Joseph in Venice when it was still an Austrian town.

We found the hut in which the forester told us that a woman wove right at the top of a hill. The woman took us first into her storeroom that led off the verandah. I have never seen such a lavish display of possessions in any peasant's house. Poles were suspended all round the little room, and on these were hanging dozens of sheepskin coats and brown overcoats with orange pompoms. Then there were men's shirts and women's shirts all heavily embroidered, any number of woven aprons with rich silver threads and long tassels, and yards of coarse braid for binding round the waist. There were thick blankets, bright with orange and red bands, and several lengths of woven linen. From hooks in the ceiling hung great sides of smoked beef, and on the ground were piles of wax forms for bees, besides a rich collection of wooden milk pots, wooden troughs and other wooden utensils.

The loom was in a little square hut of its own. The woman was making aprons. They were very plain, with a beautiful rhythmic pattern worked into red and orange bands, but no silver thread. They were for her own use, she said, or for paying "foreigners" who came to work for her.

The view looking back down the valley towards Jasina was beautiful. The background of greenish white snow was patterned with brown cottages. It was absolutely still and frozen, and, in the mass of detail worked into one big canvas, not unlike a Breughel picture. Then while we were standing there the heavy clouds began to move away and the sun, that had first lit only the screes in Poland, gradually

spread over the whole scene. For a short time the hills were a sparkling bluish white. A man came out of the wood with three long pine trunks bound together. He was coasting them down the hill, helping them along the level with a stout pole and then, coming to a slope, sitting on them and racing down as on a sledge. We all ran down the hill together. Our fiaker was waiting on the bridge and we rattled back to Jasina in fine style.

It was after four o'clock and the last lunchers were just leaving Nedoma's. Presently, however, an old peasant in Hucul dress came in. He sat down, ordered brandy, and drank our health. I asked him how he could speak such good German. He had done his military service years ago before the War in Vienna, he said, when Carpatho Ukraine had not even been thought of.

"This country has had a varied history," he continued, "before the War we were treated by the Hungarians as if we were animals. Then came the War, and after that we were for twenty years with the Czechs. Those were good years, and we all had work and bread. But who knows what is going to happen now?"

Then I asked him what he was, and the fun really began. The eyes of poor Ivan, the good little Ukrainian, were almost jumping out of their sockets. He looked nervously first at the peasant and then at me, wondering what the old man might be going to say next.

"I am a Ruthenian," he shouted. "This Ukrainian idea is all nonsense. We are all Ruthenians here. The Ukrainian idea is the artificial work of a few men. It is all a puffed up affair. There will be a free Ukraine one day, and it will be a rich country. Yes, there will

no doubt be a free Ukraine," he repeated excitedly, coming over and brandishing his glass in my face, "but it is a long way to Kiev, a very long way."

Then he abruptly sat down again. Presently he started talking about conditions in Russia. He had not a good word for the Russian system. His brother with his wife and child, he said, had just escaped from a village somewhere near Kiev. All the land in the district where they had lived was not yet in the collective farms, but the independent peasant had a wretched time, and was driven into a collective farm sooner or later. The authorities would come along to a richer peasant, he said, and on some trumped-up charge, that he had not paid all his taxes for instance, confiscate his land. They would then give him a very poor piece of land somewhere else. The peasant set to work again and improved the new holding. But as soon as it had been made into a paying concern, along would come the authorities and repeat the charge of non-payment of taxes. The peasant would then be again forced off his land. Russia, he concluded, was a very poor place indeed for a man who wanted to work.

By dinner time we had finished our lunch and started to walk home. On the way we were met by one of the boys who was dancing along in great excitement from the school. It was the "Comic." He seized hold of Ivan and whispered to him with great excitement that there had been a *skandal* in the school, a real revolution. When I arrived at the school I found there certainly had been. The school was in an uproar.

In the morning, almost immediately after I went out, the boys had made a mass attack on the young Jews who came there for apprentice classes, and had then turned on the masters. They had set on the Jews

in the courtyard as they came out in an interval between classes, had beaten them with sticks, and, by threatening them with knives, had forced them to eat bacon fat, which for a strict Jew is taboo. For twenty minutes there had been pandemonium. Although there were eighteen Jews they had been too surprised and frightened to make any resistance and the eight boys from the school had had it all their own way. The Jews, apparently, always defend themselves badly.

After finishing with the Jews the boys turned on the technical instructor, a Czech, who had only just come and could not speak any Ukrainian. They hustled him badly and then went to Nikendaj and demanded the recall of all the Czech staff, with the exception of Nikendaj himself, who was always tolerated as he could speak perfect Ukrainian. Nikendaj replied by ordering a lock-up, and when the boys ignored this and disappeared into Jasina, he further ordered that there should be no supper. This led to a riot in the kitchen and threats to the cook, who was forced to work at the point of the knife.

Nikendaj was very worked up, angry perhaps, but more upset and disappointed that such a thing should have happened in his school, for it seemed to indicate that all the Czech work of the last few years was definitely beginning to fall about his ears. In his final judgment he was torn between his sympathy for the boys when they maintained that the technical teacher should have learnt Ukrainian, and his sympathy for the teacher as a fellow Czech. The cook was on the verge of hysterics, and old Holesowski, who was only waiting for a train to take him to Prague again, and who had for days been pottering about in an apron, taking a picture down here, pulling a nail out there and looking generally benign, was afraid to go out

alone. Nothing could be done, for if the boys had been beaten or otherwise severely punished the Klempus's would have immediately got the Czech teachers into far worse trouble. For the next two days there were continued minor disorders, and in the end an inspector was obliged to come up from Chust. He gave the technical master immediate notice and appointed a Ukrainian elementary school teacher from the village to the post of Director.

His arrival was decidedly awkward for me. He gracefully refrained from turning me out of the inspector's room, but as we had to share it I did not care to leave my notes about. For two days I carried them hidden in my pocket.

The inspector was a Ukrainian to the core.

"This room is painted a very ugly colour," he said to me as we were going to bed. "Fancy having people in charge of an art school who have so little taste. We must get this altered. A much better colour would be something cheerful—yellow with a blue border, for instance"!

# 5

ON my last day in Jasina Ivan took me to a peasant wedding. We arrived at nine in the morning, to find the guests already dancing, and spent the whole day there. It may sound a long time, but even then we did not see anything like the complete celebration; for a peasant, when he marries, takes at any rate two days and two nights over it, and, if he is rich, three days and three nights!

We were invited first to the bridegroom's house. The younger guests were just starting to dance in the hall, while their elders were engaged in conversation round tables in the living room. All were in their usual bright work-a-day clothes. I was placed at a table next a man who had worked on the Austro-Hungarian railways in Galicia and who could accordingly speak Polish. We talked of geography and agriculture. He knew roughly where Germany and Russia lay, but of England he had scarcely heard; and if the people there did not grow maize how ever did they manage to live?

Almost immediately food and drink were served. The bridegroom's mother set out plates of rice balls wrapped up in sour cabbage leaves—of which some hundreds had been prepared in an enamel cauldron—and little cakes that were as hard as stones. We ate with our fingers. When no one was looking I managed to slip my food under the table, but the spirits, raw local products, I had to drink. A glass

and a bottle were passed round the table and each guest was toasted by his neighbour on the left, had the glass filled by the neighbour, toasted the neighbour on the right and filled the glass—and so on round the party. The bridegroom, in Hucul clothes except for a brown Homburg hat, wandered about and seemed to have been forgotten by everybody.

After a time I managed to escape into the hall, from which came the even beat of music. The small space was by that time so full of people that it was almost impossible even to push open the door. The front door was blocked, and had it not been for three shafts of light that streamed down from a hole in the roof the room would have been in complete darkness. The only empty space was at the bottom end of the room where a circle of some ten people, their arms clasped behind each others' backs, were dancing the Huculka. Three peasant musicians were sitting on an improvised shelf well above their heads. The dancers stepped round in a circle first in one direction then in the other, and after each reverse the music went more quickly until at last they were flying round like a merry-go-round. Suddenly the music would stop, the circle break up, and the dancers, laughing and panting for breath, melt into the crowd and give place to another circle which was immediately formed.

We ate and danced until midday, when a little ceremony took place preparatory to our departure for the bride's house. Members of the family sat in a row in front of one of the tables. The bridegroom, the best man, who carried as symbol of his office a kind of big artificial sprig decorated with coloured feathers and bells, two groomsmen and a violinist processed round the table. Then the best man threw down a towel and the bridegroom, kneeling on it, thanked his

mother for bearing him and caring for him. The old grandmother came forward and in a high squeaky voice sang a song about filial duty, and everyone in the family group cried and kissed the others. In a procession behind the best man and bridegroom we all marched down to the bride's house.

Here there was a mock battle round the door. The bride's friends pretended that the bridegroom was a robber and must be prevented from capturing the girl. After much friendly punching and rice throwing some of us managed to push our way into the house with the bridegroom.

On the threshold we were given the bread and salt of welcome. The hall was somewhat larger than that in the bridegroom's house and much more turbulent. People were dancing, drinking, loving, sitting on each others' shoulders, clinging to precarious footholds on the wall. In the living-room the bride was being subject to a mock sale. She and the bridegroom sat behind the table, while their respective best men, standing at either end of the table, argued in humorous fashion about the price to be paid. This part of the proceedings is particularly popular, and such of the guests as could squeeze into the room hung on the words of the argument with bright eyes and bated breath. Bursts of laughter and rejoinders marked the wittiest sallies.

The windows were of course quite blocked up, and the room was lit only by a group of candles on the table. Beside the candles I could just distinguish a loaf of bread and some pieces of sugar, symbols of plenty and sweetness, and the wedding crown of silver tinsel and flowers made by Ivan's mother. The bride's grandmother came in as the sale was in progress and, singing the while in a high voice like her

counterpart at the bridegroom's house, placed the crown on the bride's head and decorated the bridegroom's hat with flowers and rosettes. For a reason which I could not discover the bridegroom cannot sit uncovered, and, while his own hat was being decorated had to wear another.

The auction lasted nearly one and a half hours. The chief parties to the procedure both looked acutely miserable. The bridegroom sat the whole time with a dazed wooden face, gazing in front of him, while big round tears streamed slowly down the bride's cheeks.

Finally, at about three o'clock, when the bride had been sold for twenty crowns (three shillings) and the farewell ceremony of the bridegroom's house repeated, we went in procession to the adjoining church. The guests formed a chattering half circle, the priest gabbled through a service, and in ten minutes the ceremony was over. One of the groomsmen had stood the whole time balancing a hat, with a loaf of bread and a candle on it, against the bridegroom's back. Symbolic customs vary in every village, but not even in Jasina was there anybody capable of explaining to me what this one meant.

Back in the courtyard of the bride's house the bride and bridegroom, before crossing the threshold, were wrapped up in a large woollen blanket. I imagined this was to wish them married happiness and many children, but apparently it was only to wish them much wool, that is to say, riches.

We danced and ate for some time longer, and then Ivan and I went home. "If you want to take more photos," the guests said, "come back to-morrow, we shall still be here." They were to make merry in the bride's home all that night and the following morning,

and then go back to the bridegroom's home for the afternoon and the second night. I asked where the newly married couple were going to live. That question had not been decided yet, they said; perhaps they would live with his family, perhaps with hers. It did not seem to matter very much, for in either case they would have had to share the family's one room.

. . . . .

I went back to Chust one morning. The valley of the Tisza, which the railway line follows, and which had been in darkness on my journey up, proved to be very beautiful. At first the valley was broad and dotted here and there with sky-blue cottages. On the hilltops were pines. Then the hills began to converge, and soon the railway line and river were sharing a deep, gorge-like valley hemmed in on either side by grass-covered hills studded with great oaks. The immediate scene was a pastoral one; but occasional side valleys allowed splendid views of the higher snow-covered peaks and the sweeping shoulders of the upland pastures. Then the trees became thicker and soon the train was running down through miles of oak and beech woods.

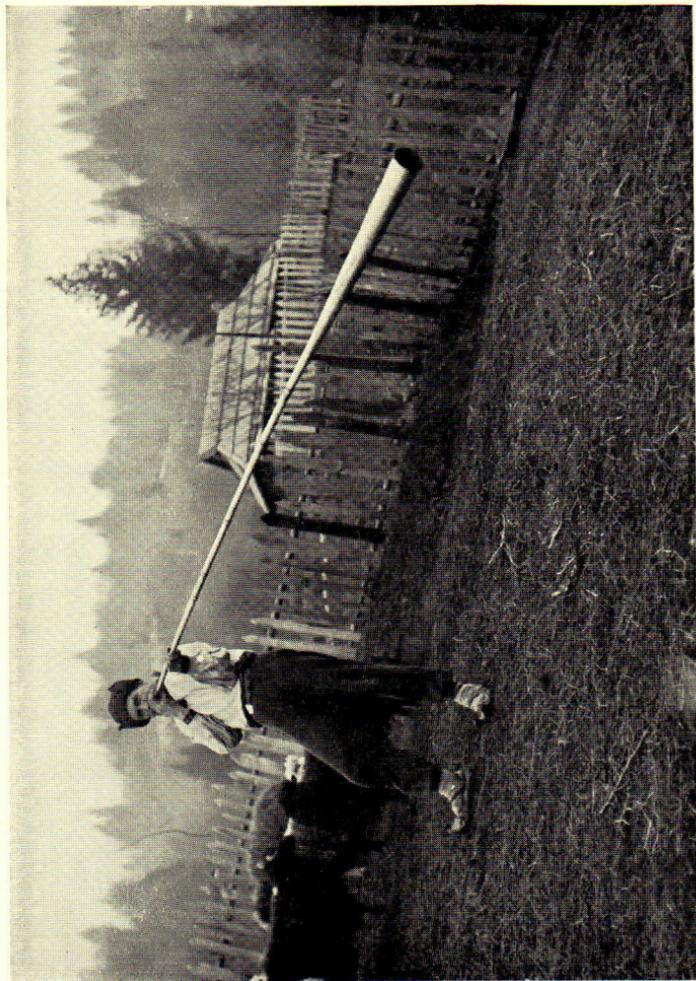
Just before Rachov we passed the Duma, Carpatho Ukraine's concentration camp, an institution which seems to be an inevitable concomitant of the one-party State. It did not look very forbidding. Right beside the road was a small disused factory and a group of wooden huts. These had been surrounded by high barbed-wire fences and served as the main section of the camp. Sentries were patrolling the wire, and in an enclosure I saw a prisoner walking about and trying to fight his misery by playing the violin. Further up the mountain side were two other sections. A new military

road curved away round a shoulder in a series of sweeping hairpins, bringing the eye first to the snowline, where more huts were visible, and then, right away up in the middle of the snow, to the third and final section. The prisoners were usually brought down to the bottom section to work, but for a time the two upper sections were so cold that no one could live there at all. To find out the exact number of prisoners in the camp was always impossible. Officially there were said to be about forty, and it was added, as in any "Nazi" land, that they consisted of a few Jews or others who had raised their prices without reason, and of one or two persons who had been found guilty of currency smuggling or similar anti-State activities, or worked as agitators for foreign Powers. In fact, it seems that most of the prisoners confined there were village schoolmasters or members of the liberal professions who sympathized with the Great Russian political group, and there were also of course the emigrants who were undergoing precautionary examination. The total number was variously estimated in non-official circles at between one and two hundred. Reports from Prague, supported by the information of the official news agency of one of the neighbouring Powers, stated that there were two further concentration camps in Carpatho Ukraine, one at Fancikovo, the other at Velky Berezny. The camp at Fancikovo was said to be in the middle of a large wood near the Hungarian frontier. A French woman journalist, who was determined to find the camp, marched backwards and forwards through the wood for a whole day but found nothing. I myself found no traces of a camp at either place.

At Rachov the train was searched. Probably an escape had been made from the Duma. Gendarmes



*The bride (see p. 91)*



*Calling the sheep (see p. 76)*

came and looked under the seats but no one was found.

Further down the valley hundreds of lumber rafts, complete already with the big wooden bars that serve as rudders, were lying on a shingle bank by the Tisza waiting for the opening of the Hungarian frontiers. They were impressive evidence of the complete disorganization that the closed frontiers were causing to the economic life of the province. At Akna Slatina, too, the chimneys by all the salt mines were smokeless. The mines were being worked only two days a week; partly because the reduction in size of the Republic had decreased the demand for salt, but more especially because there was no means of getting the salt away. Experiments with lorries, which might at any rate have served to prevent the salt stocks from increasing, had proved that this method of transport was too costly.

This action of the Hungarians and Poles in blocking trade probably played no small part in preparing the stage for the final downfall of Carpatho Ukraine. For it produced not only want but idleness, and the two combined gave the extremist agitator, whether Ukrainian or foreign, just the stage he needed. There is little doubt that their action was carefully calculated. The Hungarian frontier had never been opened since the Vienna Award. Trains had been promised many times, but each time just as they were to start running there was a new frontier clash, and on account of this the Hungarians would cancel all the plans. Not only did it mean that the province could not export to Hungary, but also, as the only line to the west passed through Hungarian territory, that no rail communication was possible with other parts of the Republic. The three lines that lead across the Car-

pathians into Poland, and so to the port of Gdynia, had by this time also been closed. The Polish authorities had somewhat speciously declared first one line and then another unfit for traffic. The bridges were falling down, they said, or the track was loose, and repairs would take months, if not years, to effect.

One of the few sure means of subsistence at this time of crisis was having a relation abroad. For with a flourishing black exchange market in existence holders of foreign currency were rich people. The price of the pound sterling, for instance, had always been round one hundred and thirty-seven crowns in a bank, but privately it would fetch very much more. The chief buyers were Jews or other accepted enemies of Germany who, ever since the threat of invasion in May 1938, had been increasingly eager to leave the country, but who, if they did so, could not take their money with them. Thus, the price of the pound sold privately, which in June 1938 was round two hundred crowns, had by January last risen to four hundred crowns, and by March to the neighbourhood of seven hundred crowns. In Slatina alone nearly fifteen families managed to live by selling, on this black market, the small sums of money they received from relatives in England. One girl, hearing that England was an eldorado for domestic servants, had set off to seek her fortune. Unlike most imagined eldorados, England fully came up to expectations. Within three months there were fifteen other girls from Slatina in England too. Each was sending home from one to two pounds a month, and with this to supplement their own incomes the family managed to live quite comfortably. Much money also came to Carpatho Ukraine from local inhabitants' relations in America,

where there are over 500,000 Ukrainians, and in Canada.

Some fifteen miles to the west of Chust lay the small town of Sevlus. It soon became more familiar to me than any other town in Carpatho Ukraine, with the exception of Chust, for it was here that C was banished to hospital. It was a pleasant place, lying to the south of a steep hill at the point where the Tisza valley spread out into the great plain. All over the hill were terraced vineyards, some adorned with queer little "Gothic" and "Classical" summerhouses born of the fantasy of their owners, while the flat water-meadows beyond the town were studded with groups of walnut-trees. The town itself consisted of one long street, with side streets running off it at right-angles, and most of the houses, one-storied and built in the florid 'eighties, were the usual temples of ferny gloom. But the pleasant first impression of the place was further enhanced by a spacious eighteenth-century house, set in a park full of lilac and syringas, the home of an Hungarian magnate, and by a big whitewashed Gothic church, the only authentic Gothic church that I saw anywhere in Carpatho Ukraine.

The Gothic church was a surprise. For in south-eastern Europe practically every Gothic building was destroyed by the Turks during their two hundred years' occupation. From 1526 to 1697 the Turks did, in fact, control Sevlus and other parts of Carpatho Ukraine. But they were there as friends not as conquerors, having been called in to help Jan Zapoly, the local overlord, in his revolt against the Emperor Ferdinand I, and it was due to this fact that the church was preserved. The "Turkish" house, a curious rectangular building in faintly Turkish style, is still

pointed out by romantic local historians as being the place in which one of the local governors kept his harem.

The Sevlus hospital was a State institution. It consisted of a series of whitewashed bungalows with fretworked gables standing in a damp tree-shaded enclosure on the outskirts of the town. The Czech stomach specialist to whom C had been recommended turned out to be a gynæcologist. This fact was hardly reassuring to begin with. Then there was the appearance of the waiting-room, which looked like a scene from the Congo, with fierce horns of every shape and size jutting out from the walls, and exotic ferns clustered thickly about on tripods, from between which grimy, unkempt patients, more like animals than humans, peered furtively at each new arrival. My mistrust was soon further heightened, for some of the rooms in the hospital itself were even less modern or hygienic. Take the lavatories for instance; they all had brown walls, the majority of the local inhabitants who frequented the hospital preferring their fingers to paper and a subsequent rub on the wall to a wash. But this was not the worst inconvenience. After C had been in the hospital for three weeks the Ukrainian authorities decided that too many Czechs were employed there. The doctors were forced to dismiss half of the excellent Czech nurses and take raw, untrained Ukrainian girls in their stead. The new recruits, all ardent members of the Sitch, could cry "Slava Ukrajini" to perfection, but they did not even know how to put a pillow-case on to a pillow correctly, and far less how to take a patient's temperature. However, the doctors were excellent, and in spite of all, C made a steady recovery. Also his English came to birth. Weeks of study at Berlitz schools and at

home had produced no great result. In the hospital, however, in the presence only of convinced Czechs and Ukrainians, with both of whom Poland was unpopular, he was afraid to speak a word of Polish. English became the only possible medium of communication between us.

In Carpatho Ukraine C's Polish nationality was a source of constant embarrassment to him, and several times nearly landed us in trouble. On one occasion we were travelling in the train near Rachov. C, having taken various photographs of the mountains, also took a quick snap of the Duma concentration camp. A railway policeman immediately came forward and asked for his papers. Although a Ukrainian he could scarcely read the official photographer's card. He seemed satisfied, however, and, saluting politely, apologized for the interruption, excusing himself on the ground that C "might have been a Pole," of whom he said there were a great many spying about! He then sat down with us and became very friendly. I was eager to be rid of him, feeling that to talk to him when we had in amusing fashion just escaped what might have been an awkward situation was to tempt providence. But C, bound by the canon of Polish politeness, said that agreeableness called for agreeableness in return, and that we certainly should not shake him off. Only trouble elsewhere in the train eventually rid us of him.

Not far along the street from the hospital was the Polish Consulate. It was the only Polish Consulate in Carpatho Ukraine and should thus by rights have been in Chust with the German and Rumanian Consulates. There being no Polish subjects in the province it was not clear what regular work there could be for a Polish Consul—other than that of pray-

ing for the collapse of the autonomous province and for its incorporation with Hungary—and Father Volosin, it is said, had been extremely unwilling to grant the Consul an *exequatur*. To the entreaties of the Polish official who had been sent to negotiate with him he replied only in monosyllables until, his resistance finally worn down, he closed the interview with a laconic “Let there be a Consulate”. Subsequently he stated that there was no accommodation suitable for a Consulate in Chust, and had banished it out of sight in Sevlus. There the Consul, who had acquired much knowledge of the Ukrainian question at Kiev, had made an attractive flat and office out of a series of rooms he had hired in the house of a small Hungarian noble. Life cannot have been cheerful for him. From behind the curtains that protected his bedroom doors and window peeped out steel trellis-shutters, while beside his bed was a loaded revolver. Before the front door sentinels stood perpetual guard, nominally to protect the Consulate, but in fact to take stock of all who enjoyed the Consul’s charming hospitality and telephone reports to Chust.

One afternoon while waiting for the train to take me back to Chust I went to see the magazine of the Tobacco Monopoly. My attention had several times been attracted by the sight of peasants struggling through the snow with big wooden stretchers piled high with brown bundles, but it had not occurred to me, there in the snow, that the bundles could be tobacco leaves.

Tobacco has, in fact, been grown in the Sevlus district in small quantities since time immemorial. In bygone days the peasants themselves used to roll the leaves into simple cigars. But a few years ago, when Great Britain reduced her sugar imports from Czecho-

slovakia, the cultivation of tobacco received a great impetus. The Government was faced with the immediate necessity of finding a substitute crop for the sugar beet which the peasants had hitherto been encouraged to produce, and one of the crops they decided on was tobacco. A Tobacco Board was founded and given complete control over production quotas for the various districts and for individuals, and also over prices.

The magazine and its attendant offices consisted of a splendid series of modern buildings erected by the Czechs on the outskirts of the town and not far from the hospital. The magazine was not beautiful, but its imposing six stories, and the height and solid girth of two Czech-built silos standing on an adjacent site, suggested an order and vitality, a present-day "awareness", rarely found in that corner of Europe.

The Czech official who took me round the magazine gave me an outline of the life of tobacco. The harvest, as I had already learnt in Slovakia, comes at the end of August. The leaves, which are usually about two feet long, are picked and hung up to dry in big communal drying houses built out in the fields. These drying houses, in the shape of barns, have walls built of wide spaced poles which allow the wind and air to circulate freely round the leaves. These are threaded on to strings stretched across the barn. Early in November, when the weather begins to get damp and foggy, the leaves are graded by their owners and gradually taken to the magazine.

In the hall which we first visited the tobacco was being received, weighed and graded by the Tobacco Board officials. As the peasants tipped the contents of a tray on to the scales, the weighman called out the

weight and the tester, quickly picking up one or two bundles of leaves, beat them over his arm, smelt them, and decided what class they were worth. Thence the bundles were taken into a ground floor storeroom and split up. The leaves were arranged into piles by deft fingered women, working at incredible speed. These piles, some six feet in height, reached the whole length of the room. The scene reminded me of a giant ant-heap, and the smell of tobacco, already pungent enough in the hall, was now so strong as to be almost suffocating. The women, I was told, could only acclimatize themselves to the work slowly, and small wonder, I thought!

Pushed into the middle of each row of leaves were big thermometers on the end of stout sticks. The leaves, when piled up, gradually increase in temperature and moisture, and each time the temperature rises above a certain level the pile must be taken down and re-made in another place, the heat being released in the process. A pile, when re-made, is taken one floor higher up in the building. One pile that we inspected had been moved up five floors in eight weeks, but in damp weather the piles increase their heat very quickly and can usually be left standing only for about a week. At each removal, however, the speed of heating diminishes. By the end of March the annual work is finished. The leaves are by then quite dry. They are pressed into huge bales and are ready for transport to the factories.

Tobacco from the Sevlus district is not of a fine quality and can be used only for pipe tobacco, or for mixing with imported tobacco for the manufacture of low-grade cigarettes. Not more than ten per cent of it can be used even in *Vlastas*, the cheapest Czechoslovak cigarettes. But the Government's scheme has worked

well, and the average price received by a peasant for a one-acre crop of tobacco is £26.

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The story of the Jasina revolt of 1919 to which reference has already been made (pp. 61 and 66), was a tiny historical episode of its own—with more of the ingredients of saga and legend than any other isolated historical happening of modern times.

The revolt was led by a group of young students of whom the most important were the three brothers Klempus, Vasil, Ivan and Dmitro, Stefan Klotchurak and one Alexei Motcherniak. Ivan Klempus, who had been in close touch with the Ukrainians in Galicia, went thither early in January to try and obtain military help from them, while Dmitro, who was a soldier, was commissioned to study the local Hungarian army, with a view to seeing how it could most easily be disarmed. Dmitro worked quickly, and on 8 January, a force of 160 local lads attacked and disarmed the Hungarians, and seized control of Jasina. A mass meeting followed by the bridge and all the inhabitants proclaimed their allegiance to the Ukrainian State.

The next objective was Rachov. A spy, a young widow who later married Vasil Klempus, was sent down the valley to discover the strength of the Hungarians encamped there. The spy was caught and sentenced to death, but later her life was exchanged for that of two Hungarians who had been taken as hostages. When she arrived back she reported that the Hungarians were very weak, so the Huculs at once started moving. They had nothing to wear but their local sheepskin coats, and the force included every male in Jasina. They captured all the villages easily

enough and advanced to the outskirts of Rachov without loss of life. Then there was a good deal of shooting and, it seems, a certain element of musical comedy. Vasil Klempus went to a telephone, rang up the commander in Jasina and requested that the Hungarians should retire. The commander, surprised by these new methods, or ignorant as to the strength of the Huculs, at once agreed to do so.

The capture of Rachov meant the acquisition not only of large numbers of new rifles and recruits but also of a number of badly needed machine-guns. The Huculs pursued their victorious course so quickly that within a few days they were already within striking distance of Marmoros Sziged. The Hungarian military commander then summoned the rebel leaders to come and negotiate. On January 26 Vasil Klempus went to Marmoros Sziged, but the Hungarians, finding him intransigent, threw him into gaol. This precipitated the Huculs' first tactical error. They advanced on Marmoros Sziged and captured it. But peasants were not the people best qualified to manage a town with a large urban population of Hungarians and Jews. Besides, they had weakened their strategic position for the town was across the river Tisza. The Rumanians, who had long wanted to seize Marmoros Sziged but had not dared to do so, saw their opportunity, brought up a whole division and, after a long and fierce battle, forced the Huculs to retreat leaving twenty-six dead and over three hundred prisoners. The Rumanians, the new enemy, drove the Huculs up the valley again, and advanced as far as Rachov in a few days. But they were then occupied with war against the new Bolshevik régime in Hungary and had no more force to waste on what they considered to be only a few mountaineers.

The Huculs meanwhile set to work to organize an independent State. They elected a kind of Parliament of forty-two members, including two Jews and two Hungarians, and appointed four ministers, local Huculs, to deal with military, economic and home affairs and also feeding. The Ministry of Food was, curiously enough, the most important, and the food question presented serious difficulties. The Huculs managed to exchange wood spirit for food.

The Republic lasted until the end of 1919, when the Rumanians captured Jasina. The Klempus's ran away, but their father got left behind, and is said to have been beaten to death by the Rumanians.

# 6

THERE was a loud banging on my bedroom door. A man from the police-station said that Bilej wanted to see me. I had no idea what it might be about, and all the possibilities I considered seemed very unlikely. But I felt uncomfortable all the same. I gave the address of our Consul in Bratislava to an American colleague, and asked him to telephone to the Consul should I not be back by lunch-time. Bilej, the Police Director, was standing in the hall of the office in a magnificent green and gold uniform. His assistant, a humourless man with thin lips and pince-nez, who used to act as interpreter for us, was there too. We all went into the grandest room, sat down in big leather arm-chairs and looked very solemn.

“The Police Director wants to ask you a few painful questions,” said the interpreter.

“What exactly are you doing here?” was the first question.

“You know I am writing a book,” I replied.

“What is your profession?”

I saw at once that he had the inevitable suspicion of all itinerant Englishmen, and that he thought I was a spy. I was only apprehensive then that he might expel me, as he had done an apparently harmless American film reporter. I saw the discomfort of the last few weeks thrown away for nothing, and already pictured myself climbing into the omnibus again and setting out west where no definite work awaited me.

"I am a journalist by profession," I said, "but for the moment I am trying to get some general idea of Carpatho Ukraine. Are you perhaps worried about the telegram I sent yesterday to a Polish woman?"

I regretted my remark at once for I saw that his spies had not told him about the telegram, and the confession would probably only add another black mark to my name. However, he quickly brushed aside my question and came nearer to the point.

"What exactly were you doing in Jasina?"

I gave a truthful account. The cart journeys certainly sounded harmless enough.

"I have a report from Jasina that while you were there you showed an undue interest in the Orthodox Church. In fact you have done so ever since you came here."

He was so far afield that I smiled.

"I don't know where you have got your information from," I said, "but I have not spoken to one Orthodox priest since I came here. I do not usually ask people I am talking to what their religion is, but I don't think I have spoken to any member of the Church. I am going to see the Orthodox Bishop this morning, as you may already know."

"It has also been reported that in Jasina you had a meeting with a Polish agent," he went on. This was so absurd that I laughed outright. Bilej looked very solemn.

"That's impossible," I assured him, "at least I certainly did not do so wittingly. I will tell you whom I saw; Nikendaj, Hurka, Klempus and Baczynski. I know Baczynski is not—well not exactly pro-Ukrainian, but still I don't think he could be a Polish agent. I must say I am very curious now to know which of these gentlemen was masquerading under false colours!"

At first he was still dubious and started explaining that none of these could have been agents. Then it seemed to occur to him that he was on a false trail and he became less serious. I told him about the school director's reception, and suggested that all the trouble was probably due to that. Soon we seemed to be on quite friendly terms.

Then came a barbed thrust.

"You have not been in very close touch with 'us' since you came here. Major Moss,<sup>1</sup> when he was here, worked very closely with us and gave no trouble at all."

"I only wish I could often talk to you," I said, "but unfortunately we have no common language."

In the end he patted me on the back and said he hoped I had not thought that he suspected me of being a spy or anything like that. But I was to notify him in advance when I was going to make any more journeys, so that if he got reports from the gendarmes he would know that he could discount them. I did not think that this showed much *nous* on the part of the police-officers, and on reflection I wondered whether the whole interview might merely have been staged with the object of warning me that visits by foreigners to the Polish Consulate, where I had lunched two days previously, were not desired.

Later I learnt what was perhaps the true explanation. There were in Jasina two youths of nineteen who had received at Chust a fortnight's training, as detectives, and their job was to look for foreign agents. They were obliged to send a weekly report to Chust, and often they had nothing to put in it. So everyone in Jasina wondered whether it would be his turn next to be reported, and perhaps this time it had been mine.

<sup>1</sup> The novelist, who had been touring Carpatho Ukraine in a caravan.

Out in the street again I saw six peasants being bundled out of a military lorry. They had on their white frieze coats bound with blue braid and over their shoulders linen bags filled with pots. Then I saw that they were bound together two by two with chains round their wrists, and were being led off to the prison. I thought it was rather an object lesson.

After Bilej's gentle hint that I ought to keep in closer touch with "them", I made an appointment with Fedor Revay for the afternoon. Fedor Revay, elder brother of the Minister, was an important man in Chust. President of the Ukrainian National Council, one of the three national councils in Carpatho Ukraine which had a hand in deciding the fate of the country in 1919, and which still exists, he was now President of the Government political party as well. By profession a printer, he had before the troubles managed a small works in Uzhorod, but they had failed. Then it had been his good fortune to receive the directorship of the new State printing works in Chust at 5,000 crowns (£35) a month, a very big salary in Chust.

I was received by him in the works, a one-storied white building occupied until the recent confiscation by the Jewish high school. He was a heavy, stoutish man with a pendant face enlivened now and then by a humorous smile. He could speak quite good German, but like so many people in Carpatho Ukraine he preferred to have an interpreter lest he should "give me any false impressions". The interpreter, however, spoke much worse English even than Revay, and eventually Revay and I got on splendidly in German.

It proved as difficult to get anything out of Revay as out of other leading Ukrainians in Chust. But here is some account of our talk :

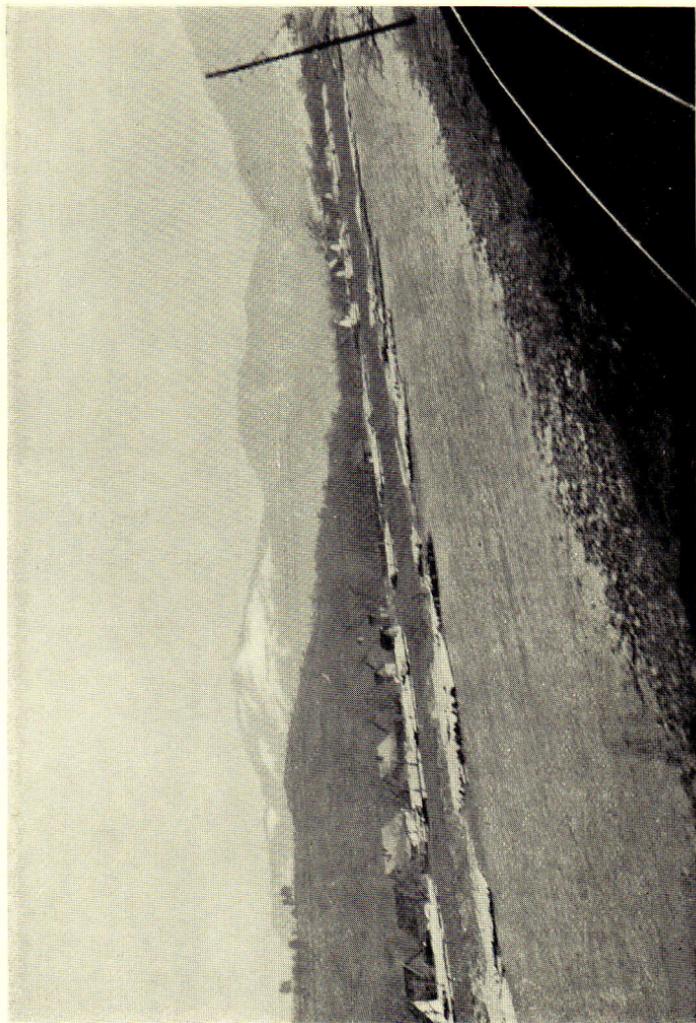
SELF: "Could you tell me what programme UNO (Government party) has beside that of promoting the Great Ukrainian idea?"

REVAY: "It has got a fully worked-out plan for every sphere of life, for the economic development of the country, for social improvements, for raising the level of culture, for public works and so forth."

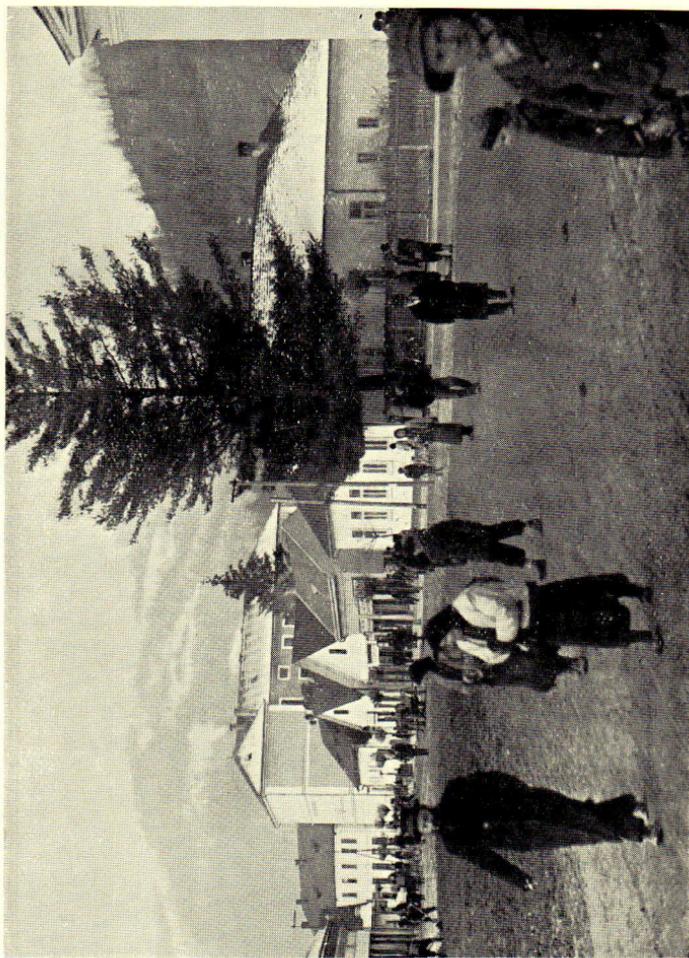
SELF: "Could we be a little more precise about this? I feel it is a very important question, for if Carpatho Ukraine were to become a kind of little paradise it would serve as a splendid magnet for the other parts of the Ukraine now included in Poland, Rumania and Russia. Let us take, for instance, the question of agricultural development. What exactly is proposed in this direction?"

REVAY (*like a ship in full sail*): "We are going to tackle the question both of the mountain pastures and of the plains. We are going to increase production and raise its standard. We are going to raise the level of prices and to improve the conditions of the worker and his hopes for the future. We are going to put everything on a sound economic basis. . . ."

SELF (*beginning to feel that the end was further away than ever*): "Could you please tell me exactly by what methods you propose to do this? As far as the mountain pastures go I know what the present conditions are. Peasants may graze a horse there for the season for forty crowns, a cow for thirty-five crowns, and a sheep for fifteen crowns. They go up to fetch the milk once a week and sell it in the valley. How are you going to alter this system?"



*Lumber rafts held up by the closed Hungarian frontier (see p. 97)*



*Rachov*

Here the interpreter, who had the townsman's easy inclination to attribute all troubles to the Jews, intervened.

"They are going to be taken out of Jewish ownership," he said shortly.

SELF: "But the mountain pastures are State property."

Here Revay intervened and squashed the interpreter. Then there was a long pause.

SELF: "Well, what is going to be done to alter this bad system?"

REVAY (*becoming suddenly more reasonable*): "We are going to alter the system of marketing. At present the peasant markets his produce himself. He can sell only a small part of it and always gets a bad price. We are now going to organize the sale of milk, butter, cheese and other farm produce on a co-operative basis."

There was the answer in a few words. But it had taken a lot of getting. Colleagues told me that eminent persons whom they interviewed nearly always talked in this fashion, doubtless because they had not got any definite plans worked out yet. Maybe this was so.

I then asked Revay what he thought were the chances for the Great Ukraine.

"We have so many enemies abroad that I'd rather not discuss that question," he replied shortly.

But he soon came round to it from a different angle by inquiring what information I had had about Carpatho Ukraine before coming there, and from what sources I had acquired it. It was probably false, he said, and if it came from the British press it was certainly tainted by self-interest as well.

Revey, and all the rest of the group that worked in close co-operation with the more active Germans, believed that England was definitely opposed to the Great Ukraine idea, and consequently anticipated hostility from every Englishman. I insisted that England would never go to war about the Ukraine question, that she was (as I then believed) disinterested in Eastern Europe, and that she only wanted peace and would certainly not fight a preventive war. But he was not to be convinced.

"As England has interests in every corner of the world," Revey said, "she cannot be disinterested in any one part of it, least of all in this—for it is clear that she must feel that the creation of a Great Ukraine would be unfortunate for her in the future. Germany and a Great Ukraine would be a formidable combination that could well deal England a very nasty blow."

"English policy," he concluded, "is selfish and illogical. If England were logical she would force Poland, a state with seven million Ukrainians, two and a half million Germans, as well as Lithuanians and White Ruthenians, to partition herself, just as she forced the break-up of Czechoslovakia. That's what she ought to do. But she won't, for she is afraid of us Ukrainians, and, as always, wants to put a spoke in Germany's wheel."

Then I went on to see the Orthodox Bishop. His "palace", an enlarged edition of a peasant's cottage, was next to a little blue onion-domed church on the outskirts of Chust. I was welcomed by the old Archimandrite, whom I remembered from my first visit, and a young priest. The priest, who had the delicate features and lithe swaying gestures of a woman, and whose long chestnut hair was done up in

a bun at the back of his head, led me down a gallery to the Bishop's bed-sitting-room.

It was the most pleasantly furnished room in Chust. There were a big sofa and two wing chairs covered with blue velvet, and a deep arm-chair. On the floor was a finely woven tapestry carpet, and there were more on the walls, while in the corner was a fine ikon surrounded with embroideries. Clerical austerity was limited to a white enamel washstand.

The Bishop, a huge man with a long black beard, rose, locked the outer door of the ante-room, looked all round it for possible eavesdroppers, and locked the door of the room in which we were sitting. Then he drew his robes about him, settled down in the arm-chair and sat toying with a jewelled medallion of the Virgin that hung on a gold chain round his neck. Though the atmosphere appeared outwardly calm there was battle in the air even here. The Bishop did not want to discuss politics, he said. But he added almost in the same breath that the Orthodox Church was of course violently opposed to the régime—how could one expect it to be anything else, he asked, as Revay had announced in a recent speech that the Government would only support the Greek Catholic Church? The priests were constantly being tampered with. Those who were at the meeting of the committee that was to draw up an Orthodox list for the elections had of course been seized and thrown into gaol, and only the day before there had been a new piece of chicanery. Telegrams had been sent out by the authorities summoning various priests to “a meeting of Orthodox priests in Chust”. Not all of them had come, but the twenty who did arrive were shepherded into the Koruna Hotel and there forced to sign a declaration of allegiance to the Government.

This explained the unwonted visitors that I had myself seen in the Koruna that morning; a group of young and rather dazed priests sitting round a table and watched over by two Sitch men with revolvers at their hips.

Then the Bishop went to fetch the Archimandrite, who, apparently, was more expert than he in local history. At first the long white beard of the Archimandrite and the baldness of his head, save for the uncut grey-brown hair which he wore hanging down his back in the manner peculiar to Orthodox priests, made him seem very old. He sat down on the sofa.

"Could the Archimandrite tell me anything about Kabaljuk," I asked the Bishop.

The Bishop swept out his arm towards the sofa.

"This is he," he said.

It was a dramatic moment. I had read about Kabaljuk, a kind of Ruthenian Savonarola and bitter enemy of the Ukrainians, whose preaching in the years shortly before the War had swept thousands of Ruthenian peasants into the Orthodox Church, but I had imagined him only as an historical figure. Possibly this was because in 1914 his career had been cut short and he disappeared into a Hungarian prison.

In my bewilderment I looked closer at him and saw that my original estimate as to his age was quite wrong. His eyes were as bright and alive as a child's, and he could scarcely have been more than fifty years of age. While the Bishop and I were talking he sat there all the time turning a thick black cord rosary. He understood only a little French, but if he gleaned anything that pleased him or awakened his imagination he would start gently purring. He did not say much, but when prompted to do so he would go off

into a flow of energetic language. Then he would stop as suddenly as he had begun.

"Many times when I was preaching I had to go about in disguise," he said, "often as a Jew or a beggar. Once when I was coming from the old frontier down to Chust I had to go into the forest three times to change my make-up." I asked him what times were like now. He only smiled and then started to turn his rosary again.

. . . . .

Next day I learnt that while I was with the Bishop an attempt had been made on the life of General Prchala. The General, who had been in conference with Father Volosin, was walking along the corridor on the way to his car, when a Sitch lad stepped forward and fired three shots at him at point-blank range. Fortunately all the shots were fairly wide of their mark, and the bullets buried themselves in the wall. Prchala, with unruffled dignity, continued his way downstairs. Whether the lad had been stirred by Ukrainian propaganda and felt that in shooting the General he would be serving the national cause, or whether his action had been inspired by others it was impossible to tell. The latter story was the most widely believed, and colour was lent to it by the fact that official circles not only failed to give any account of the affair, but even refused to admit that it had taken place.

The Czechs in Prague now felt that one of their actions had been justified. Before General Prchala had left for Chust to assume his duties as Minister they had insisted that his life should be insured, and that the Chust Government should pay the premium!

# 7

THE feud between the Ukrainians and the Orthodox Church, which has always been closely allied with the Great Russian political movement, is not a new one. Moreover, it is one of the most important of the many feuds that divide this tiny land. With its history is bound up the whole story of the development of national consciousness in Carpatho Ukraine in the last hundred years.

The story is long and complicated, and has been told in many different ways so as to suit the politics of various nationalist writers. Lest the reader is still uncertain as to the exact difference between a Ukrainian and a Ruthenian, here is a brief outline of the history of Carpatho Ukraine from the point of view of national consciousness.

For many centuries the people of Carpatho Ukraine—in common with the inhabitants of the area now claimed for the Great Ukraine—were known as Little Russians or Ruthenians (a word adapted from the German *Ruthener*), and were said to form one of the three branches of the Russian race; Great Russians, Little Russians and White Russians. The Ruthenians were backward people living in the mountains and forests, cut off from their fellow Ruthenians in the north by the crest of the Carpathians. They attracted no outside attention, appearing merely as one of the smaller and least important groups of Slavs situated

within the confines of the vast and ramshackle Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Then the Russians, whose ambition was always to expand south as far as Constantinople, saw in these Ruthenians a possible lever for acquiring a first foothold beyond the Carpathians, and a Pan-Russian movement was fostered in Carpatho Ukraine, having as its ultimate object the annexation of the province to Russia. The first step was taken in 1843 when a certain M. Pogodine travelled through Carpatho Ukraine and made contacts with local people who favoured the Pan-Russian idea. By 1860 we find the headquarters of the movement in Vienna, where several propagandist newspapers in the Russian language had been founded, while propagandists were working all over the province, minimizing the difference between Little Russians and Great Russians and spreading an interest in Russian literature and culture. The patriotic writings of Dukhnovic, a local poet who became one of the prophets of the movement, were in a language that differed scarcely at all from pure Russian. Then, towards the close of the century the supreme control fell into the hands of a Count Vladimir Bobrinskij, President of the Galician-Russian Society, a Pan-Russian of tremendous enthusiasm, but as later events showed, little prudence. Bobrinskij was dissatisfied with the progress of the movement, which up till then had attracted followers only from among the students and intellectuals and was almost unknown to the peasantry. He decided that the only way to arouse the interest of the thousands of illiterate peasants was through religion. A ready instrument was at hand in the Orthodox Church. As the Tsar was Supreme Head of the Orthodox Church, the words Orthodox and Russian were often synonymous

in the peasant mind, and a convert to Orthodoxy, therefore, would be virtually a convert to the Pan-Russian movement.

Bobrinskij discovered a certain Alexis Kabaljuk, a butcher's assistant, with a natural aptitude for preaching, trained him and sent him out to preach Orthodoxy in the countryside. Kabaljuk had tremendous success and whole villages, the most noteworthy being Iza, close to Chust, went back from Greek Catholicism to Orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian Government then came down with a heavy hand. Iza and other villages were completely devastated, and an *agent provocateur* was able with little difficulty, to extract from the enthusiastic and verbose Bobrinsky all the details of the organization. The result was the famous trial at Marmoros Sziged in 1913-14, whereby Kabaljuk and ninety-four peasants were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The Ukrainian movement in Carpatho Ukraine is of comparatively recent growth. It sprang from a declaration made in the Vienna Diet at the close of the last century by M. Barvinskij and a group of Ruthenian deputies from Eastern Galicia, to the effect

<sup>1</sup> The idea of battling for the allegiance of the peasantry through religion is no new one in eastern Europe. All through the late Middle Ages the Poles and the Russians were disputing the vague confines of their territory. Behind Russia stood the Orthodox, behind Poland the Roman Catholic Church, and then, as now, to win the peasant's soul usually meant to win his national consciousness as well. In 1563 Polonism won a signal victory. The Orthodox Bishops of south-eastern Poland signed a Union at Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholic Church. The Orthodox were to acknowledge the Pope, and to recognize the supremacy of Rome in all questions of dogma. On the other hand they were to retain their own rite, the much revered "old Slav" liturgy, and to be allowed independence in matters of habit or custom. A belief in the Immaculate Conception or Papal Infallibility, for instance, are regarded as questions of dogma, the marriage of priests or the use of certain coloured altarcloths are matters of custom. The Bishops and their followers were in future known as Greek Catholics, or, more correctly, Roman Catholics of the Eastern rite. They were always regarded with suspicion by the Russians, and in 1863 all those who were living in the part of Poland then in Russian captivity, were "received" or forced back into the Orthodox Church.

that they no longer considered themselves as belonging to one of the three branches of the Russian family, but as members of a Slav race that was completely individual (see pp. 8-9). Members of this group, in order to differentiate themselves from the Ruthenians, began to refer to themselves as Ukrainians, a term invented long ago by the Poles and meaning people who lived "on the frontiers" (*u. granicy*). For their literature they began to employ exclusively the language of Kiev, which came to be accepted as pure Ukrainian.

Barvinskij's propaganda soon began to spread across the Carpathians, but on the south side, in Carpatho Ukraine, it had markedly less success. The Hungarians endeavoured to close the frontier between Eastern Galicia and Carpatho Ukraine to any persons who might be propagandists, and repressed all attempts at expression within the province itself. The League of Saint Basil managed to issue a number of religious and school books in a language that was a mixture of Old Slav and Ukrainian, but no Ukrainian cultural organization was allowed. The only newspapers published in Ukrainian were *Nauka* (*Science*), a weekly organ edited by Father Volosin, then director of a priests' seminary at Uzhorod, and an agricultural sheet produced in Budapest. There was no writer of even local importance using the Ukrainian language.

The movement in Carpatho Ukraine, as far as one can make out now, had no pronounced political programme, and in the years immediately before the War it was growing gradually weaker.

. . . . .

At the close of the War the leaders both of the Great Russian and of the Ukrainian movements

claimed to represent the people of the province. The Great Russians formed a National Council at Presov, and advocated union with the new state of Czechoslovakia; the Ukrainians formed a National Council at Chust and proposed affiliation with a Great Ukraine; while a third National Council at Uzhorod, consisting of Magyarophil Great Russians, wanted the province to remain with Hungary. Finally, as a result of the efforts of M. Zatkovic, a member of the powerful Ruthenian National Council in the United States, the Members of the three Councils in Carpatho Ukraine were persuaded to unite together at Uzhorod. There, on 16 May, 1918, they voted unanimously for union with Czechoslovakia.

The Great Russian group in Carpatho Ukraine found itself in an awkward position. The hated Hungarian rule had ended, only to be replaced by Czech rule, while the Russia of the old days had disappeared for ever. The group divided into several subsections, but the general policy was to demand provincial autonomy within the framework of the Czechoslovak State, and to continue to look towards Russia linguistically and culturally. Its enmity with the Ukrainians naturally continued, and was even intensified, for, whereas before the War the chance of creating a Great Ukraine had been very remote, it had now become appreciably nearer.

The Ukrainians emerged from the War greatly strengthened. A Ukrainian State had narrowly missed being formed to the north of the Carpathians, and the movement had become actual.

The Czechs, the new rulers, in contrast to the Hungarians (as was pointed out in the Introduction) pursued a policy not of suppression but of *divide et impera*, favouring first one group and then the other.

At first the Ukrainians seemed the least dangerous; for the Czechs feared territorial claims on the province both from the Poles and the Russians, and the Ukrainians clearly hated both. Ukrainian was made the language of instruction in the schools, and *Prosvita*, the newly founded Ukrainian cultural organization, received liberal subsidies and the gift of a magnificent new theatre in Uzhorod. Masaryk himself gave the organization a grant of 600,000 crowns.

In 1924 came the first important change of policy. Ukrainian ceased being the obligatory language of instruction, and a new series of rules were introduced, allowing individual teachers considerable latitude. The Czechs, like the Hungarians before the War, had decided to foster a local spirit, and a new grammar, written by Father Volosin, and purporting to be a grammar of the local Ruthenian dialect, was enforced wherever possible.

Twelve years later it was decided that the attempt to build up a new regionalism was moribund. A change was needed. The Ukrainians had by this time become very much stronger and the Ukrainian movement was becoming something of a menace. Russia, meanwhile, had clearly lost interest in a possible acquisition of Carpatho Ukraine. In 1936 a plebiscite was held, and parents were asked to vote on the question of the language of instruction in schools. The alternatives were Ukrainian and Russian. The voting went in favour of Russian. This, it is usually agreed however, gave an incorrect impression of the people's real desire. Even Czech teachers have admitted to me that the majority of the peasants, many of whom are practically illiterate, voted for "Russki" (Russian), under the impression they were voting for "Ruski" (meaning the local Ruthenian dialect).

Experts are universally agreed that the language of the district is a Ukrainian dialect and is almost identical with the dialect spoken on the north of the Carpathians in the Polish Ukraine.

The Orthodox Church, the mainstay of the Great Russian Movement, and arch-enemy of the Ukrainians has, since the War, increased its power to an unprecedented extent. Once the oppressive hand of the Hungarians was removed more converts were made in one month than in all the years of Kabaljuk's evangelism. The Czech Government with its policy of *divide et impera* certainly had no interest in suppressing this revival, and the wave of Orthodoxy that swept over the country was allowed to follow its own course. Before the War there were only 12,000 persons of Orthodox faith in Carpatho Ukraine; now there are approximately 150,000.

In most cases the change over was made very simply. A majority of the peasants in a village would announce their conversion to the Orthodox from the Greek Catholic faith, the priest would be bundled out and his place taken by another willingly supplied by the Orthodox bishop. In 1924 and 1925 (the time at which the Czechs were beginning to turn away from the Ukrainians) some one hundred and seventy villages went over in this way. The Greek Catholics claim that the movement had the full support of the Czechs, and that in many cases the priests were removed by force, lorries being sent to pack up their furniture and drive it away. The main allegation is without doubt true, but to what extent the tales of terrorism are to be believed it is hard to say.

A great outcry was raised and the Bishop of Munkacevo lodged an astute protest in Prague. He claimed that the churches were the property of the Church as

a whole and not of the parishioners, who therefore had no right to choose what sort of priest they would have. In January 1926, the Government replied that all churches which had changed hands since the War were to be handed back to the Greek Catholics progressively. This was fairly carried out, and the last of the churches was handed over in 1928. The Government, faithful to its policy of *divide et impera* gave a substantial subsidy to the Orthodox Church for the building of new churches.

# 8

RIGHT in the middle of Carpatho Ukraine lies Svalava. It was in the public eye for two reasons; firstly as a possible alternative capital to Chust; and secondly, as a reputed stronghold of the Great Russian movement. The omnibus which was to take me there should have left the railway station at twelve o'clock. By twelve-thirty there was no sign of it. No one knew whether it would eventually go, whether it had gone already, or even whether it ought to go at all. In reply to my inquiries, a gendarme, the stationmaster, and an officer who was sending off lorries laden with farm produce and mails, all denied any knowledge of it. Eventually it turned up at about one-fifteen, and then broke down three times on the journey. A full complement was sixteen persons sitting and nine standing, but actually we numbered far more. In my corner we were an oddly assorted party; a road mender with spades, two Czech soldiers, a Jew with side-curls who read a Yiddish newspaper all the time, a Sitch man in uniform, a huge gendarme with a little Jew on his lap, a Ukrainian peasant and myself. At first we all sat very glum, and it was only later, in face of constant engine trouble, that our tongues were loosened and we all became friendly. But in such mixed company we could only talk of the weather even then.

The country was not attractive; miles of great hills,

covered on their lower slopes with scrub beech. The only cheerful note was the deep blue cottages, which here had a naive distinction of their own. Local custom decreed that the front door side and the two ends should be painted blue, but that the back, which was at right angles to the road, should be left its natural earth colour and decorated with rows of big blue spots. Yards of coarse linen had been strung out on the fences to bleach. Higher up in the hills the cottages were not plastered at all.

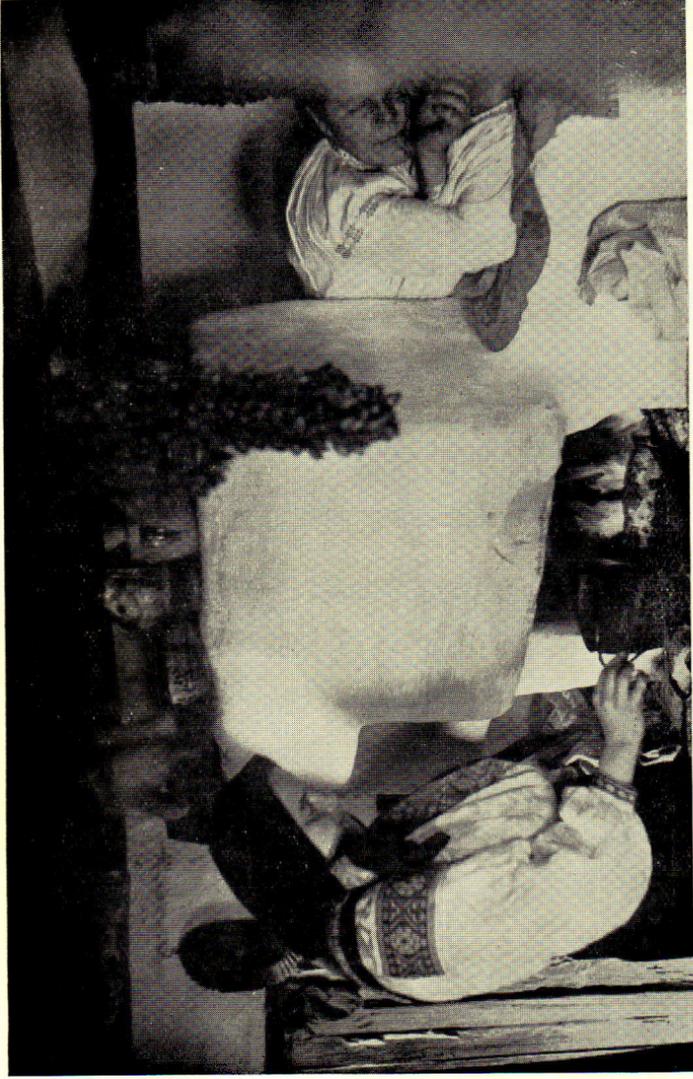
We bumped and swayed into Svalava at about four o'clock. The town seemed to be a long dirty street and nothing more. The house belonging to the Risdorfers, with whom I was to lodge, turned out to be just by the omnibus stop. Going round into a courtyard I found myself confronted, through a glass door that led off a verandah, by the opera singer from the Koruna. She was the sister of my hostess. My hostess herself was sitting just inside the door, but was having her hair cut and set by a child from the local hairdresser's, and appeared unable to move, much less to speak.

We went into a large salon, facing the street. It was decorated with six *étagères* on which were a collection of variegated ferns. Presently other people came in; the president of the local administration; Rohac from Chust; the elder Klempus, still in his sheepskin coat and Hucul shirt; Klotchurak, who was said to be destined for ministerial rank within a week; Risdorfer, who, besides being the local doctor, was head of the Government Party organization in Svalava, a candidate for the election to the Chamber which was to take place on the following Sunday, and the recently appointed Government Commissar in the Svalava factory for the production of timber by-

products, and one or two others. When we all sat down to tea—tea in glasses with slices of meat and grey bread—the conversation was mainly political. I felt as if I were in a den of conspirators. Any who were suspected of opposition to the régime, or of being out of sympathy with the leaders on any points, were marked down as people to be “ruthlessly eliminated”. As in Germany they were referred to as “dangers to the State,” and it seemed as if no treatment could be severe enough for them.

My hostess, who liked to play a political rôle, had a heated discussion with the president of the local administration. The president was complaining about Risdorfer's assistant. Not only had he worked for the Great Russian movement for the last ten years, but he had now even dared to be “impertinent” about the Great Ukraine movement. He must be dealt with. Risdorfer's wife said she had worked with him for twelve years on the Red Cross Committee and could vouch for him. He was a splendid doctor, had worked wholeheartedly for the Red Cross and had a wife and many children dependent upon him. Why must the president choose just this man to make an example of when there were so many others who would serve the purpose equally well? If he were sent to the concentration camp his family would starve. But the president was adamant; impertinence was inadmissible, the man must be publicly penalized.

Rohac came up and asked me whether I thought Commander Wedgwood-Benn, who had recently been in Chust, was in favour of a Great Ukraine. They were all hoping he was, for they very much wanted sympathy in the House of Commons. They badly needed the help of countries other than Ger-



*The top of a stove makes the warmest bed*



*A travelling companion*

many, he added, for they had no desire to become a German colony, whatever people might think.

"Didn't you ask him?" I said.

"Yes, of course we did, and he said he was in favour of it. But how can one know whether he was speaking the truth?"

That this was the first question they asked Commander Wedgwood-Benn is certain. It was the first question they asked all visitors, and it seemed to indicate the same lack of self-assurance in political matters as that which made their leading personalities dislike talking to anyone whom they thought might not be "in sympathy with us." Far from trying to convert a visitor who might not have been favourable, they would leave him right out in the cold. Both a British visiting correspondent and the correspondent of one of the leading French papers were on four different occasions promised interviews with Revay, but when they arrived they were invariably sent away again with some excuse; while an American correspondent was told that he would be able to obtain all the information that he required about Carpatho Ukraine from Kleiss!

How Wedgwood-Benn coped with the authorities I do not know, for I only saw him on the first evening of his twenty-four hours' stay. Coming back from the country, I found him seated with a Greek Catholic priest at a table in a small café in the town. The two men had no living language in common, and so the priest was reading the news from the local Ukrainian paper to him in Latin. "Hitler, bonus vir," I heard Wedgwood-Benn saying. The remark must have cost him a lot, I thought—or did I detect a note of irony in his voice?

Later I managed to steal out and have a look at

Svalava. The long street was bordered by white, grey and blue one-storied houses built in the period when ornament was more valued than comfort, while here and there were little blocks of modern flats. A short distance away from the street was the residential quarter with a pre-War colony for workmen employed in the factories, and a handful of modern villas in attractive gardens. There were four white churches, indicative of religious differences rather than of the size of the population, and some splendid modern administrative buildings and a very large school, put up by the Czechs. On a piece of waste ground at the end of the town was the Sokol House, belonging to the Czech gymnastic society, with a restaurant and a cinema. Music from a loud speaker on the roof blared out over Svalava, so that the Czechs held the air if nothing else. They probably also controlled Svalava's amusements, for I did not see even a café anywhere else. Svalava was on the whole a pleasanter place than Chust. It was better spaced and on all sides were attractive views of the tree-clad mountains.

When I got back to the Risdorfers everyone was still sitting round the table just as I had left them. Rohac and another man decided to go to the cinema. Good Ukrainians though they were, they had to go to the Sokol building for their entertainment. The rest of us followed. The film, which was beautifully clear, told of adventure and robbery on an Atlantic liner. For an hour it took me away from the dirt and intrigue of Carpatho Ukraine, and my pleasure in walking on the soft carpets of the ship, sitting in its comfortable chairs and talking to its attractive unpolitical passengers may have been vicarious, but it was none the less real. Then we came to the final kiss, the lights went up and I was back again on a hard wooden chair

in a dingy cinema gallery. All illusion vanished. We pushed down the narrow stairs and walked home through the slush and snow.

I went straight to bed on a couch that had been prepared for me in the salon. At midnight I was woken up by a heated political argument next door. One was always being woken up by politics in Carpatho Ukraine. At the hotel in Chust I was often roused in the night, usually a Saturday night, and even while I was half asleep would recognize the familiar drunken dialogue in the passage:

“You are a Ukrainian.”

“No, I am a Ruthenian.”

“What, you are a Ukrainian, yes?”

“I am a Ruthenian.”

“Come along; you—are—a—Ukrainian.”

Then at last the reply would come, drowsily and in bored fashion:

“All right, I am a Ukrainian.”

But at Svalava the argument was not so simple nor so quickly over. After about an hour it was broken by a banging at the window, and drunken voices demanding my hostess. Three young Germans from the factory were outside. Mrs. Risdorfer came in and handed them brandy out of the window. “They are my three special pets,” she said. I heard the pets being not very agreeable about England and the English, and I had a strong suspicion that Mrs. Risdorfer agreed with them.

Every room in the house was occupied that night. I was in the salon, two men were in a spare room, and two more were in the hall. In the morning I found there was a bath, the only real one I saw in Carpatho Ukraine. It was only accessible through the spare room and the Risdorfers’ room. One of the guests had

on a crochet nightcap, which he said prevented him catching cold. The other was sleeping without pyjamas. A doctor, he said, had told him that the time one catches cold is just at that moment in the morning when one is taking off one's pyjamas preparatory to putting on one's clothes, and that was the moment therefore that one must eliminate. Mrs. Risdorfer disappeared under a huge pile of feather pillows. The bathroom was decorated with three *étagères* of ferns.

At breakfast we were plunged into politics. A deputation of young peasants headed by a Greek Catholic priest arrived. They were from a neighbouring village and wanted to protest about the composition of the election committee there, which they said contained a majority of people sympathetic to Hungary. Presumably they wanted Ukrainians appointed so as to take no risks.

Feeling in need of a change of atmosphere, I decided to go and look at the wooden church at Bystry just outside Svalava. I crossed a small bridge at the end of the town, then a large expanse of grass with herds of geese, and climbed a hill between two rows of country cottages. It was already as if I were in a country village. A peasant who was driving two cows in a cart asked me how I liked his animals. I said I did not speak Ukrainian, to which he replied quickly that he did not either.

"I speak Russian, that is to say Little Russian, the language of our Ruthenia," he said.

Then I met another man who also said he was a Ruthenian. And how was it that I spoke "Slav", he asked me politely, not knowing what to call my language which by this time was such a mixture of Polish, Czech and Ukrainian that I did not know what

to call it myself. He said that the church, of which he appeared very proud, had been moved down the hill from another village some four hundred years ago. A film company had wanted to buy and remove it, but the people loved their church and had not agreed to sell it.

The church was in fact the best I had seen. It stood in a little churchyard above the road and was sheltered on three sides by a ring of tall lime-trees. It was tiny, only seventeen paces long and eight broad, while the chancel measured only some seven feet from ground to eaves and scarcely twice that from ground to roof apex. It was built in three sections, chancel, nave and tower, the order ascending towards the tower at the west end, and their deep shingled roofs came down almost to the ground. The tower had two bulbous domes, shingled like the roof, and from both chancel and nave roofs sprang little white boxes also supporting domes. Each dome bore a tall Orthodox cross. At the west end the projecting roof, supported by delicately carved pillars, formed a tiny verandah. While walls had weathered silver grey the tiles were in general rather darker, and the whole church was a study in grey shading which lent the woodwork added interest. The interior, which was practically dark, was lit by a few minute windows, scarcely a foot square, with their original roughly made glass. The building left me with the impression of something joyful, like the music of Mozart; and as I went down the steps to the road, I had a new and lively impression of the many different lines of the roofs, converging upwards into little domes and crosses in much the same way as various threads of melody are woven into an ordered fabric of sounds by the ingenuity of a master.

From Svalava I drove in a taxi down the valley to the monastery of Podhorajny, which lies on the outskirts of Munkacevo. The valley was broad and bordered with low hills covered with beech woods. On the way I visited Beregvar, the only large estate in the province. It is owned by an Austrian, Count Schönborn-Buchheim. The house is large and stands in a well-kept park with a drive bordered by neatly clipped beech hedges. So much order was quite unexpected. In the house was the hospital evacuated from Munkacevo when the Hungarians took over the town in November. The Schönborn family, one of the richest in Central Europe, once owned some 170,000 acres of the surrounding forests, but had sold them to a limited company.

My driver, like all other taxi drivers in Carpatho Ukraine, was a Jew and spoke German. He lamented the situation during the whole journey. Everything had been going all right for the last twenty years, he said, but in the last few months it had all been disorganized and no one knew what the future was going to bring. There had been hard days between 1930 and 1936, but they had been due to the economic crisis and the fall in price of timber. In 1937 prices had gone up again. The troubles now were of a very different order and business was at a complete standstill. Everyone was feeling the pinch. With the export of timber stopped no one had any money to spend and the small traders were as badly hit as the wage earners. Also anyone who happened to have money did not want to invest it but preferred to sleep on it. A lot of the unrest arose purely from this lack of work and economic disorganization. During the Czech period, the country had progressed three hundred per cent, he added. In the Hungarian times it had been a

lost land. It was the Czechs who had put the roads in order, built the bridges, taught the people to read, put up hospitals and so forth. I asked him if he thought the peasants appreciated the work of the Czechs. He thought very few had an active appreciation of it, but that the majority of them were well content under the Czech rule and did not want to have anything to do with a new movement which threatened to upset it.

The best way to approach Podhorajny, which lies slightly aside from the mouth of the valley, would have been through Munkacevo. But since the cession of Munkacevo to Hungary in November 1938, all the normal lines of communication in the district had been upset. We were obliged to take a rough by-pass, built by the Czechs, with their usual dogged acceptance of facts, which permitted travellers on the main east-west road skirting the bottom of the hills to circumvent the new frontier round Munkacevo, and, incidentally, to reach this main road from the Svalava-Munkacevo road. The by-pass went through Podhorajny.

At first we ran across the wet fields of the valley on a little embankment, and then skirted a cliff which fell steeply into a river. Suddenly we came on the monastery lying just where the cliff was giving way into a gentler slope covered with vineyards and beech woods. The monastery was a big square block of buff-coloured buildings in a simple baroque style, with the chapel standing slightly behind it. It looked out across the river at the suburbs of Munkacevo. I rang at the door and was admitted to a small waiting-room. A brother told me that I had chosen the monks' lunch-time to arrive and asked me to wait. It was bitterly cold in the little room and there was a strong smell of damp linen. Soon, however, the brother

came back with a large tray of food. Monks who had been working in the fields, and peasants wanting alms or help, passed by, and there was a constant coming and going of soldiers from the frontier guard who were billeted in some of the cells.

At length I was taken inside. As the brother who showed me round was an emigrant from Galicia we could talk Polish. The principal object of my visit was to see the ethnographical collection which had been evacuated from the museum in Munkacevo; but this did not give me the impression of having any particular value. I had already seen, in their natural setting, and in fact still in use, objects similar to many of those displayed. Interesting, however, was the large collection of the painted eggs which the peasants give to each other at Easter. Their design, like that of the cottages, varied with every valley and showed a large number of different influences. The only other points of interest were the refectory with the large pulpit in the centre from which a brother reads the scriptures during meals, and the chapel with its picture presented by one of the Popes and said to have come from Constantinople.

On the way back through the cloister we passed two young monks with black cowls over their heads and missals in their hands. They moved with a swaying walk and had the complacent smile of a middle-aged woman. In the garden outside a group of more active young monks, some of them not yet in robes and looking to have scarcely the sixteen years that is the minimum for entering the monastery, were chopping wood with great vigour and much merry laughter. "It's their gymnastics," the brother said. "We set them to chop wood three times a week to let them work off their energy." Had they really felt a call at that

age, I wondered, and, if so, could it have been a God-sent one?

. . . . .

The existing frontier ran through a village lying only a few hundred yards beyond the monastery. We walked along to the barrier and looked across into Hungary. The Czechs had made a temporary barrier but it was nevertheless a solid one. The Hungarians, on their side, however, forecasting correctly the future course of events, had only thrown a rough barrier of logs across the road. The actual frontier line ran diagonally over the cross roads and then cut a farm-yard in half. For the moment the peasant's hen might have been Hungarian, his cock Czechoslovak. The Frontier Demarcation Commission then sitting in Budapest was to rectify matters of details such as this. Whatever it could do in this direction, however, the general position seemed illogical.

This frontier resulted from the Vienna Award of November 1938. The Munich Agreement, it will be recalled, settled a basis for the delimitation of the new Czechoslovak-German frontier, but left open the question of the new frontiers with Poland and Hungary. They were to be settled by direct negotiations between the parties concerned. The Czechs wisely left the new autonomous governments of Slovakia and Ruthenia to negotiate with the Hungarians, for the common frontier with Hungary was with their parts of the country and not with the Czech districts. The Czechs thus avoided a likely cause for future recrimination. No decision could be reached, however, and the matter was finally submitted to Germany and Italy for arbitration.

The question was indeed difficult, for the population

was very mixed. During the hundreds of years previous to the War when both Slovakia and Ruthenia had been integral parts of Hungary, the Hungarians had been slowly pushing the autochthonous populations northward. The Hungarians, who in general had a higher level of culture, kept to the plains and the valleys and edged the local people up into the mountains. By 1914 the position was roughly that the Hungarians had swamped the southern part of the Slovak and Ruthenian plains, founded and dominated towns at the mouth of the valleys, and to some extent penetrated up the valleys themselves. These towns, such as Kosice in Slovakia, Uzhorod and Munkacevo in Ruthenia, were depots for the whole trade with the mountainous hinterland. The main lines of east-west communication skirted the mountains and at the same time connected the towns one with another. In 1919 the Hungarians had to surrender the whole of the two provinces. But there is no doubt that in 1938 Hitler would have liked to overlook the census of 1910, on which the new Czechoslovak-German frontier had been based, and award to Hungary only the southern part of the plain, retaining for Slovakia and Carpatho Ukraine not only the predominantly Slav mountains but a strip at their feet with the towns and the direct west-east communications as well. For by that time he was already vitally interested in Carpatho Ukraine which had value both as an outpost in the east and as a core for a possible future Great Ukraine. In fact, when M. Tiso, the new Slovak Prime Minister, returned from a visit to Herr Hitler in November, he brought to Bratislava an assurance that all the towns would remain in the Czechoslovak State.

Before the Award was made, however, Italian

diplomacy had been at work. Italy, who was an old ally of Hungary, pressed Hungary's claims. In the end Germany, which had gained so much, felt obliged to make some concession to her Axis partner, and Hungary was given the towns, to which on ethnographical grounds she had full claims. The resulting Hungarian Carpatho Ukrainian frontier has a curious line. It ran straight along through the plain with two long tongues shooting up north through purely Slav villages, their tips just encircling Uzhorod and Munkacevo. Hungarian pride may have been justified, but from the economic point of view the result was as disastrous for her as for Carpatho Ukraine.

To the north of Munkacevo the new frontier ran between an outlying suburb of the town and the town itself. This suburb, to which I drove, was a collection of little villas and a few shops and was absolutely dead. Previously its whole life had been directed towards Munkacevo; then it was left in the air. The branches of shops were cut off from their headquarters, there was no work for the occupants of the villas all of whom had previously been small Government officials or clerks in private undertakings, and no one to come out to the two attractive little garden restaurants. The frontier was a level crossing at the southern end of the houses. Across two ploughed fields I could see the town and smokeless chimneys of Munkacevo proper.

There the position was just as bad, if not worse. The population had fallen from 26,000 to 16,000 in three months. Whereas Munkacevo had previously been an important centre of trade it was then merely a frontier town, and one that lay not even on a straight frontier but up at the end of a tongue. The large body

of officials and lawyers who had previously worked there had been liquidated, and both sources of supply and markets had been cut off. Both masters and labourers were impoverished at a stroke. Everything was shutting down and even the cinemas only opened once a week. One of the worst temporary inconveniences was the almost complete lack of firing. All the stoves in Munkacevo were constructed to burn wood, but owing to the complete closing of the frontier the normal plentiful supply of cheap timber from the surrounding mountains had been shut off. The price had quadrupled.

The day I spent there was the first on which the frontier had been open. Nearly a hundred peasants' carts had come down from the hills with wood. They stood blocking the road in two long lines. No one was allowed out, but the Hungarian merchants came in under special guard, and were allowed to make their purchases and take them away. For a time we stood by the level crossing. Then my driver said that we were arousing interest among several people whom he recognized as detectives in the disguise of countrymen, and suggested that we had better drive on again.

Back in Svalava I sat in a small cake shop where officers were eating large piles of cream buns. Of course, the battle about the omnibus had already begun. No one knew at what time the express omnibus from Presov was due, nor where it stopped. No one knew either at what time the railway omnibus was due. At length the general consensus of opinion was that both the railway omnibuses had already gone through, and that the express was usually full when it arrived. A little Jew and his elegant young wife, with whom it appeared I had travelled when we first went to Chust, then came along. By the taxi stand three

dark, bearded men in long black cloaks suggested that we should share a taxi with them. Two people were packed into the back of a tiny taxi with my suitcase between them, three others shared the two spare seats and I got up beside the driver. Later when the dividing window was opened for a moment I was very glad I had, for the heat and smell of unwashed flesh inside was nauseating. Apparently the elegant young woman found it so too, for she was violently sick all over her fellow passengers. Then, somewhere away up in the hills, we punctured. We all got out into the bitter cold. One of the black bearded gentlemen immediately seized hold of me, started speaking in English and led me away into the night. I thought he was a Jew, but it turned out that his long hair was that of an Orthodox priest. He immediately asked me what I thought about things and then, before I had had time to answer, started on a first-hand tale of terror.

Half of the village near Chust, of which he was pastor, he said, hated the present régime. They did not feel themselves to be Ukrainians and lived in an atmosphere of constant terrorization. Only a fortnight ago two young Sitch men had burst into his house in the evening, pulled him up from his table and asked him what he was. "You are a Ukrainian, aren't you?" they had said, and when he had denied it, and defended his political activities as justifiable, they started to threaten him. One of them pushed a revolver into his chest and said he should count three and then fire. "Are you a Ukrainian? One, two——" and then the other had knocked up the revolver and said that they had better go but that they would get him another time. They bolted off into the night, with the priest, according to his own statement, in hot

pursuit. There had been a gendarme walking in the road and the men had been caught. Neither of them came from the locality; one being an emigrant from Galicia, the other from Jasina. The people in his village, he began to emphasize again, felt themselves Ruthenians. They welcomed autonomy, but wanted a true autonomy, not an autonomy that meant giving the province over to the terrorizing rule of a small band of Ukrainians. When I asked him how they would vote in three days' time he said that they certainly did not want to vote Ukrainian, but that there was no knowing what they might do under present conditions.

By this time the driver had repaired the tyre and was hooting loudly. The Jews and the priest clasped their robes closely round them and everyone squeezed in somehow. The driver, however, thought there was still space for another fare, and by the time we arrived at Chust there were six passengers inside and I was hidden beneath luggage.

. . . . .

Back again in the Koruna I found tremendous activity. All the world was converging on Chust for the elections that were to be held on the Sunday (12 February). In the hall I met a Swede, an American, an Englishman and his wife, all of them journalists, and in a large private room was a group of German journalists and film reporters. Two Berlin registered cars, the first foreign cars to be seen in Chust, stood outside the hotel where they had attracted quite a little crowd.

The elections had long been freely referred to as the "second important milestone in the building of the free Ukraine," and had aroused great excitement.

They were the first elections to be held in Carpatho Ukraine, and it was hoped that they would provide a final justification for the Government's claim that the land was solidly Ukrainian, and so strengthen the Government in its relations with Prague and in the eyes of the world.

German interest in Carpatho Ukraine seemed at that time to be as great as ever. German arrivals, apart from the journalists, included a Consul with a full staff, and a deputation of foresters headed by General Goering's second-in-command. The foresters were to inspect the State forests and report on the possibilities of timber export to Germany. In the presence of Ukrainians and Germans we felt like intruders at an intimate family gathering.

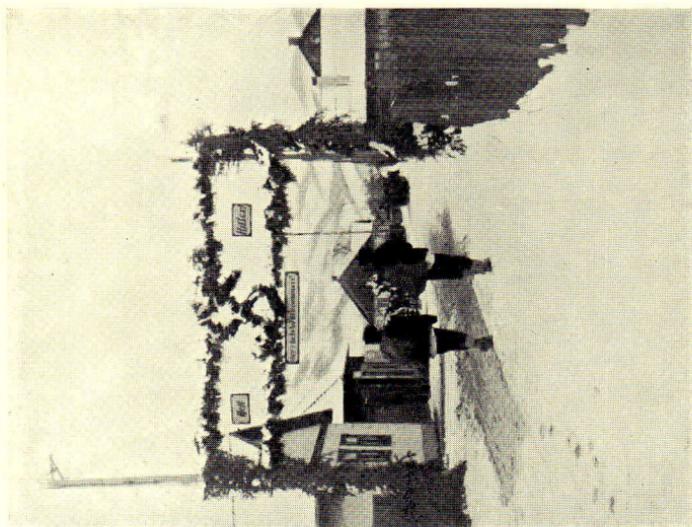
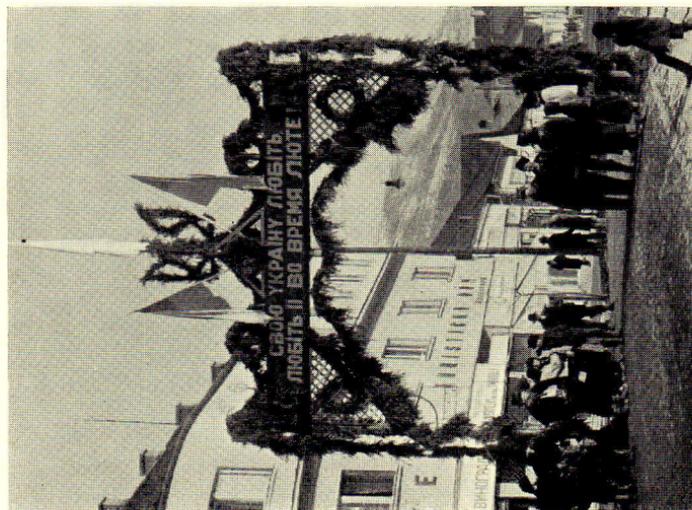
In the evening we discussed the possible lines of development for the future.

A Czech journalist, who had come down from one of the best Czech papers, said that the feeling in Prague about Carpatho Ukraine was one of mixed shame and confusion; shame that such a state of affairs could exist anywhere within the Czechoslovak Republic, confusion as to what was really happening. About events in Slovakia, he added, people had a good idea, but Chust was only just a vague place somewhere beyond. With regard to the future, he said, there were two forecasts current in Prague. One was that Germany would go slowly and concentrate on the creation of a wholly free Great Ukraine consisting of all the four parts, Czechoslovak, Polish, Russian and Rumanian. Critics were pointing out, however, that realization of this scheme would mean a long frontier for Germany to defend against Russia, at any rate for the first years until the Ukraine was on its feet, and that Germany would not want to undertake such

a task. Germans in important positions had always told me that a cardinal feature of German policy was to avoid this frontier. The other and more often heard forecast was that Germany would limit her aims for the time to encompassing the downfall of Poland, and to incorporating Galicia, and the other Ukrainian districts of Poland, in the present Czechoslovak State as a part of Carpatho Ukraine. By so doing she would acquire complete control of territory containing valuable raw products, but have the Czechs to look after it for her, to spend their money on it and defend it for her. In Prague this possibility roused little enthusiasm. But in Slovakia, where there was less dread of close German control, and where the people were less bound by realities, it met with a good deal of approval, and many Slovaks were already dreaming of a big federal pan-Slav State, which would include not only Czechoslovakia and the Ukrainian parts of Poland but even the whole of Poland. The Ukrainians in Chust, one may add, were no longer claiming from Poland only the recognized Ukrainian districts. The so-called White Russians, who inhabit the country to the south of Vilna, were also in reality Ukrainians, they said, and their territory too must be recovered from the Poles.

The possibility of a close relationship between the Ukrainians and the Czechs has now been removed from the field of practical politics. But in discussion of the various plans for the re-formation of the Slav States it is one that has frequently recurred, and in consequence should not be overlooked. In the future, should the map of Europe again be in the melting pot, it might well acquire actual significance.

I was discussing the idea at a little place in the mountains with a teacher who was an immigrant from



*Ukrainians and German settlers decorate their villages for the elections (see p. 148)*



*Shingled Churches are a feature of many villages*

Kiev. He started by telling me that in the days before the War no enthusiastic Ukrainian has stopped to consider Carpatho Ukraine, which they had thought definitely swallowed up by Hungary and lost. Then I asked what he thought would be the next step in the building up of the Great Ukraine.

“The Great Ukraine is a dream,” he said, “and we should limit our aims to the creation of a new federated State that would include both Galicia and Czechoslovakia. The Germans will never attack Russia, for that would mean losing their strength as Napoleon lost his. Haveliccek, the great Czech writer who died a hundred years ago, said that the Czechs could not hope to stand alone, but must form a federated state with the Slovaks and Ukrainians. His idea still holds good to-day. The Ukrainians and the Czechs would complement each other in many ways. The Czechs have money and industries; the Ukrainians agricultural produce and rich supplies of raw material. Moreover Ukrainians and Czechs have had a certain similarity in their historical development and have a similar psychology. Both have lost their native aristocracies; both are democratic in spirit. The same methods were used by the Ukrainians against the Poles as by the Czechs against the Germans, the Ukrainian Sokol and Luha being modelled on the lines of the Czech organizations. Also the co-operative organizations, which play so important a part in our life, the sport associations and the school system have all been copied from the Czechs.”

I asked what he thought of the possibility of the Poles being included in this new State too. The Poles would never join in, he said, they were far too proud to work in the same yoke with anyone else. They were not a work-a-day people and always had

their heads in the air. In the last century, following on the three partitions they had thought they were the Messiah among the nations, expiating the sins of others by their sacrifice, and now they thought they were fit to take over the patronage and domination of the Slav world that Russia had previously held. Besides, he added, in a momentary access of racial antipathy, the Poles were the traditional enemies of the Ukrainians. Had not Havelicek written, "There are two wolves, Poland and Russia, and the Ukrainians are the lamb; but one day the lamb will also be a wolf."

Asked if he did not think that the new Ukrainian-Czechoslovak State would be entirely under German control, so that the Ukrainians would merely have exchanged one master for another, he replied very definitely "No." When the new State was prepared and as soon as Germany was occupied elsewhere, it could turn round on Germany. But Germany would probably not make too many demands on it for she would always be aware of this danger. This was the answer that I usually received when discussing the relationship of any kind of Ukrainian State and Germany. It would even be given by those who appeared to be working in the closest co-operation with the Germans.

Communication with his friends in Russia was very difficult, he went on. Previously there had been a certain amount of coming and going across the Rumanian-Bessarabian frontier, but that was now difficult as the Russians, for strategical reasons, had completely depopulated a belt some one hundred miles deep all along the frontier. Houses, churches, farms, everything had disappeared. Such a clearance had not been difficult there for the country was open

rolling steppe land with no intensive cultivation or settlement, but in the neighbourhood of the Polish frontier it would have been quite impossible. News, however, does filter through, and is carefully collected at the Party headquarters. Czech legionaries are still returning home, peasants escape, people read between the lines of the local newspapers and, as I was often assured, there is always the work of the Konawaletz Society. Apparently the Ukrainian nationalist organizations find that the task of getting propaganda into Russia is far harder than getting news out. Their best means, they say, is the wireless.

# 9

ON the morning before the election Kleiss paid me the unusual compliment of joining me for breakfast. He made the waiter change the cloth which he said was insufferably dirty—it certainly was, for we had only clean cloths on Monday and as one always had to clean one's knife on them before eating they were fairly streaked by Tuesday already—but he managed to carry it off with a laugh and I thought all would go peacefully. But the storm soon came. His nostrils dilating and twitching with anger, and his mouth more twisted than ever he delivered a fierce diatribe against the habits of foreign journalists. I had asked if he had met my English colleague.

“No, I have not,” he said, “because he has not had the common decency to introduce himself to me. The habits of English, American and Swedish journalists are really extraordinary. Isn't there a single one that has been properly brought up? Not one of them seems to know that in common decency a new arrival should introduce himself to those already established by offering his hand or sending a card.”

I said English people at any rate hated introducing themselves, and then suggested that perhaps he had not met the Swede either.

“No, I should think I have not. He *did* send a card; but how? Seeing me sitting at a table with other people he had the effrontery to send it over asking if

I would care to come to *his* table. I have never heard of such rudeness."

"Perhaps that's a Swedish habit," I said.

His nostrils twitched even more violently.

"I am not in the least interested in Swedish habits. People must conform to my German ones. The most remarkable of all," he concluded, "was the young American who sent me a message through Minister Revay that he would await me in the Koruna at five o'clock. To treat me like that one would have to be at least the Duke of Kent." (To do justice to the American I must add that Revay had proposed and made all arrangements for the meeting himself.)

In the evening the final election meetings were held all over the province. Bonfires were lit in all the villages, and speeches were made about the rising flames of freedom.

In Chust a huge trident, the badge of the Ukraine, was lit at dusk on the castle hill. Komarynsky made a speech from the balcony of the Koruna. We all stood in the slush and falling sleet and listened.

He started by saying how the Ukrainians had been oppressed by the Hungarians, and then, after hopes of freedom in 1919, had fallen under Czech rule. The Czech oppression had lasted right up to the last, and only a few weeks before the great days of October the Czechs had tried still another method of denationalization, the abolition of the cyrillic alphabet. Then had come the Vienna Award and the cutting off of historic Ukrainian cities. Afterwards there had been hard days; some people saying they were Russians and proclaiming their sympathy for Russia, others that they were nothing at all, just autochthonous Ruthenians. But to-morrow they were going to show the world that all rumours and all former divisions were without

meaning. They would show that they were a united people and a part of the great Ukrainian race. They would move forward as one man. Anyone who refrained from voting would be a traitor to the nation. Slava Ukrayini!

There was not one word of constructive policy—only Hitlerian bombast.

Then we all trooped off in a long column to the Government building to hear a speech by Minister Revay. Nearly all the houses had put festive candles in their windows, and even the humblest cottages had used their best candlestick to light their one window. The effect of hundreds of little points of yellow light flickering down the length of the snowy street was good. At one place, just where we turned out of the main street, a little group of aged side-curved Jews were standing watching the fun. The big iron shutters, with which all the shops in Carpatho Ukraine were provided, were already drawn down over the windows. Then a Sitch column came swinging down the street. Like rabbits the Jews darted through their doors and lowered the final shutter behind them with a rattle. The Sitch lined up outside the Government Building looked real villains that night—poor, bedraggled, undergrown ruffians from the lowest grade of society. Here there was a greater attempt at German stage-managing than at the Koruna. A single figure stepped out on to the balcony, at first silhouetted against the lighted room behind him, and then caught up in a burst of floodlighting. He was saluted loud and long. Then came the news that Revay had been held up in the country and could not speak. We were all asked to go home quietly and in good order. Revay's movements were always a mystery; it was a measure of public security, so we were told.

In the evening there was a big dinner "for the journalists". Each of us except the Germans had noticed that we had not been invited, and felt slightly offended. Then we learnt that others had met the same fate. So we arranged a nice one for ourselves.

Election day dawned cold and grey with a thick fog all over the valley. The streets were crowded in Chust from an early hour, but I wanted to see how the election was conducted in the country districts and drove out to a group of villages to the east of Chust and somewhat off the main road. In the first village we went to everything seemed quite dead. No one was moving in the streets and the only signs of life were the flocks of geese pecking in the dust and the smoke oozing slowly out from between the roof tiles. Only one flag was out. On the cottage wall beneath it was a carved Orthodox cross, so the flag was probably a little attempt at insurance, rather than a sign of loyalty. The election booth was in the former school, a low thatched hut with the tiniest windows imaginable and the rotten walls tumbling in all directions. In the yard was the electorate; peasants of all ages, the men in white frieze coats with the seams outlined with thin black cords, and sprigs of palm in their hats, the women in the fleecy woollen coats of the lowlands that made them look like shaggy sheep. A gendarme, almost as tall as the cottage itself, was standing by the door with a crowd of men pushing round him. Inside, a peasant in a high white astrakhan hat barred the door of the actual voting room with his arm and admitted the voters in batches. The room had an uneven earth floor and two low windows. At a rickety table the committee of four who conducted the voting were sitting surrounded by a mass of papers. The voting slips, consisting of a sheet of paper bearing the

names of the thirty-two Government candidates, had been sent out to the voters several days before by the local authorities. Each voter brought his slip with him, had his name ticked off on the committee's list and was given an envelope in which he placed the slip. There was a kind of screen consisting of two pieces of linen hanging from a string, but few people worried to go behind it. Most of them looked round at the assembled party, smiled nervously and then with a show of coyness put the paper into the envelope and dropped it into the urn.

Far from being a free election the whole thing was of course farcical. How farcical, however, I only had brought home to me then. In the first place, it was only possible to vote for the Government or to express dissatisfaction with it; one could not vote for another party for there was only the Government list. But how could one even express disapproval? There were two courses open. Either the voter could stop at home, in which case he would be fined, for voting was obligatory in Czechoslovakia, and be marked down as an opponent of the régime, or he could go to the polling-booth and put an empty envelope into the urn. But in this manœuvre too he would almost certainly be marked down, for the envelopes were quite transparent and anyone who was watching could see whether the voting slip was inside or not. I myself saw several empty envelopes going into the urn. At this first booth I did not see anyone openly spying, but in many of the other booths up and down the country, and in Chust itself, a man was seen sitting all day long watching the urn, which was conveniently placed directly between him and the light from the window. Furthermore one must remember that a very large number of the peasants are illiterate, so that they

probably did not realize the import of the procedure. With so many illiterate voters the open elections that used to be held in the old days probably had their merits; for in that event the voter did at least realize what he was being asked to do.

The head of the Commission, who suddenly noticed me standing in the background, came and asked for my identity card. He spelt the Czech out haltingly and then, after gazing at the card from all directions, said that it was certainly not valid, because although it was signed, it had not the Foreign Office stamp on it. Then another man came up who could speak French and he assured him that all was in order.

At Danilovo the whole village was decorated with flags. Everywhere they were blue and gold, except on the houses of the two gendarmes where the blue and gold flapped lazily beside the red, white and blue, symbol of allegiance to the Republic. There the voting was going on in a modern Czech-built school. The old peasant who was holding the door greeted me warmly in English. He had been in Chicago for twenty years and seemed to know all the Middle West. Our talk, however, was soon cut short, for the schoolmaster came along, saying that my presence was strictly illegal, and hustled me off, perhaps with reason, for a brief glance into the room had shown that there was not even a pretence at a screen there and that the urn was under the very nose of the voting officer.

At the next village I was again greeted in English by a voting officer who immediately took me inside the booth. The voting was nearly over, for the whole village had been asked to go to Church at eight o'clock and then go and vote in community. The booth had by this time become the village club. The peasants were all standing about discussing their affairs and

commenting on a few laggard voters who trickled in. It was a festive scene, for the boys all had flowers or, more often, long feathers in their hats, and all the men wore pleated white linen shirts, decorated with red and blue glass buttons, which were drawn in slightly at the waist and then hung down outside the trousers like short skirts. Voting slips were tightly clasped. One doubled-up old woman came in and produced hers, wrapped up in a long piece of white linen, from somewhere in the depths of her clothes. In the corner a mattress had been stuck up, and for the sake of appearances a man or woman would occasionally be pushed behind it; but few seemed to feel the need of it themselves. Later I heard that the village had voted 99.5 per cent in favour of the Government. It was hardly surprising, for in many cases as the voter went to the table the commissioner, instead of handing him the envelope, had taken the slip from him and put it into the envelope.

Outside in the street was a huge gathering of peasants. Two old men were holding forth. Up to now things had gone all right, they said, with plenty of work and bread, but who knew what was going to happen in the future? No one seemed to have any idea. Then an old Jew came along, bent with age and supporting himself on a stout stick. "Are you going to vote for the Government?" someone cried. "Of course," he said with emphasis. Then he turned round and added with a sly smile, "And if I vote for the Government what sort of treatment are we going to get afterwards?" Everyone laughed good-humouredly.

By the early afternoon the coveted white flag which signified that a village had given a vote of more than 98 per cent for the Government list, was flying from many of the church towers.

In the evening the faithful gathered in the Koruna restaurant to hear the results from outlying villages which were being broadcast. So much brandy and liquor was sold that the supply ran out.

Two men with Sitch armbands were arrested outside the hotel, on the grounds that they were Polish spies in disguise, and at about three o'clock the evening ended in a fight. One of three Czechs who had suddenly come in, all rather drunk, started abusing the Ukrainians and Germans. There were no Ukrainians in the province, he said, they were all Ruthenians; it was a Czech land and all the trouble had been stirred up by the Germans. A crowd of people led by the young hotel-porters set upon him, beat him and threw him headlong down the stairs into the street. Three policemen came to arrest the ringleader of the porters, but he had hidden in the attics. Next morning the police returned, armed with rifles, but again went away empty-handed. According to the porter, the Czechs were a cowardly crowd, and he had held all three policemen at bay with a drawn knife.

The final figure was a 92 per cent vote in favour of the Government. The local officials were jubilant, and the German Consul, who had sent to Berlin twenty telegrams relating the course of the day's events, said that Hitler would have been quite satisfied with only a 65 per cent Government vote.

. . . . .

For some time before the election there had been constant doubt as to whether there would be an opposition list. At elections to the Czechoslovak Parliament all parties had been represented. These parties, however, had been dissolved when provincial

autonomy was granted, and, in view of the new issues at stake, which cut clean across the old political affinities, it was obvious that they could not be revived. The only opposition party that could have been formed would have been one that incorporated on a broad basis all people who considered themselves Ruthenians and were unwilling to subscribe to the ideals of Ukrainians.

Developments were clouded by secrecy and false rumours, and it was not until some days after the election itself that I was eventually able to piece together the surprising story of what had really happened in the opposition camp. Leaders of the Orthodox Church, and certain members of the former Agrarian party who were representatives of the Great Russian idea had attempted to form a joint opposition party, but, as rumour correctly whispered, they had all been thrown into gaol and kept there until after Sunday, 22 January, the day on which candidate lists had to be presented.

The Orthodox Church had at first considered running independent candidates of its own, but when the leaders approached Father Volosin on 17 January they were told that it was too late to do so as no time remained for the organization of a party. Volosin offered to put a certain number of their representatives on the Government list, but repeatedly refused to state how many. Kosse and Stefan, the former Agrarian leaders, then suggested to the Orthodox leaders the organization of a big joint party. And a meeting of sixteen persons to discuss means for putting the scheme into practice was held at the former Agrarian party office in Chust on 20 January.

Hardly had the meeting begun when the door was burst open and in marched the police, headed by

Bilej in person. Bilej accused those present of holding a meeting without having obtained permission. But he allowed Kosse, who maintained it was no meeting, but only an informal gathering of friends whom he was informing about conditions in Prague, to go and see Volosin. Volosin upheld Bilej. Kosse returned to the hall, and he and his fifteen friends were carried off to the local gaol. This was on the Friday morning before the election Sunday. All sixteen were kept there until Sunday afternoon, and some of them until Monday or Tuesday.

So much for the ringleaders. The Government flattered itself that it had settled with the opposition easily enough. But on Friday evening it had to be on the alert again, and on Sunday, in spite of everything, two opposition lists were presented.

As soon as the arrests on Friday became known a Dr. Bathory, who had been in close touch with the various leaders, drew up a second list. The police got wind of this and a kind of relay race ensued. Bathory started darting about from place to place, hunted by the police. He was captured in a car at Sevlus on Saturday morning. But the police did not get the list, for Bathory had handed it to a friend named Vassilenko exactly ten minutes before the arrest. By this time the affairs of the would-be party were in a fine state of muddle. The news of the arrests had spread among the faithful like wildfire, and the people of Iza, loyal members of the Orthodox Church ever since their conversion by Kabaljuk, themselves decided to make a list. It was a noble effort, but they had no sort of organization, no political experience and little knowledge of anything outside their own village. The assertion made by officials, that they put the name of a Government candidate, one of their

fiercest opponents, on their list, may well have been true.

Both lists were killed. The people of Iza went with their list to the Government buildings on Sunday morning and asked for the official competent to register it. They were sent from room to room until at last they became fogged and desperate. Then they returned to the official whom they had first seen.

"Yes, I am the man who accepts lists," he said, "but you have come too late, for it is now four minutes past twelve and, as you know, all lists must be presented before twelve."

Vassilenko managed to get his list presented by a friend. But it was rejected on the ground that it was not backed by a party organization.

In this comic interlude, worthier of a musical comedy than of serious preparations for an election, the Government appears to have had at any rate some measure of right on its side. For in Carpatho Ukraine it was the law that every political party must be registered with the authorities, and recognized by them, before it could have any corporate life or enjoy the right to take part in elections. Up to the Friday on which the leaders of the potential opposition party held their meeting, no effort had been made by them to organize any party, and, judged by western standards, it is hard to see how they could have done so in the two days which remained. The weak part of the Government's case was that they chose to resort to force.

One of the chief difficulties with which the Government of autonomous Carpatho Ukraine was always faced was that of financing the country. The annual expenditure in the province had been about 350

million crowns, of which Carpatho Ukraine had been able to provide only 100 million crowns. The balance had always been paid by Prague. Ever since October, however, the Czechs had shown an increasing unwillingness to pour money into a province which, at every turn, showed a desire to emancipate itself more and more from Czech control. At first this had not worried the Ukrainians, and apparently did not do so even in January of this year, when it had become quite clear that, if they were to carry out the investments which they had in mind, their budget would be bigger than ever. Germany, who through her foreign policy was directly interested in Carpatho Ukraine, would, they naively believed, provide them with all the money they needed, either in the form of loans or direct subsidies. As far as I could ascertain, however, no German money ever came to Chust, nor was there ever any real question of its doing so.

By the time of the elections, the Government's sanguine belief in this financial help seemed to be weakening. Hope turned towards the American Ukrainians, who had already, in a smaller way, shown a marked readiness to help, and, somewhat unwillingly, negotiations were started with the central Government in Prague. Of the negotiations with Prague, which all along were particularly stormy (being intimately bound up with the presence of General Prchala) we were to hear plenty more later on.

The Germans, however, although they would not provide money, showed great interest in the proposed economic development of Carpatho Ukraine. In the twenty years of the first Czechoslovak Republic, Carpatho Ukraine had been the Republic's source of supply for timber and salt and an increasingly

appreciated playground for tourists. This rôle, however, no longer satisfied the Ukrainians. They dreamt of a little State in which forestry and industry would be neatly balanced, and where the level of life would rise to that of western or at any rate central Europe. They asked nothing better than German co-operation.

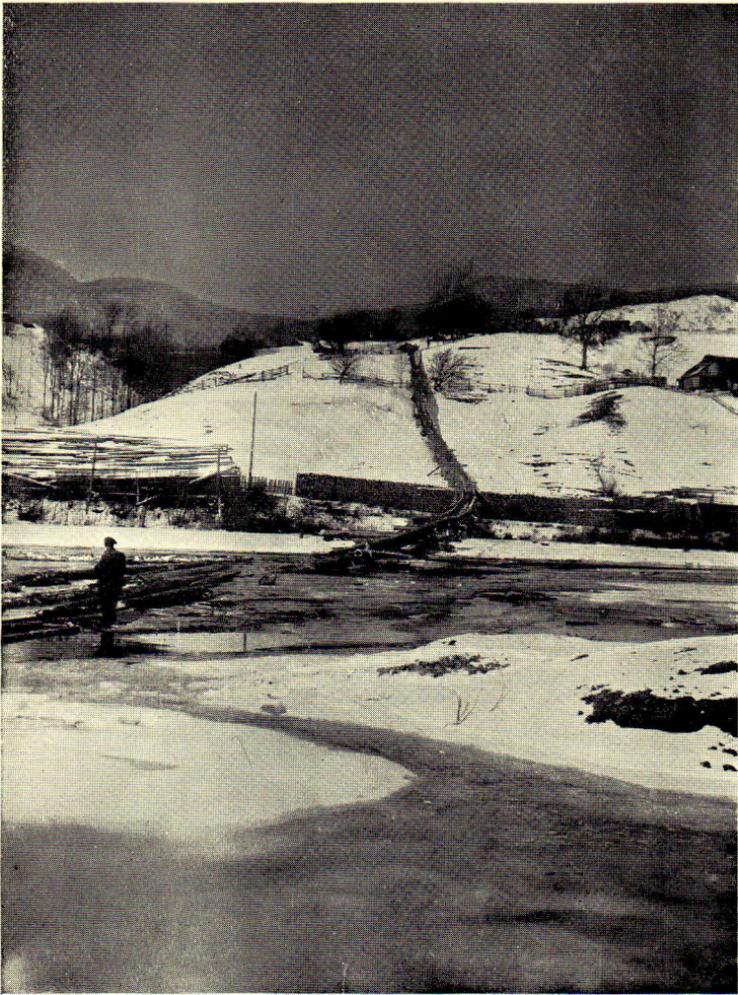
The group of foresters who had suddenly appeared in Chust on the eve of the elections were to inspect the State forests and gauge roughly what amount of the timber which Germany still needed could be provided by Carpatho Ukraine. Negotiations were to follow for a Trade Agreement, by which Carpatho Ukraine would export timber to Germany, and also eggs, butter and any other agricultural produce that might be available, acquiring in return the machinery needed for the construction of factories and the exploiting of such raw products as oil and iron. It was also suggested that the Germans should start an omnibus company for the improvement of communications. It was estimated that in three years Carpatho Ukraine would have absorbed all the machinery she required. A three-cornered agreement with Rumania was then suggested as a possibility. By this agreement Carpatho Ukraine would continue to export timber to Germany, Germany would export to Rumania, and Rumania would pay Carpatho Ukraine for the timber by sending her maize. Such an agreement would have suited Germany very well, as she was exporting large quantities of goods to Rumania and was unable to take sufficient Rumanian goods to balance the payments. The Ukrainians could have taken a large amount of maize, anything up to two thousand waggon loads a year, for maize is one of the customary staple foods, and since October most of the



*A Jew going to the Kosher slaughterer (see p. 168)*



*The pipe seller*



*“Runs” bring timber many miles down the mountains*  
*(see p. 203)*

level maize-growing land had been in Hungarian hands.

Among the factories proposed were one for canning fruit and another for the production of cellulose from the timber that had previously been exported for this purpose to Hungary. Brick and cement works, to provide the materials for an anticipated building boom were also envisaged. Bata, the famous shoe manufacturer, was considering the erection of a factory at Akna Slatina for the transformation of the salt from the mines into various chemical products.

The production of oil and iron, on which both Ukrainians and Germans set great store, seemed to be very problematic. Two German geological missions came down, but they can scarcely have been excited over what they found. The Czechs, who had searched the province pretty thoroughly for oil, had only thought it worth while to start boring operations at Jasina. By February they had already been boring steadily there for six years. They had bored to a depth of 1,200 metres and, according to the experts, would not have to go much further as the oil was believed to be at a depth of 1,300 to 1,500 metres. But they were then progressing only three-quarters of a metre per day, in spite of working all round the clock. The work was said to have been held up twice, owing to a spanner falling down the bore-hole, and on each occasion it had been several weeks before it could be recovered. It was extremely unlikely that oil would have been worth boring for anywhere else.

The iron works, which it was proposed to reopen, had been disused for over sixty years, and one of them had been worked only by the old charcoal method. A grandiose scheme was now on foot for working them

with the brown coal from a reported large seam near Dovhe, an attractive little township in the hills not far from Chust.

Plans for the reconstruction of direct rail and main road communication with the west of the Republic were of course a subject of constant discussion. The idea of building an *autobahn* down to the Rumanian frontier (to connect with the one already begun near Prague) was soon given up. It would have cost in that mountainous country ten million crowns per kilometre (£113,000 per mile). A normal-gauge railway from Presov, the nearest point in Slovakia, to Chust would have cost nearly £11,000,000. German sponsorship of these schemes, so much discussed in the foreign press, seems never to have been more than a matter of wishful thinking on the part of all concerned. The only scheme which was likely to have been realized was the provision of through communication between Presov and Chust by means of rail-cars on a small-gauge railway. Large sections of small-gauge railway already in existence could have been utilized, and, if work had begun this spring, as arranged, it would have been complete before the end of the year. This would have been paid for out of the central budget.

Of the mammoth broadcasting station that was being constructed in Chust with German money for the spread of Ukrainian propaganda in neighbouring countries, about which so much is heard abroad, nothing was to be found in Chust. Visiting journalists, who would never believe the story was a myth, spent many hours hunting for traces of it, and much money on paying for the drinks of possible informers—but their search was always fruitless. Of the pipe-line, on the other hand, which may now be constructed

from Rumania to Bratislava to bring the oil which Germany will be buying within easy reach of the distributing centres, we heard reports as long ago as January, and I was officially informed that such a pipe-line was in fact under construction. Was the supposedly sudden German-Rumanian Economic Agreement, which so startled the world in March, perhaps under consideration even then?

Help from the Ukrainians in America and Canada, if on a small scale, was at any rate tangible. They formed groups, based on locality or political outlooks and acted in common. Sometimes they sent gifts of money, but their much appreciated charity more often took the form of gifts in kind. One group would send a consignment of shoes for schoolchildren, another clothes, while others still would agree to provide a certain township with a hospital, a new school, a library, a clinic or some other public building. To the special delight of the Chust authorities a very large number of different groups were formed, and the resulting competition was of marked benefit to Carpatho Ukraine. A large financial loan, secured on the State forests, was also said to be under discussion. Then, too, there was an extraordinary interest shown by many individual Ukrainians all over the world. A Ukrainian, naturalized Norwegian some ten years ago and occupied in the timber trade in Oslo, arrived in Chust with the intention of setting up a sawmill at Jasina. Another Ukrainian came from America and decided to build a studio for the production of Ukrainian films in their natural setting. Others were planning to come from America, and there is no doubt that if Carpatho Ukraine had continued to exist, much could have been accomplished with the help of individual Ukrainians, many of whom were willing

to take a business risk if it could help the mother country.

The Chief Rabbi of Chust lived in a flat in the main street. On the stairway, which, although comparatively new, was peeling and neglected and littered with bits of paper—for Jews seldom trouble to make repairs—a servant girl told me to go to the top flat and walk straight in. I passed through a small hall, neither furnished nor carpeted, and found the Rabbi in a large room beyond. This room, too, was neither carpeted nor curtained, and was quite without furniture, save for two large glass-fronted bookcases filled with tall books bound in red leather and stamped with Hebrew inscriptions, and for a table in the middle of the room at which the Rabbi was seated on one of two chairs. He had on a long padded black satin coat like a dressing-gown and a round black velour hat. (For once, I had remembered that Jews keep their hats on indoors and had not removed mine.) The Rabbi, without getting up, motioned me to the chair on his left hand. He was young and, although his face was almost covered with hair so that one could see but little of it, I had the impression that it was finely moulded and that he was definitely handsome. His hands, bony and soft and fish-like, were unpleasant to the touch, but in appearance exceptionally beautiful; delicately made, rather fine and tapering toward the finger-tips. I had plenty of time to study him, for in the morning he keeps open house for anyone who wants to ask his advice. When I arrived, an old Jew with a long white beard and gnarled hands was at great length asking advice about the marriage of his grandson.

The grandson's life happily settled, I asked the

Rabbi what future he saw for the Orthodox Jews in Carpatho Ukraine.

“All we ask is that the situation should not be any different from what it has been during the last twenty years under the Czechs. We lived very happily with the Czechs. The last few months have not been too bad for us either, better in any case than in Germany and other lands. But we hope that things won't change,” he said.

There was at that time little prospect of an immediate change, for the Jewish community, one of the most compact and curious in Europe, managed to dominate public life and yet not to come into conflict with the native inhabitants. While the wealthier, more educated of its members controlled higher commercial life and the law courts, the rest ran the town shops and village stores, owned the inns and restaurants, made the clothes, repaired the watches and drains and were in fact responsible for everything except those few undertakings that had fallen into Czech hands. A number of them, too, were settled on the land where they lived as peasants. Together they numbered 65,000 souls, or nearly thirteen per cent of the total population, a bigger percentage than in any other land in Europe.

With the Ukrainians the Jews fitted in well enough. The Ukrainian is a backward person, to whom systematic work is unthinkable and who thus is not at all jealous of the Jews' position. Moreover, the Jew, apart from his business, is interested in little save religion, and his life, dominated by the old Jewish ritual, proceeds quietly in the artificially conserved spirit of the Middle Ages. He is almost as fanatical as his Rabbis, who live only for bible-teaching and the Old Testament laws, want to know nothing of modern

science, and are strongly opposed to any new habits or ideas. Hardly any of the Ukrainian Jews have been baptized, and there are no Jewish organizations save the old Orthodox Church. But although the Jews knew that at that time no anti-Semitic legislation was contemplated, they were nevertheless feeling uncomfortable. A Jewish rag merchant, told me that his father, a butcher, had been Mayor of Akna Slatina for forty years. That had been in the good old Hungarian days; now no such thing would be possible. Change was in the air, and they were all afraid of what it might bring.

The Rabbi's visitors were numerous, but the only woman who appeared was his wife. She came in by a side door, a big dark woman in a kimono, with thick black hair and full face and breasts. For ten minutes she stood in the corner, silently watching us, and then walked disdainfully off. Suddenly the door was pushed brusquely open and a man with a big red beard strode in. He started a long tale about a discussion he had had with a neighbour, over the price of a load of timber. He was dressed like a peasant, had an astrakhan hat on the side of his head, and his gestures were those of a peasant. When he took his hat off for a moment, I saw that in spite of his beard his head was quite clean shaven; only the side curls, demanded by ritual, were there. They were tied up with tapes and hung down in neat little bunches beside his ears.

When the visitor had gone the Rabbi arose, and led me into the adjoining room where lectures are given twice a day to candidates for the Rabbinate. The room was empty, but one evening, in another town, I had looked through a window into just such a room as this, and seen a class in progress; white faced lads studying

with avid concentration open copies of the Talmud, their only light tiny oil-lamps. On the wall, above a banner embroidered with the lions and crown of David, the Rabbi showed me two framed sets of rules in Hebrew. These were the rules of the school as drawn up by his father and grandfather. The position of Rabbi, he explained, is more or less hereditary, and there exists almost a Rabbi caste. He was only the third representative in the direct line in his family, but some families, such as that of the Spira in Munkacevo become real dynasties. When the last Spira died the Rabbinate passed on to his son-in-law, a young Rabbi from Galicia. According to the law the son of a Rabbi must always be proposed as one of the candidates for the succession when his father dies, and unless there is anything particular against him, or unless he himself does not wish to become a Rabbi, he is usually elected. The Rabbi of Chust informed me regretfully that as he had not been blessed with a son, he was determined, like Spira, to choose Rabbis as husbands for his daughters. When I took my departure I went out by a back door, through a muddy yard, lest one of Bilej's watchers should have seen me and given the Rabbi a black mark for talking to a foreigner.

Throughout the interview, I had particularly wanted to ask the Rabbi for an explanation of the ritual bath. In every small township in Carpatho Ukraine, or wherever there was a synagogue, I had noticed a largish nondescript looking building, often in faintly moorish style, bearing the interlocked triangles of the Jewish faith. This, I was told, was the Jewish bath-house, but what exactly happened there no one would explain. At length, one evening, as I was coming out of a yard where I kept my car, I ran into a Jew with whom we had once travelled in the train.

He was a stalwart young fellow with a strong voice who, although he wore a caftan, did not appear to regard ritual as a particularly sacred matter, and was always ready to volunteer information. As we walked up and down the street, I at last learnt the meaning of a ritual bath. It must be taken before praying. A strict Jew goes to the Synagogue three times a week, on the Sabbath, on Monday and on Thursday, taking the ritual bath as a preparation each time. Others take it only before the Sabbath. The bath-house contains normal baths and also the ritual bath, which consists of a sunk basin approached by steps. The bather must go into the water and completely submerge himself, taking care that all his hair is covered. Strict rules regulate the depth of water in the bath, and there are penalties for the bath-keeper if he infringes them.

The provision of bath-houses, the young man added, is one of the duties of the Jewish "Community." These Communities, to which all who recognize the Jewish faith belong, are independent organizations of the Jews within the normal organization of the town or rural district. All members subscribe to the common funds, out of which provision is made for the erection of synagogues, Jewish evening schools for the study of the Talmud, and other purely Jewish institutions.

The young man also explained why it was that we so often saw people walking about in Chust with one chicken, or one duck, under their arms even if it were not market day. The Kosher rules apply to fowls as well as to animals, he said, which means that they must be killed by a process of bleeding. Also they must be carefully inspected to ensure that they are "clean"; a chicken, for instance, with a leg broken below the

knee is clean, while one with a break above the knee is unclean. Both the killing and the complicated business of inspection are in the hands of a special ritual slaughterer, who charges fourpence for killing a chicken, and tenpence for killing a goose. Another important matter in the Jewish ritual is the condition of the knife used for slaughtering. The blade must "shine like a mirror," be absolutely sharp and have no dents in it. It must be inspected once a week by the Rabbi who tests it for dents by running it over his nail.

Ritual of this sort dominates the whole life of the community. It is willingly followed—for in the psalms it is written "God fulfils the wishes of the righteous," and to be righteous, the Rabbis say, all the laws of the Old Testament must be obeyed to the letter. Thus it is that women shave their heads on the eve of their wedding day and wear wigs all the rest of their lives, or that after a strictly celebrated wedding the boys may only dance with the boys, the girls with the girls. Thus it is that on the Sabbath the Jew may not do any form of work, even if it be winding up a car or pushing a cart that has stuck in the mud; may not travel in a train or tram, because it would mean making someone else work, and may not accept money or even carry money in his pocket if he goes beyond the confines of his courtyard. Ritual obliges the women who frequent the synagogue to sit like unclean things in a *purdah* gallery, while age-old custom, which has acquired something of the force of ritual, makes their home life that of married nuns. They work for their families, but know neither the world, nor friends, nor even their nearest neighbours, and scarcely go into the streets save for the weekly visit to the synagogue.

This supreme interest in the externals of religion is

not without its advantage for the Jewish people, especially in difficult times, for it keeps their minds from dwelling overmuch on actualities. The only Jews, in fact, who were in a really sad position were the members of the small band of intelligentsia, the doctors and lawyers, who, without the possibility of leaving Carpatho Ukraine, were yet tortured by a growing fear of the future.

Every day Jews asked me about the rules for entry into England, the dominions or the colonies, and their efforts to fit themselves for life there, should they be able to obtain a visa, were pathetic. Most of them thought that if they could assemble two hundred pounds and speak English, they would be in a position to demand a visa, whereas, in reality, such assets would only enable them to qualify for one if there happened to be a vacancy for a possessor of such specialist's qualifications as they had. English lessons were in such demand that every teacher had a long waiting list, and the sale of English books was phenomenal. Even in quite tiny places I came on plentiful stocks of Hugh Walpole, John Buchan and other English writers. Towards the end of my stay the stocks were beginning to run low, and owing to the difficulty of obtaining foreign exchange were not being replenished. When I went into the Chust bookshop to buy an English book to while away a journey all I could find was *Sex In Prison*. It had been specially ordered by a local inhabitant of Chust who had subsequently refused to take delivery. For three years, the salesman said, with a look of mournful resignation, it had been offered to each successive customer.

On a table in the little room behind the cake shop, that provided Chust with a genteel and much fre-

quented tea room, I found one afternoon an Easy English Course in the German language. It turned out to belong to a large fair-haired Jew, who told me that he had not been able to find a teacher and was working by himself four hours a day. His case was typical of many others with which I came in contact. He wanted to go to Australia, where he had heard there were openings for doctors. Previously he had worked as a doctor in Karlsbad, Pistany and other spas, and was then deputizing for his brother who was a doctor-dentist in Chust. His fluent English was scarcely recognizable, but perhaps it did not matter much; for unknown and unprotected he had little chance of obtaining a permit to work in Australia.

One of the cruellest tricks played on these unfortunate people was the "selling" to them of British passports. I first heard of these sales when coming back in the train from Sevlus one evening. Opposite to me was a young man who asked for my *Times*. He was an Hungarian Jew of good family, who had been employed in an insurance firm at Uzhorod. When the Hungarians obtained Uzhorod the firm had transferred to Chust and he had come with it. Naturally he wanted to obtain British citizenship, which, he said bitterly, would not be difficult if he had money. In Uzhorod several Jewish lawyers, and others, had bought British citizenship, the cost of which was from £600 to £1,000. None of the people had ever been to England and none could speak English. They did not intend to go there either, but would stop in Uzhorod and continue with their normal work, protected by British nationality. Later I heard similar stories from a number of other people, and all believed that they were true. If I questioned the stories, the inevitable reply was: as England had

recently sold a slice of another country to ensure her own peace, why was it unlikely that she should sell her own citizenship?

The truth of the matter I eventually learnt from one of our passport control officers. Certain lawyers, it appeared, had discovered a good and safe way of making money. They would tell rich Jews that they could probably obtain a British passport for them in return for a certain sum of money. The Jew would pay the money, but after a period of supposed negotiation between the lawyer and his friend in authority, he would be informed that in this case the lawyer had been unable to do anything. The innocent who had hoped to obtain the passport was of course not in a position to sue the lawyer and his money was irrevocably lost. As the English money would have had to be bought on the black market at about three times its official value, and could be sold at the same rate, the prospective Englishman came out of the deal very badly, the lawyer very well. In most cases the lawyers were Jews themselves.

# 10

BETWEEN the elections and the first meeting of the newly elected Diet, a period of calm was expected. So we decided to escape from the enervating atmosphere of intrigue in Chust and go up for a few days to Rachov, where we should have the chance of seeing something of the conduct of one of the great State forests, which together employed over 75 per cent of the population. On the way we had decided to visit salt mines at Akna Slatina.

We left Chust by train early one morning, changed at Camera Le Sziked, a wayside station in Rumania, into a tiny narrow-gauge train that brought us back across the Tisza into the Republic, and arrived at Akna Slatina at about mid-day.

Slatina is a place that is still in its growing pains. The centre of the scattered township is a muddy street with modern steel and concrete houses on one side, and on the other a large modern Czech hospital and a group of villas arranged in a decent plan. In the vicinity are the usual wooden houses, debased and urbanized examples of the peasant style, a big wooden cinema dating from the pre-War "fretwork" period, and, on a hummock, a group of large eighteenth-century villas in spacious tree-filled gardens belonging to the mine directors. Behind the hummock are the three groups of mine chimneys and the big openwork wire wheels, turning first this way and then

that as the lifts rattle up and down the mine shafts. On the whole it is a bleak and rather squalid place, but its position and the lovely view of the mountains are some recompense to the officials forced to live there.

The mine was a great surprise. It was a thing of real beauty, not merely curious. We raced down in a cage that moved so fast that I thought we should lose our stomachs, or else be thrown out and killed *en masse*, and then suddenly came to a halt by a gallery. At the end of this we came out into one of the loveliest halls I have ever seen. It was some sixty feet high and several hundred feet long, with many big transepts like those of a cathedral. The whole was of a clean whitish grey colour and immediately produced an atmosphere of cheerfulness. The walls at the top ran straight down to a gallery, cut out like a triforium, and then sloped gradually backwards. Their texture varied in bands, a broad quite smooth band, where the salt had been cut clean off with a saw, and then a band furrowed like granite by the axes of handworkers. These furrows all ran in the same diagonal direction and produced a splendid symmetry. The roof was cut like stylized waves. I had none of the usual impression of being in a mine, stifled somewhere down in the bowels of the earth, disorientated by the lack of sky, and dismally oppressed by a vague claustrophobia. It was more like being in a house of fantasy, an exceptionally cheerful and in no sense macabre fantasy.

The mine consists of several of these galleries one below the other. In the lowest one the men had only just started working. They start near the roof, cutting the salt away round the base of the walls with

a machine saw, and then, beginning near the walls, hacking up the floor, so that the gallery gets gradually deeper and deeper. The most spectacular gallery is said to be the topmost. It was three hundred feet high, with the roof curving gradually inwards like the roof of a Gothic cathedral. The salt had turned dark green and the air had made the surface quite smooth.

Back in the office the manager told me something of the mine's history. Salt, he had said, had been worked in that neighbourhood ever since the Middle Ages. As soon as one shaft was exhausted another would be opened up. The one we had just visited had been worked since 1800. The three shafts produced together about 175,000 tons of salt a year, and the workers were among the best paid in the whole Republic. They earned from fifty to sixty crowns (seven shillings to nine shillings) a day, but owing to the closing of the frontiers they were then only able to work two days a week. Out relief was only a hundred crowns a month, and as they had never saved up during the good days many of them were now in a very poor way.

The workers at Slatina are descended from generations of salt mine workers, but few of them are of local stock. The local inhabitants, always few in number, had shown neither the aptitude nor the desire for sustained and skilled work. Thus, just as Germans and Austrians had to be imported for intensive working of the forest so had Rumanians been brought in from neighbouring territory for the intensive working of the salt mines. In talking of these workers the manager had used the term "Magyarized" Rumanians. I was always hearing of Magyarized Germans and Magyarized Rumanians, but never of Magyarized

Ruthenians. I asked the manager the reason for this; why, if the Germans and Rumanians had succumbed to Magyar influence, the much simpler Ruthenians had not done so, too. The root reason, he said, was because they had never learnt the Hungarian language. The Germans and Rumanians had usually settled in the small industrial centres, such as they were, while the Ruthenians had remained rooted in the country villages and in isolated settlements in the forests. In the towns there had been schools, and after a people for several generations had spoken Hungarian in the schools, and, more important, learnt to read and write in it, they began to speak it at home. Also if they had wanted a Government job, or any better paid one, they had had to learn Hungarian. In the country districts, on the other hand, schools had been few and far between, and even if the Ruthenian children had attended them they had often finished their schooling illiterate. For the Hungarian language was not studied as a subject, and right up to the end, many of the children only half understood what they were being taught.

We lunched in a little Czech restaurant, where we had already breakfasted, and enjoyed the luxury of fresh butter and tea in clean glasses at half the price that was charged at the Koruna. We then drove out to Nizsky Apsza, a village where the peasants were said to keep buffaloes.

Nizsky Apsza is about six miles from Slatina. We crossed a tract of brown heath country, where one could almost see the wind blowing, and then bumped along a wet sandy track over a shoulder of hill to a broad valley with three villages in it. The population here is very mixed. The two villages at the bottom



*The funeral procession (see p. 177)*



*At Apsza they drink buffaloes' milk (see p. 179)*

of the valley were exclusively Rumanian, that at the top Ruthenian.

Just before the first village we were met by a procession. Bareheaded peasant boys in white frieze coats and trousers were carrying silken church banners ornamented with long tassels. I supposed it was one of the many feast days of the Greek Catholic Church, and C who had got out his camera, ran back through the mud to photograph the procession as it came along. Behind the boys was a large crowd of peasants, and yet further behind a small orchestra rather thin and scrapy, its notes blown away by the wind, consisting of a violin, viola, and guitar all held well in the air. The tune, when heard, seemed cheerful. Then came three rows of girls, in bright embroidered dresses, each carrying a lighted candle.

Suddenly, I saw that it was no holiday procession, but a funeral. For behind the girls, borne along in the midst of another seething mass of peasants, some weeping, others gossiping gaily enough, was a coffin. It was painted sky blue and decorated all over with sky blue paper roses. I was told it was the funeral of a rich demoiselle. I wanted to escape from this macabre scene and was afraid that C taking photographs might give serious offence. But apparently he did not, for the demoiselle's brother darted out from the procession and told C that he knew what he was doing, he was taking photographs, and that he wanted one. C promised that he would send him one. But no, this was no good, he said, he wanted it at once; he knew where it was, it was inside the black box already, and C must take it out. Just then another brother came along and dragged him back to his place by the coffin. We pushed on through the mud to the middle of the village.

These Rumanian villages show the Rumanian influence very strongly. The houses have steeper pitched roofs and the posts that support the verandah roofs are much thicker and more heavily carved than in the rest of Carpatho Ukraine. The church, like those near Chust, was purely Rumanian; a very tall slender tower with a gallery round it, and, above this, one big spire and four little spires. Then the dress is different, and there is quite a different tradition in weaving. The women have little embroidery on their dresses and their aprons are made of a coarse woollen material with bold stripes running across it, usually red and yellow or black and yellow. Everything, in fact, is much coarser and bolder. The women's bags, in which they carry their pots and so forth when they go to market, are made of a coarse linen in a tartan pattern, the ground usually dark red with much purple over it. Some of the women are really first class weavers and make their bags of woollen tapestry with beautiful floral designs. This tapestry is also used for carpets and for the long strips of material that conceal the piles of pillows placed on the rails above the beds. They clothe the walls much better than embroidery work or the strips of ordinary thin striped material, and against the background of the plain brown wooden walls, make a setting of which no interior decorator need be ashamed.

The men, too, have their own dress, characterized by their hats and belts. Their hats are amusing. They are little round straw hats with tiny crowns and falling brims, and with a pale blue silk ribbon round the crown surmounted by five *rose du Barri* cords. The ribbon crosses at the back and hangs down in two short ends, and this and the elastic band with which the hats are held on gives them a singularly childish ap-

pearance. The elastic is worn under the chin or under the back of the head according as to whether the wearer chooses to have his hat perched on the back or the front of his head. In contrast to these light hats the men often wear stout leather belts, anything up to a foot broad. They are not made locally, but have to be imported from Rumania, and their heavy studding and tooling clearly shows an eastern influence that has little to do with Ruthenia proper. A man who came out of one of the cottages strapped his belt round him, shook himself a little, and patted his sides contentedly. It was a tradition in the village to wear these belts, he said, but he liked them because they braced a man up and made him feel stronger.

We found the buffaloes without difficulty, for nearly all the Rumanians and Jews in the village kept them. C made friends with a man who had two cows and he willingly brought them out into the yard. They were not very large, but as all buffaloes are strong and apt to get restive, the village, which by this time had collected, was kept behind a stout fence. A good cow buffalo they said, costs about £7. She will give less milk than an ordinary cow, but the milk has a bigger fat content and is sweeter than either cow's or goat's milk. The male buffaloes are used for draught purposes and when full grown can easily pull twice as much as an ox. The only thing against them is that they always like to get into water when they are hot. In summer, if a buffalo scents a river or pond nearby, off he will go, cart and all, and a tremendous tug-of-war ensues between him and the driver. As the buffaloes are very strong they usually win, and into the water goes cart, driver, and everything else. I asked Ruthenian peasants in a neighbouring village why they did not keep buffaloes too. They admitted

their value and usefulness, but added, with a shrug of the shoulders, that it was "not the custom there."

At Camera Le Szigid, the main-line junction, we found that someone had removed C's photographic satchel from the little platform at the end of the railway waggon, where we had set it down with our cases. C, being a true Pole, was not at all disturbed; it had gone, so what was the use of worrying about it? But the Czech gendarme who was standing by the train took up a different attitude. At first he searched the train, but, finding nothing, decided that it must have been removed by someone at the one halt between Slatina and the main line. No one had any suggestion to make. Then somebody said that he had seen a young peasant clasping something under his short coat, get off the train and walk away across the fields. Others then remembered they had seen him too, but no one knew who he was, or whence he had come. The Ruthenians said he was a Rumanian, the Rumanians that he was a Ruthenian. Then a tremendous argument ensued as to exactly what he had worn. His straw hat fixed him as a Rumanian, but to which of the Rumanian villages did he belong? Every detail of his dress was discussed, and just as the other train was coming in they had managed to decide that he must have come from a certain village far up in the hills. To the great credit of the Czech gendarmerie they managed to trace the lad down that very evening, and two days later the satchel with all its contents was returned to C in Rachov.

The train was crowded. A Rumanian peasant, a broad bovine fellow in white, with a smiling face and two huge linen bags full of beans, came and sat down opposite us. He was on his way to Jasina, he said, to sell his beans, for he could get a better price for them

there than in his own village in the valley. He would stand by the bridge at Jasina until they were all sold. As no one would buy more than a pint he would probably be there for three days or so. He said he scarcely remembered the Hungarian times, but added, as peasants invariably did, that the Czech days had been very good. Everyone had been able to sell his produce then, but now it was all very difficult, for the Czechs did not want to buy anything from Carpatho Ukraine.

On the first evening at Rachov we saw little save the dark street in which the houses looked better than those in Chust and in which everything was much cleaner, a great triumphal arch put up for the elections, and the Tourist Hostel, built recently by the Czech Tourist Association, in which we were stopping. It was much better than the Koruna. We had a clean little room under the roof, with two white beds, a strip of carpet and running water, the latter an unexpected luxury even though it was only cold. Downstairs was a good simple restaurant, full of Czech officials. The food was excellent, and I realized that the longer I stopped in Carpatho Ukraine the more I came to appreciate all things Czech. There was even a bath upstairs. Unfortunately, however, the service was not Czech, so we could not use the bath. Although the manager promised us baths, nothing that he could say would induce the maid to put a few logs into the geyser and light the fire.

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The Director of Forests had been called away to a funeral and nobody else knew anything about our coming. Faced with an empty day, we decided to walk up into the hills.

We set out across the deep valley in which Rachov lies, traversed the river, and started up a narrow valley on the other side. The view ahead was enclosed by high snow mountains. For the first hour's walking we were too near the town to find anything of interest. Unlike the lovely cottages of the Jasina district, the houses here seemed to be only poorly proletarian. They were marked by no particular style and were among the most squalid that I had seen anywhere; roofs falling off, walls patched with odd bits of wood or tin, the inhabitants dressed in rags. In one house were two tiny rooms, each about nine feet square, one for the family and the other for some hens and a pig. The family room was full of steam, and moisture was trickling down the walls and dripping slowly on to the pile of rags in the corner that served as a bed. The father was out of work, and the family's one source of income, apart from what they could scrape from their plot of land, was the threepences that a little boy earned by the sale of home-made flutes.

Further up the valley, at a place where, with the help of an expert who made the door and window frames, a family was building itself a new house, we turned up steeply into the hills.

Above us was a big expanse of sloping hillside on which peasants' houses were scattered thickly, while here and there were little groups of fruit trees, a sheep pen, or an isolated dutch barn. A woman was kneeling by a small waterfall fixing the blue, yellow, red and orange wool that she had dyed at home. The snow was far above us, beyond a dark patch of forest. No tracks crossed the hillside and no vehicle could have reached the cottages, not even a peasant's cart. Holdings were fantastically intermixed and each plot was so tiny that there was little scope for improvement.

No wonder, I reflected, that in such a community, life tends to follow the traditional pattern from generation to generation. Most of the families have been there from time immemorial. If I asked a peasant how long he had been in his present house, he replied either that he had been there "always" or that he "came from over there." For "over there," I used at first to envisage some little corner in the next valley, but hardly would the process be complete before I realized that the place at which the man was pointing was quite close at hand, perhaps scarcely a hundred yards down the hill. The house used to be there, he would say, but it had got burnt down, or perhaps he had had to leave it when he married, and his brother now lived there. Few of the families seemed to have had connections with Galicia, as had those around Jasina; and, although it was always reputed to be a centre of Ukrainianism, I personally found little enthusiasm for the cause.

By a small sheep pen a man in blue homespun trousers, bound tightly round the leg, and a heavily embroidered shirt, was practising on his twelve-foot horn. The tune was always the same; a long expanding note, then a series of trills on two notes only, followed by a long note fading away again. I noticed that he had a gold ear-ring like a little badge in one ear. He said that when he had been in the army he had had to go to hospital where he had been constantly troubled by bad headaches. The doctor had prescribed all sorts of pills, and eventually given him this charm. The charm had worked wonders and the headaches had completely and immediately ceased. He had lost the first charm, but when he had replaced it the headaches had immediately stopped again. Pills, he said, destroyed the blood and nerves. The

gold ear-ring was like a magnet, he thought. It attracted the pain, and sometimes when he washed in the morning the ring was quite dirty.

While we were talking to him another man, short of stature, with an alert, shy expression on his face, and wearing deep wine coloured trousers, came running out from his hut with a flute. He fetched us *bliny* (stuffed pancakes) on a big round dish and we all sat down in the shelter of a haycock. The little man played the flute well, but he preferred talking.

“I hope we are not going to have another war,” he said. “I was in the last one for three years and I don’t want another. I know what a lot got destroyed here then. The Hungarian soldiers took our crops, and then later the Rumanians robbed us. But the next war will mean the destruction of everything here, and probably of all of us too. I only want peace so that I can go on working undisturbed.”

His wife, who had come and joined us, nodded appreciation.

“I have seen many different rulers here,” he said later, “but I don’t mind who comes in the future. They are all the same in the end; not so good and not so bad.”

I asked him what he was. Of course he was a Ruthenian, he said, and, like everyone else with whom I spoke that day, added that he could not understand *Nova Swoboda*, the new official newspaper. His own trouble was that he had difficulty with the Ukrainian language itself; others, who spoke more or less perfect Ukrainian at home, had not had an opportunity of learning the cyrillic alphabet.

Fortified by the *bliny* we started to climb the hill to a hut where it was said that Michael the musician

lived. Michael, who supplemented the meagre income from his two acres by mending watches, was, I had heard, a skilled player of both the zither and the violin. Inside the hut we found a woman sitting on a straight-backed chair by the hearth, her hands crossed on her lap and a scarf over her head. She was conversing aimlessly with two men who were sitting at a table. Michael brought down his zither from somewhere in the roof of the hut, and set it on the table. He had made it himself out of pinewood, and it closely resembled an English zither save that the strings were made of seven small strings each, and that it was played with two small hammers instead of with the thumb and fingers. The other man brought out a violin and they started to play.

They started off with the best known of the many melodies to which the Huculka is danced. Its very pronounced rhythm at once took me back to the wedding at Jasina. After repeating the same few bars many times without variation, they suddenly stopped. Then they played some of the other forty melodies to which the Huculka can be danced. Few of the people can read music and none of the tunes are ever written down, so that although they are in general outline much the same, they are liable to considerable variation from district to district. The actual dance changes too. In the olden days it was nearly always taken slowly, but now the people like to take it faster and have introduced many variations into the step.

“You have danced the Huculka in Jasina?” Michael said. “That’s no place to do it. They are too old-fashioned up there. You should see my wife dance it.”

After some persuasion the wife got up, threw off

her scarf and took the old man whom we had brought up from Rachov with us by the arms. At first they stood facing each other, gently marking time. Then they began slowly moving round, bringing one foot up to the other. At each reverse they went quicker and quicker, until at last they were flying round like a top. Suddenly they stopped, and started beating with their feet on the ground and clapping their hands. Then off they went again, first one way and then the other, varying the step after each reverse. Then the music faded away, and, as suddenly as they had previously halted, the dancers now stopped altogether and flung themselves down on the hard wooden bench by the window.

A violent snowstorm had come on and outside the little windows we could see nothing but swirling snowflakes. C and I started dancing, and soon we were all four swinging round merrily enough. But although it is easy to dance the Huculka it is very difficult to dance it well. Michael's wife did not think we could dance it at all, for we were never able to acquire that even up-and-down motion and lightness of tread that turns the dancing circle into a single living thing.

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As we were eating a combined lunch and tea in the hostel restaurant Kleiss, his wife and a German friend walked in. They had been ski-ing from a hut in the mountains. Kleiss and I soon started discussing politics, whereupon Frau Kleiss at once became very embarrassed and tried to change the subject. She knew her husband a great deal better than we did, for he was soon whipped up to a fury, and his conversation was more illuminating than discreet.

Kleiss said that he and I never agreed. I replied that whereas I personally had no grievance against either Germany or himself, he evidently did not reciprocate that feeling. There was no answer. Then he proceeded to analyse the position of our two countries. Germany and Italy, he said, were "right" states; England, France and America "left." The terms had lost their original meanings, and a right state was one that had ideals for the future, while a left State clung to the past. All States he added, had an upward period, a peak period and a period of decline; England was clearly on the decline. There was, he continued, another important difference between England and Germany, namely this, that England was richer than her position and qualities merited, while Germany was poorer. But in twenty years everything would be different; England would no longer be where she stands to-day. It was in fact very fortunate, he said, returning to his earlier statement, that England was a left State, otherwise Germany would never be able to rise to world domination. For whatever might be said about England, she was still powerful, and had England, even now, chosen to concentrate on the future instead of on the past she would have been an insuperable barrier in Germany's path.

The German friend then asked me where I stood politically in England. I said I was supposed to be on the right, but that the degree of my political orientation did not justify me in standing up and saying, as the Nazis did, that my ideas were infallible. I could not be a Party member and at the same time an impartial judge.

"What would happen if an army were run on those lines?" demanded Kleiss.

“But neither the German people nor any other people can be regarded as an army.”

Kleiss started laying down the law. “Only by treating the people as an army can one co-ordinate thought and obtain unity of direction; only by first attaining these ends can the German people hope to rise to world dominion,” he announced in loud, clipped tones.

Frau Kleiss, who had now become extremely nervous and kept looking this way and that, started patting her husband’s arm and said, “Of course you mean mastership of our own country; we have been subjected pariahs for twenty years, now we want to be free.” But it was quite obvious he did not.

England must recognize Germany’s demand for colonies, Kleiss went on. She always recognized things too late. Take the case of Spain; why had she only recognized Franco at the last moment and by so doing made another enemy for herself?

“Because one can’t go about recognizing insurgents,” I said, “until the legitimate Government has been definitely overturned.”

“Other people,” he said with a leer, “recognized what was going to happen years ago, and knew how to benefit from it. But it does not matter what England does about the colonies, for in twenty years she will have lost them all anyway.”

Frau Kleiss was by this time really frightened. But she need not have worried. Kleiss was so comic in his fury that I could only laugh; moreover I wanted to hear what else he had to say.

Germany, Kleiss went on, needed colonies to provide for all her surplus population, and he quoted figures showing population per square mile of the various other European countries. I suggested laughingly that if there were over-population it would be

better if Hitler gave gold medals to mothers who had no children, instead of to those who had eight or more. Then C, who had so far remained silent, butted in.

"Aren't the Germans rather illogical?" he said bluntly, "they preach the racial basis, Germany for the Germans, Poland for the Poles, every nation a compact racial group, but yet they want our Galicia and also overseas lands where there is not a single German at all."

Then the storm really broke. Everyone shouted. Kleiss said C's arguments were childish, that he refused to discuss such matters with anyone who spoke with "Polish arrogance." "Things have been said which I as a German cannot allow to be said in my presence," he screamed.

By this time the whole room was looking at us. I managed to silence C, and Kleiss got up and without shaking hands walked off. His car was waiting, he said, and they must be getting back to Chust. Outside I heard him remark that I was a democrat who "still believes in moral principles".

"His" car, I noticed, was Volosin's private car which had been sent up to fetch them. They were given it for any little expedition they might like to make. But this was their last. For in a few days he was recalled—on instructions from the Wilhelmstrasse, I was told by other Germans. He had been playing for the Great Ukraine, they said, conducting a diplomatic action all on his own (in conjunction with the Vienna group presumably) and the ideas he had been putting forward were not those of official German circles. Kleiss's recall seemed added confirmation that the official attitude was getting the upper hand at home, and that Germany wanted to keep the Ukrainian question on ice.

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On Sunday, a week after the elections, I went up to Jasina in a blizzard. I did not go to the woodwork school for the new Ukrainian director had arrived and the school had been completely reorganized. The reorganization was destined to turn it into a hand-workers' school, where the Ukrainians could be trained in the various trades then usually in the control of the Jews. The idea was constructive, but in practice it worked out badly. As a first step a leatherwork course had been initiated; but thirteen out of the fifteen boys who had subscribed were Jews, while the other two were a German and a Hungarian. The authorities had had to accept the boys, however unwillingly, as they badly needed money.

The local Czechs were in a state of grave concern. The air was full of rumours about their future. Two things were certain: that two thousand out of the five thousand Czech officials still left in Carpatho Ukraine were to be given definite notice for 1 March, and that the choice of those who were to go from Jasina rested with Vasco, the Greek Catholic priest in the village, who was a member of Volosin's secret committee. Vasco had said openly in the local Government offices in Rachov, "Those whom I wish to stop will stop, those whom I wish to go will go." The secret committee, which met once a week in Chust, was the most dreaded organization in the province. Its members, one of whom came from each district, gave reports on the general atmosphere, and on local events, special attention being given to the behaviour of the Czechs and of members of the other minorities.

The general position of the Czechs, however, seemed better at that time. Since the election things had calmed down, for the Ukrainians now felt assured

of their position and no longer needed to carry on anti-Czech propaganda in the hopes of influencing the vote. Volosin himself, and, more important perhaps, the Germans, seemed determined to exert a calming influence. A few days previously the new German Consul, who represented the official Wilhelmstrasse policy, had said to a responsible person whom I knew in Chust, that the Czechs could not all be got rid of at once. They were necessary for the proper running of the country, and would be for some five years more. They could only be superseded slowly, and as the Ukrainians had been trained to take their places. If experts were needed they could be recruited from Germany, he added. As if to implement such a policy Volosin had declared in a private circular to officials that all anti-Czech agitation must stop, and that anyone who instigated any agitation would be liable to fifty days' imprisonment.

Preparations for the first meeting of the Diet were already in full swing. A group of leading people had arrived in Rachov and were drawing up plans. The meeting was to be held in Rachov, because, in view of that town's connection with the Jasina Revolt, it was considered to be more closely bound up with the Ukrainian movement than Chust. As no public hall was available the recreation hall of the Czech Tourist Hostel was to be adapted for the purpose.

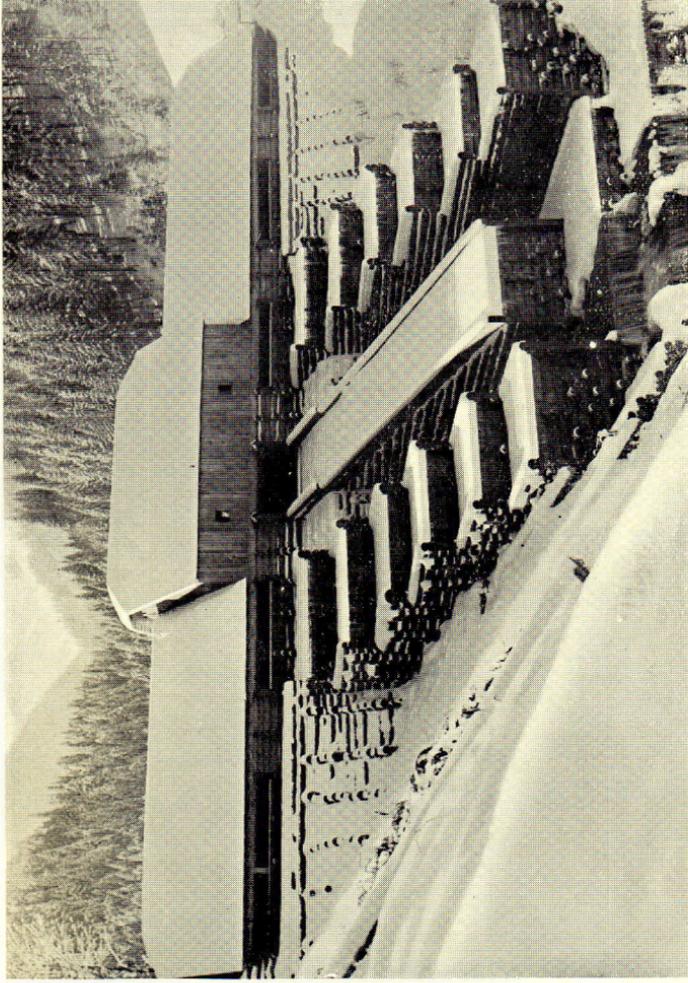
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One evening I went to call on the Director of Forests. He lived in the ground floor flat of a beautiful house set in the middle of a secluded garden. I found him sitting by the wireless with his young brother, a good-looking lad who seemed to find it amusing to wear a small but flourishing black beard protruding

from the tip of his chin. The director, in appearance like a miniature Mussolini, at once impressed me as an odd mixture of shrewdness and absurdity. His father had been a simple woodman on the Schönborn estate. He himself was the only Ukrainian on the Rachov forestry staff, and the importance of the position to which he had recently been appointed obviously gave him great pleasure. Having deposited me firmly in the middle of the dining-room he said that he would give me a basic idea of the forests in those parts. The younger brother brought us in a bottle of sweet syrupy wine and left us with a smile on his face—probably he knew what to expect.

The basic idea which the director had promised consisted first of a detailed list of the districts into which the Rachov area is divided; then detailed lists of the personnel employed in each of the districts; here there were three clerks, two inspectors, an engineer in charge of the dams, an inspector of diseases, there two clerks, two engineers, etc., etc. The number of districts and officials seemed interminable, and I began to wonder if I should have to hear full particulars of the number of foresters and other manual workers as well. Then he suddenly came to the Head Administration in Rachov and ended up, beating himself on his fully expanded little chest by saying, "And at the head of all this great organization, with full control over all the officials whom I have named to you is a Director in Chief, and—that—is—*me*." For a few minutes he was breathless, but even this was not the end. I had to suffer lists of the trees that grew in the various districts, lists of the soils, lists of the means of transport.

None of this meant much to me; but the director had such a store of enthusiasm that I could not well



*Wooden dams hold up the water for rafting (see p. 201)*



*A forester's hut (see p. 202)*

escape, and the hypothetical man whom I had waiting for me in the café had to wait a very long time. I at last went home through the swirling snow to a savoury omelette served with stewed whortleberries. Either this unusual mixture, or the wine, disagreed with me so badly that for three days afterwards I had to starve.

# 11

ONE of the chief preoccupations of the Reich Germans in Carpatho Ukraine was with the German minority. According to Czech figures this minority numbers some 7,000 persons, but the Germans estimate it at some 14,000, and claim that there are an additional 14,000 who no longer recognize themselves as Germans and need to be "reminded of their origin." All are descended from colonists who have been coming into the country since the Middle Ages. As the French and English colonized lands overseas, Germans colonized large territories in eastern Europe. The colonists are to be found not only in Carpatho Ukraine but scattered over south-eastern Poland and southern Russia, in Hungary, Rumania and Slovakia. Apart from those who founded the many small German townships in Slovakia and worked the silver and lead mines, they are nearly all peasants. Rulers with empty territories, devastated by the Turks or other invaders, or with forests, such as those in Carpatho Ukraine, that needed to be scientifically developed, were always willing to receive German settlers, and even gave them lavish encouragement to come, for they were a hard-working lot.

The first German settlers in Carpatho Ukraine made their appearance soon after the Tartar invasion in 1241. The Tartars under Batu burst through the mountain passes by Jasina and Varecky, swept

down as far as the Slana River and then, when it was heard that Jenghiz Khan had died, disappeared home as suddenly as they had come, bearing with them twenty or thirty thousand of the local peasants as slaves. King Bela IV (of Hungary), who had been forced to flee to Dalmatia, returned to find a largely depopulated land, and it is said that he himself invited the first Germans to come.

To what race exactly the small and scattered population inhabiting the district previous to the arrival of Batu belonged, is a matter of serious dispute. Some people say it was Ukrainian; others that it was autochthonous and of no marked family. The first Ukrainians in the district, the latter maintain, were those that came from Podolia with Theodore Koryotowic in 1360. (Theodore had had a feud with his uncle, Witold, Grand Duke of Lithuania, and sought the permission of the King of Hungary to settle south of the Carpathians. The king willingly granted his requests, gave him the title of *Dux Podoliae et Gubernator Castri Munkaci*, and arranged a marriage between his daughter Anne and the local Prince Palatine.) However it may be, a few wild spirits were heard suggesting this spring that it was the Germans who, in virtue of their having come to Carpatho Ukraine a hundred years before Koryotowic, were really the first settlers, and that the Ukrainians were "newcomers." In official German circles the idea was naturally laughed at, but I did not notice that the Ukrainians, who were particularly touchy on such subjects and not at all sure about eventual German aims, were at all disposed to treat it lightly.

A much more important influx of German settlers came much later, in the second half of the eighteenth century. Maria Teresa, the energetic Queen of

Hungary, wanted to develop the vast untracked State forests that at that time covered almost the whole of the province, and, in order to put her scheme into action, imported large numbers of foresters under contract from Germany and Austria. The local mountaineers, the Huculs, whose name meaning "Wanderers" had been given them by the Rumanians living at the foot of the vallies, were apparently of little use as foresters. Their primary interest was in their flocks, and they only cut such timber as they needed for building or firing.

Some of the German villages, such as Nemecka (Deutsch) Mokra, have preserved their German character absolutely untouched, and to visit them is to step into that part of Germany from which the original settlers came. Others, in which for some reason or other there has been a large infiltration of alien elements, have tended to become Magyarized. The twenty years of Czech rule brought surprisingly little change for the German minority, although its position was somewhat complicated by the introduction of Czech as the official language. The mixed nature of some of the families, and the number of languages which people had to speak, was clearly shown by a railway employee who jumped into my cab as I was leaving Chust station one night. He spoke German as he had a German father, Hungarian as he had a Hungarian mother, Czech because he had lived in the Czechoslovak State, and now Ukrainian because he was working on the railways!

After October 1938, all the Germans were in clover. The Ukrainians, having just won their own autonomy, felt bound by honour to pass on similar privileges to the small German community. The Germans were granted everything they wanted: a State Secretary

charged with protecting German interests; permission to form a National-Socialist Party, professing the full National-Socialist ideology, and all the subsidiary organizations; schools, built and maintained by the State, with German as the language of instruction; and their own school inspectorate which was to be a subsidiary branch of the Party organization. Significant of the interest which this small German minority then aroused in wider German circles was the fact that the new leaders were not of local extraction, but were all imported from the Sudetenland. Herr Oldofredi, the State Secretary, was from the neighbourhood of Eger, while his assistants were from southern Bohemia. Others were also to have been imported, with the task of developing an "S.A." and women's organizations.

Zipserei was the first of the German villages that we visited. It lay some two miles up the river valley from Rachov, and we walked there one snowy afternoon.

The village, which consists of a long street running parallel to the river, immediately impresses one as being different from the others in the neighbourhood. The houses, though still built of wood, were neatly plastered and ornamented with pilasters and well-designed mouldings, and each was set in a neat well-kept garden. But a more important difference, perhaps, was in the atmosphere. At the entrance to the village was a huge triumphal arch of wood and greenery plentifully ornamented with swastikas and bearing the inscription "Heil Hitler." Nearby was the school, a small wooden hut with one large room in it. I went in and introduced myself to the teacher—a youngish man with the good German name of Müller. He said he had only been there for two months

and did not know much about the history of the village. But there was no doubt that he was thoroughly imbued with Nazi principles. As we went into the classroom the children rose to their feet as one, raised the right arm in the Nazi salute and roared "Heil Hitler." On the walls were plenty of swastikas, and catchwords such as "All for one, one for all," or "Our Leader orders, we obey." In a corner I noticed a collection of picture postcards stuck on a large cardboard and labelled "The Fatherland." It came as quite a surprise to see that they were not of German cities but of Carpatho Ukraine! Müller said that owing to the fact that all the German children were concentrated here, instead of attending parallel classes in the neighbouring schools, there was serious lack of space. He had to take three classes concurrently in the morning and three concurrently in the afternoon. The system was bad, as it meant that he could give each class only half an hour's preparation while he taught the other two. But he was soon to have an assistant, and he hoped the Ukrainian Government would build them a new school. He must have had a hard life, for in the evenings, he told me, he was busy trying to "win back the lost Germans" to the various cultural and other German organizations. When I left, the children again rose and gave a full-throated "Heil Hitler."

At the top of the street was the village store kept by a German called Bogdanski. His name sounded more Polish than German, and his ancestors were presumably among the German settlers who at one time or another wandered south over the Carpathians. On the other side of the road lived his grandfather, who was said to be the local history expert. We crossed over to his house. On the door of his workshop was a

little notice—"Please wipe your feet." We seemed at once in Germany—such a notice on a Ukrainian peasant's door was unthinkable. The inside of the house was unlike anything local. It was larger and showed a quite different standard of life. There were curtains at the windows, good solid mahogany beds and cupboards in the "best" room, and even in the kitchen respectable furniture, with a full complement of dishes, plates, knives and forks. Here there would have been no eating out of the pot as at the Popaduks'.

The grandfather, who was very old and hard both of seeing and hearing, came into the best room and with the help of his daughter read out the history of the village from a sheet of paper. The first settlers, consisting of twenty-one families, had come in 1790 from the Zips, a district near the Tatra mountains in Slovakia that had been a German settlement since the Middle Ages. They had been given plots of land and sufficient wood to build themselves houses. Their pay had been largely in kind—corn, maize, sugar and so forth—and had been held in a large store similar to that which I had seen in Jasina. The first two generations, he said, had remained pure German, but since then, in that particular village, which lay on an historic main line of communication and was not isolated, there had been a good deal of intermarriage with the local people.

Everyone in the village was employed in the State forests, and every man we passed had either an axe or a saw under his arm.

. . . . .

Boghdan, said the Chief Forester, was a pleasant place in summer. At the junction of five valleys and four streams, it is set in broad water meadows backed

by the rising slopes of dark green forests. Then, it was still winter, and the forester had driven us the ten miles up into the hills from Rachov in the draughty car of the Administration. It was the first place of call on our long planned tour of the forests, now at last made possible by the hardening of the snow.

Even in winter, when deep snow almost covered the fences and lay like a thick mat over the cottage roofs, Boghdan still seemed an attractive enough place. In the distance, the white slopes of Pop Ivan were glistening in the clear sunlight, the village was neat and prosperous—for nearly all the men were employed as whole time workers in the forest—and everywhere there were signs of a full life. Men were setting off with axe and saw, and from the forests came the shouts and bangs of those who were manipulating timber.

The plan that had been drawn up for us by the director was as thorough as the lists he had given me on the occasion of my evening visit, and we saw at once that there was little chance of carrying it all out. Judicious selection on the part of the forester, however, enabled us to have a fairly comprehensive view of the work. Being of a thorough nature, like most Czechs, he took us first to a nursery of seedling trees. In the autumn they were to be carefully pricked out, but not so long ago, he said—in fact, right up till the War—a much more primitive manner of planting was still the fashion in some places. First the area to be planted was lavishly scattered with seed, and then herds of pigs were turned out on it, the pigs by their snouting up of the ground sufficiently burying the seed.

From the nursery we drove by a private road, of which the Administration had constructed some hundreds of miles, up to the head of one of the valleys,

right beneath Pop Ivan, in order to inspect one of the dams. These dams are an important and historic feature of the forests. Their function is to hold up the snow water in the spring so that the mountain streams may be made sufficiently deep for rafting. At other seasons they are not used. The water that can be released from any one dam is sufficient to keep the stream in flood for one day. Then the dam must be closed for upwards of half a day, according to the state of the snow, while more water collects. During this time fresh rafts are prepared. The dam we visited, like all others, was built entirely of wood. It is said that their usual life is fifty years, after which period they have to be completely rebuilt; but one is proudly pointed out as having identically the same design as when it was originally built by Maria Teresa.

In Boghdan it is every boy's ambition to be a rafter. Little wonder perhaps, for the rafters are the kings of the forest world. There is no sweating work for them, dragging the great tree trunks here and there or chopping them into shape. Theirs is the fun of shooting down the mountain streams on the flood water, steering the rafts with great wooden oars, and then floating leisurely along the lower reaches of the Tisza to the railhead, or even down into Hungary. It is a hard life while it lasts, they say, and one that demands a keen nerve, but it is exhilarating—and the best paid in all the forest.

All the way up the valley we had passed, in isolated positions, curious little round wooden huts. These, I was told, were the weekday homes of the forest workers. When employed at a distance from their homes, they are obliged to live in these huts from Monday to Saturday and are only able to visit their families at the week-end. We had hesitated to stop

the car lest it should refuse to start again on the snowy road, but I was allowed to visit one of them on the way down. The hut, which was some twenty feet in diameter, was half buried in the ground, and had a large opening, some twelve feet across, in the middle of the roof. The internal arrangements were simple. Pine twigs, laid round the circumference of the hut beneath the roof, provided a big bed, while the whole of the centre was given over to a huge fire of pine logs. The open roof was a combined window and chimney; rain or snow did not come in, they said, as they were evaporated by the heat of the fire. The principle of construction was identical to that of the Lapp huts which I had seen in northern Sweden. It was lunch time when we arrived and the men, in sheepskin clothes blackened and greasy from age, were sitting or lying on the twigs taking their meal. One old man, to whom I talked, was eating sour milk and cold maize porridge out of two big wooden pots. The contents of the pots, which he had brought from home on Monday, would be his only food for the week, he said. I could not see that the others had anything very different, and it seemed to say much for the nutritive value of milk and maize that anyone doing hard manual work could subsist on them alone for so long a period.

We were given lunch at the foresters' mess in Boghdan. Several foresters, and a group of Czech officials from a town some distance away, came and joined us. The forester who had accompanied us was one of the most melancholy, and at first, least friendly people we met. I was afraid he harboured some grudge against us. He had, indeed, no reason to show me signs of friendliness, for I represented a people who, in the opinion of all his countrymen, had

let down the Czechs in quite inexplicable fashion. Later, however, I found that he was struggling with a special sorrow, namely that the constructive work of the Czechs in Carpatho Ukraine should have been brought to so sudden an end just at the moment when it was coming to fruition. Of all the troubles with which he had recently been faced this, for him, was by far the worst.

Another more cheerful forester told me the legend relating to Pop Ivan. A priest (pop) called Ivan, it is said, went to the mountain with his wife. When they reached the bottom he asked her how much she loved him. "As much as the cold wind," she replied. Feeling that the answer lacked affection, he stabbed her. Then he climbed up the mountain. When he reached the top he was very hot, and the cold wind blowing about him seemed the loveliest thing in the world. He immediately understood his wife. Touched by shame and remorse he threw himself over a precipice.

Later the officials started hotly attacking the then British policy, and asked when Eden and Duff Cooper would return to office. The Hungarians used to cry "Everything back," they said, but now the Czechs would cry it, with one difference, namely, that they would cry it even more insistently. The Czechs were in eclipse for the moment, but nothing could keep them down indefinitely. "Of course all the officials here are Czechs," they said, referring to Carpatho Ukraine, "but England rules in her colonies, so why should not we Czechs rule in this little corner of the world." I should have liked to hear them making that remark to a Ukrainian! But then it is the fixed belief of the Czechs that the Ukrainians being naïve and indolent, and not feeling the need for thrift, still

need guiding. They will go out and work, a forester said, and continue at it just until they have some money in their pockets. Then they will go home and stay there until the money has gone. Systematic work, to them, is unthinkable: they only seek it when they have nothing in their pockets. "On the other hand," an official went on, "the Germans here are a haughty lot; they won't take any form of common labour for they think that such work is only fit for Ukrainians."

In the afternoon we went to see one of the "runs" that are used for bringing the wood over the broken country from parts of the forest that are being cut, to the rivers. For me this was the best part of the day. The runs are of three sorts. When the ground is slightly inclined they need a flow of water; when it is more inclined ice or frozen snow is sufficient; when it is steep they can rely on the slope alone.

The run we visited was steep. It closely resembled a toboggan-run and was some two miles long. The track was built of tree trunks, carried over streams or declivities on bridges and banked up at the corners. At the top end two men were edging the tree trunks on to it with long pointed poles. They started them off with a push and away they went at ever-increasing speed. At points where they might get hung up men were posted to help them on their way.

As we stood at the bottom end of the run in the valley the arrival of a trunk was first heralded by the loud shout of a boy who watched the men as they put the trunks on the run. It came so clearly through the thin cold air that the boys who relayed it from further down, or the old man who was sitting in a little hut made of branches on a knoll overlooking the end of the run, were hardly necessary that day. We could also

hear the tree itself from a long way off. First there was a faint noise in the distance, then a growing rumble and finally a loud swish as it came round the final bend. The most curious aspect of the process was that the tree trunks were not at all stiff. They came twisting lithely round the corners, and then, their naked sides shining silver in the winter sun, writhed from one side to the other down the straight track like exotic snakes. At the bottom of the run there was already a pile of some hundreds of tree trunks. But this did not mean that the run became blocked. The latest arrivals slid gracefully and effortlessly over them and came to rest somewhere further on.

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One of the gayest spired of the wooden churches is in a village not far to the east of Chust. We drove out there late one afternoon with a young American who had just arrived. The tall tower at the west end, and the spire and four little spires that surmounted it, seemed higher, and more attractive in their lightness, than any others we had seen. We inspected it thoroughly, and then the priest arrived, and we had to begin the process all over again.

“Do you speak Latin?” was the priest’s first question. None of us could, so we had to carry on all our talk through C.

The church was interesting from several points of view. It had been built, we were told, in 1706 to replace another, also of wood; but nearly all the internal fittings, including the complete and unusually fine set of frescoes on canvas that covered the wall and ceiling space, had been transferred to the new church. These were now scarcely visible, and the interior of the church had a definitely archaic look, caused, I think,

by the bulk and darkness of the woodwork, and the close crowding of the furniture.

Round the west door was decorative carving employing a rich vine leaf motif. In the hills we had never found anything like this. As in the Slovak hills the ornament there is splendid, but its splendour has something about it of the rude barbarity of the East. Only in the plains, where nature is gentler and more opulent, does one find those qualities of greater richness of design and delicacy of carving which betoken easier conditions of life. On the altar two women were setting dishes. One contained some flour and three eggs, the other some dried beans; both had been brought in to be blessed.

As we left the church the noise of pealing bells came through the mist from the next village, and all around us was the welcome drip of melting snow.

A little boy and girl came along.

“Give her twenty hellers,” said the little boy.

“No, I don’t want any money,” she said hastily. But when she saw it was fifty hellers (three farthings) in my hand she looked longingly at it, took it and then went darting off down the village street telling of her good fortune to her mother, her friends and anyone else who happened to be standing by the cottage doors. I noticed on the outside walls both Orthodox and Catholic crosses. The church, the priest explained, was one of those which had been in Orthodox hands from 1920 to 1925. Then, as the result of the Prague edict, it had passed back to the Greek Catholics.

Having shaken off the priest by getting into the car, we went for a drive round the village, calling at the rival Orthodox church. As we arrived at the entrance the priest with whom I had driven from Svalava came

running up behind us. He was overjoyed to see us, and led us at once across a field to his church—a new and half completed brick basilica, in the shape of a Greek cross, that was to replace the one which the Greek Catholics had recovered. The priest told us that the parishioners, numbering about twelve hundred, were building it out of their own resources.

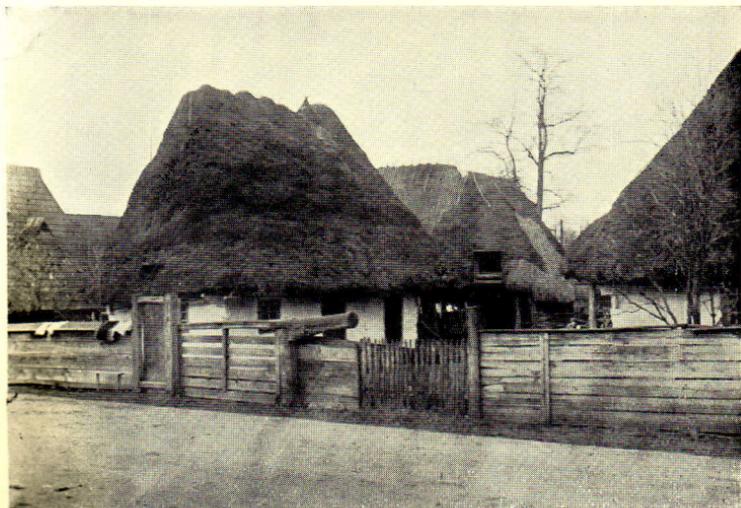
By this time it was nearly dark. We were taken into the priest's house, a little two-roomed hut by the roadside, where we all sat down round an open stove and made scrambled eggs. The priest was a jolly fellow with merry eyes set in a handsome face, and he liked nothing better than airing the English he had learnt when ministering at the Orthodox churches in New York some seventeen years ago. On cultural and political matters he held decided views. The people in Carpatho Ukraine, he said, form one of the many branches of the Russian race and speak a Russian dialect. They were quite content to live with the Czechs, and were only interested in Russia, at any rate for the moment, from the cultural point of view. A close union with Russia was only a vague and general idea, and in any case could and would not be put into practice so long as the present régime in Russia lasted.

# 12

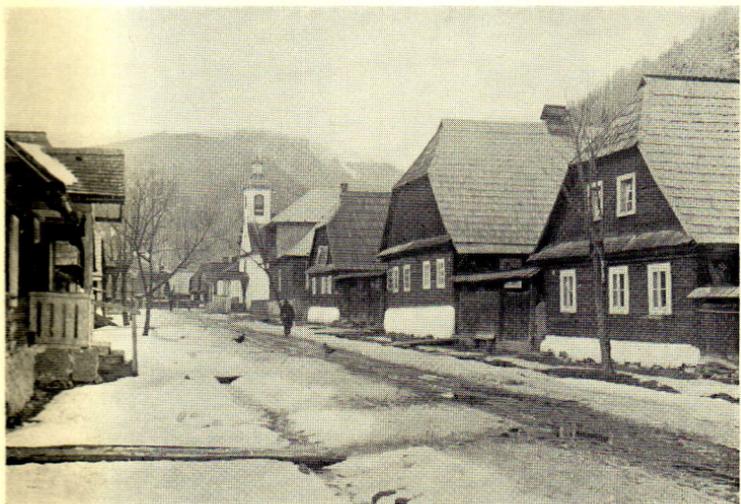
WHAT, we often wondered, in Chust, were the Ukrainians doing across the frontier in Eastern Galicia? What were they feeling about the happenings in Carpatho Ukraine? Did they really believe that the Ukrainian star was at last beginning to rise there?

The frontier had been closed since September 1938, and all normal intercourse was at a standstill.

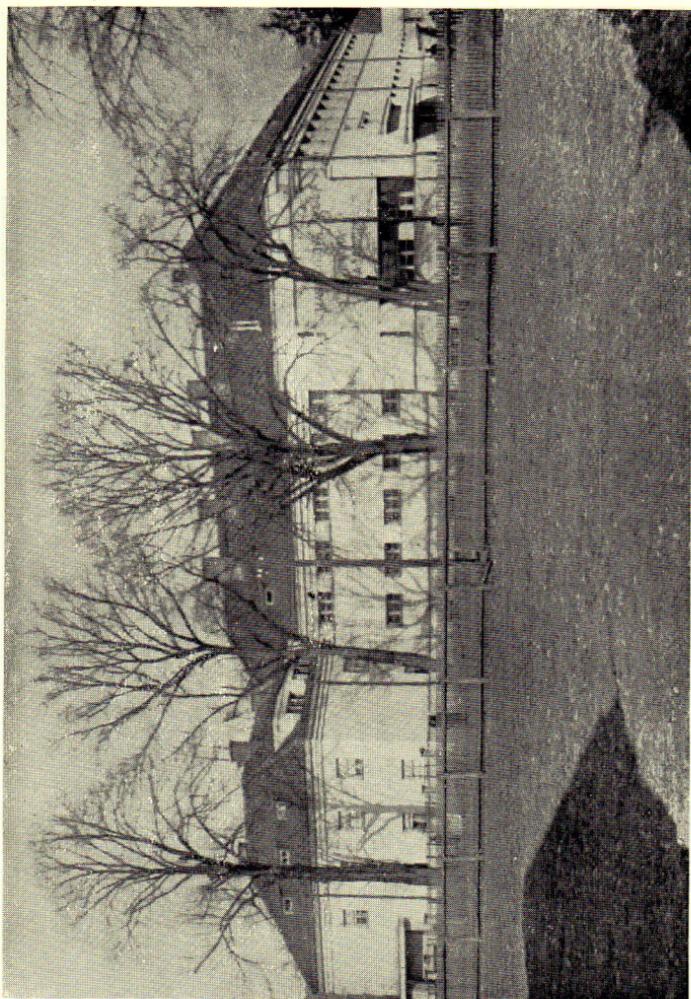
The emigrants who slipped surreptitiously across were simple people and brought little solid information. Usually they could tell only of the "Polish persecutions" in their own villages, and were unable to give any general picture of events. The one Ukrainian of any education who reached Chust from Lwow was a journalist—a Ukrainian enthusiast with a double visiting card, his name and qualifications printed in cyrillic characters on the front, in Latin on the back—and he was only there by chance, happening to have been abroad when the trouble started. Rumour, however, stated that the whole district was in a ferment; that wireless sets were sold out, and that in every town and hamlet throughout the country listening to the Ukrainian news services from Chust and other stations had acquired the sanctity of a religious rite; that the peasants were leaving their work in the fields, and that processions and demonstrations were the order of the day. Later these rumours were confirmed, and I learnt that in Lwow itself the



*A typical Ukrainian village*



*Nemecka Mokra, a German village (see p. 238)*



*The Czech-built High School at Svalava*

political leaders had been in as excited a state as the country people. Even the leaders of UNDO (Ukrainian National-Democrat Party), a party in principle favouring co-operation with the Poles, were affected. They scarcely believed that the Great Ukraine could be realized through Carpatho Ukraine, which they felt was not fit for the rôle that had been forced upon it by the Germans; yet, with Hitler moving, who knew what might happen?

The position of the Ukrainians in Poland, with which I had become acquainted several years previously, formed a striking contrast to that of their brothers in Carpatho Ukraine. In Poland the movement was an old one, and there had been Ukrainian deputies in the Galician Diet and the Austro-Hungarian Parliament long before the War. It had, in fact, been established long enough for splits to have occurred among the Ukrainians themselves. In Eastern Galicia and in parts of the country further north, national consciousness was highly developed even among the peasantry. They knew they were Ukrainians and needed no artificially puffed up propaganda to tell them so.

Ukrainian territory in Poland consists of the provinces of Stanislawow and Tarnopol and of the province of Lwow as far as the River San, all in former Austrian Poland, and of the province of Volhynia and of parts of Polesia and Lublin in former Russian Poland. Polish official figures give the total Ukrainian population as 4,441,600. The Ukrainians estimate it at 7,000,000, and German propagandists at 9,900,000. In any case there is also a considerable Polish population, Lwow being a predominantly Polish city, and large Polish islands being found not only to the west but also far to the east of Lwow. The Ukrainians of

Poland are a simple people, but in no sense as backward as the inhabitants of Carpatho Ukraine. It is generally recognized that their organizing capacity, as shown in the various rural co-operatives, is far superior to that of the Poles.

The Ukrainians in Poland were divided into two main groups.<sup>1</sup> One comprised UNDO (Ukrainian National-Democrat Party) which in principle favoured co-operation with the Poles, and UNDO's allies the Social Radicals; the other the small advanced parties which had Fascist nationalist principles and relied openly on force for attaining their ends. Above them all stood Archbishop Szczeptycki, Metropolitan of Lwow and head of the Greek Catholic Church. He has always been in a sense the "Father" of his people, and is one of the most remarkable of men connected with the Ukrainian movement. Born a Roman Catholic, of a noble family that has for generations considered itself Polish, he started his career as a cavalry officer. While still a young man, however, he turned to the Greek Catholic Church, entered a monastery and proclaimed himself a Ukrainian, from which race his family was said to have sprung. His promotion in the hierarchy of the Church was rapid, and he has been Archbishop of Lwow since 1922. His brother still considers himself a Pole and is a serving General in the Polish Army, while he himself is married to a Pole, a former Princess Sapieha.

Of the political parties UNDO had usually been considered as the representative Ukrainian minority party, and with its development had been bound up much of the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations. It was a democratic party and M. Mudrij, its leader,

<sup>1</sup> July, 1939—this classification still holds good.

had several times pointed out to me that it was "national" as opposed to "nationalist." Outside the towns the party had no organization, for in olden times, when UNDO and Ukrainian were practically synonymous, no organization was needed. The party leaders exerted their influence chiefly through the *Prosvita*, a widespread cultural society with its hall and library in every village, and the powerful and extremely well organized Butter and Milk Cooperatives, all of which they controlled. For many years after 1919 (when the Ukrainians, who then aspired to a free Ukrainian State in common with the Ukrainians in Russia, were overcome by the Polish Army under General Haller), the leaders of UNDO, although they sat in the Polish Parliament, refused to treat with the Polish Government in any way whatever. Their programme was complete territorial autonomy as promised to them when the territory was finally assigned to Poland by the Conference of Ambassadors, and for which a plan was in fact drawn up in 1922 but never put into practice.

In 1935 UNDO and M. Koscialkowski, the Prime Minister, reached what was known as a "normalization" agreement. Autonomy was not to be granted, but a number of concessions were to be made. A Ukrainian university was to be established at Lwow; the language of instruction in schools was to be Ukrainian; Ukrainians were to be granted higher posts in the Government services; in Ukrainian districts land parcelled under the Agrarian Reform Law was not to be given to Polish peasants; and the three provinces of Tarnopol, Stanislawow and Lwow were to be formed into a separate administrative area preparatory to a grant of complete autonomy. Unfortunately M. Koscialkowski retired almost im-

mediately after the agreement was made, and it was at once pigeon-holed. The Camp of National Concentration was being planned and anything, such as this plan, that might offend the susceptibilities of the Polish nationalists, whom it was hoped to draw into the Camp, had to be abandoned. Last May M. Mudrij changed his policy and began demanding autonomy again; but he had little hope of success.

The turn of events in Carpatho Ukraine put M. Mudrij in an extremely awkward position. Having obtained nothing from his policy of co-operation he was beginning to be regarded by his followers as something very akin to a deflated balloon.

"We are good Polish citizens," M. Mudrij said to a friend of mine who saw him early in March, "but with the Poles granting nothing, and with Russian agents working in Volhynia, and German agents working everywhere, we do not know how to plan—not even for to-morrow."

Mudrij and many of his close collaborators told me at the end of March, that they at any rate had never had any faith in the success of the German plans for the creation of a Great Ukraine by way of Carpatho Ukraine. Carpatho Ukraine, they said, was too backward and too unorganized ever to have formed the base for an irredentist movement, and was at the same time so surrounded by enemies that even the Germans could have had but little hope of keeping it alive. In the somewhat calmer and more realistic atmosphere of Lwow, where nationalism was nothing new, such a judgment was possible. Further, M. Mudrij, who was a convinced democrat and thus not prone to accept everything German at its face value, expressed the firm belief that the Ukrainians would have had very little to hope from the Germans once the Germans

were in power. Even, however, among those of his followers who nominally remained faithful to him—and they composed the majority of the party—there were without doubt, in the spring, many who secretly dreamed of the day when the sky-blue uniforms of the Sitch, followed closely by the field-grey of the Germans, would be seen on the Polish frontier.

The only alternative to allegiance to UNDO was co-operation with one of the several militant nationalist parties. All these parties were growing rapidly in numbers and even more rapidly in influence.<sup>1</sup> The most famous was the OUN (Ukrainian Nationalist Organization), the secret extra-Parliamentary organization, directed from Berlin. OUN, which works exclusively for the creation of a Great Ukraine, is the bugbear not only of the Polish but also of the Czech, Rumanian and Russian Governments. Only terroristic methods are employed. It was this organization that was responsible for the murder of General Pieracki, Polish Minister of the Interior, in one of the main streets of Warsaw in 1932, and then in 1938 its own leader, Colonel Konawaletz, was murdered by Russian agents in Rotterdam. Its membership is wrapped in the deepest secrecy, but many persons who are members of other parties seem at one time or another to have been more or less intimately connected with it.

Another nationalist organization was the women's party—possibly the only political party reserved exclusively for women anywhere in the world. The party rose from the ashes of the Women's League, nominally

<sup>1</sup> July: These parties are still growing in strength. After March 15 there was a short period of bitter disillusion. Since then, however, many of the country people, seeing that there is still nothing to hope from the Poles, have again turned towards the nationalist groups, and believe that their dreams can only be realized with foreign help; the offering of that help, they think, will be made possible most quickly by the outbreak of a war between Poland and Germany.

a cultural organization, that was banned by the Poles in July 1938 for having published political articles in its paper, an activity which was not mentioned in its charter and which, according to Polish law, was therefore illegal. Madame Rudnicka, the leader, a well-known figure at international women's conferences, decided that the simplest thing in the circumstances would be to found a political party, for which no charter would be required. The membership figure was kept secret, but neutral observers reported that the party's influence was out of all proportion to its members. Madame Rudnicka herself had a burning enthusiasm which, in contrast to that of the Ukrainians in Chust, seemed constructive, and which seemed pleasant enough to all but her political opponents. Nationalist influence was also wielded by certain clericals. They were not organized nor were they supported by Archbishop Szczeptycki, whose idea is to keep all Ukrainians in one fold, but their opinions, coming from the pulpit, made a strong impression on a simple and religious peasantry.

Finally for those who could not approve of the terrorist activity of the OUN nor of the democracy of Madame Rudnicka, there was the "fascist" National Unity Party of Palieff.

Palieff, on his own admission, has in his time been both an UNDO deputy and a co-operator of OUN. He founded his own party in 1933, when he left UNDO as a result of friction with the leaders. These he accused of a "policy of opportunism which meant grovelling round the knees of the Poles." The party, which boasted all the paraphernalia of a fascist organization, except a uniformed force, numbered only ten thousand registered members, and Palieff himself did not give an impression of great pre-

eminence. But although the party at first made little headway it had lately, owing to the deflation of the UNDO leaders, and to the turn of events on the Ukrainian stage as a whole, attracted considerable attention. Paliëff is a name that may well come to the fore, and is thus worth watching.

Both the leaders and the rank and file of these nationalist parties made no secret of their hatred of the Poles and the Russians, a hatred in every way as violent as that felt by the Chust leaders for the Czechs, or of their hopes for the attainment of freedom with German help. They saw the Great Ukraine as an immediate possibility, and to suggest to one of them that the German help on which they counted might prove a double-edged sword was tantamount to committing sacrilege. With most of them hatred of the Poles was traditional, but with a few, chiefly those who had once been UNDO men, it was born of desperation. "The Poles," said one of the leaders to me on the occasion of a surreptitious visit to Carpatho Ukraine in February, "will never take steps to rectify our position, not even if the Germans are already hammering on the gates—so why do you consider even the possibility of an agreement between us and them?"

The Polish attitude towards the Ukrainians has hardly varied. Whereas the Czechs tried a policy of *divide et impera*, favouring first the Ukrainians and then their enemies the Ruthenians, the Poles, like the Hungarians in Carpatho Ukraine before the War, have pursued a policy of repression, coupled with polonization. The Ruthenian or "Great Russian" group—for one exists in Eastern Galicia just as in

Carpatho Ukraine—has been comparatively silent. The Ukrainians have not. Yet every request for concessions has been met with a deaf ear, or else pigeon-holed, and no counter-offer has ever been made.

The first object of the Poles has been to segregate the Ukrainians in the former Russian provinces of Volhynia, Polesia and Lublin from their more nationally conscious brethren in Eastern Galicia (just as before the War the Hungarians tried to segregate the Galician Ukrainians from those in Carpatho Ukraine). The policy was a comprehensible one. For when the War ended many of the people in these provinces, although admitted by specialists to be Ukrainians, were in so low a state of culture that they were hardly race conscious at all. Those who were Roman Catholics always recognized themselves as Poles, but many of those who belonged to the Orthodox Church thought of themselves only as Orthodox, or, more often, merely as "locals" or "men of this village".

Propaganda with the object of making the people consider themselves Ukrainians soon began to filter into the provinces from two sources. One, curious as it may seem, was Russia. The other was Eastern Galicia. In those days the Russians, who had their own Ukrainians well in hand, used them as a basis for an expansionist policy. Agitators were smuggled across the frontier into Polesia and Volhynia, where they sought to impress upon the peasantry that they were Ukrainians, and that their future would be best assured if they joined Russia and became part of the "free Ukrainian republic under Russian protection, with its capital at Kiev." They had some success, for in the 1930 census, when 16 per cent of the population

was Polish and 22 per cent still remained "local", 46 per cent already considered itself Ukrainian. Similar methods were employed by the Russians in connection with the White Ruthenians, who inhabit the district round Vilna and Nowogrodek. When, however, in 1928 the Polish Government completed its Chinese Wall of barbed wire and watch towers along the whole length of the eastern frontier the Russian activities began to die down.

The spread of propaganda from Eastern Galicia which has been increasing all the time, has recently developed into a very marked crescendo. The authorities have endeavoured to counter it by virtually forbidding the circulation of Galician newspapers in the provinces; by making it impossible for children from these provinces to attend schools in Galicia, and, most important of all, by dissolving the connection between the co-operatives of the provinces and the headquarters of the Ukrainian Co-operative movement in Lwow. The Ukrainian Co-operatives have been obliged to merge with the local Polish organizations.

A logical continuation of this negative policy is seen in the endeavour to sever possibly dangerous contacts between Ukrainians and persons abroad by making it almost impossible for Ukrainians to obtain a passport; and in the decision to overcome the danger from Carpatho Ukraine by simply squashing the whole movement by the return of the province to Hungary.

An idea of the traditional methods of polonization, which is the complement of repression, can be obtained from the Ukrainian proposals of 1935 outlined above (p. 211). The most important are connected with education and agrarian reform. The Ukrainians complain that they have no university, that there are only four State-run Ukrainian middle schools as opposed to

sixty Polish, and that Grabski's Law of 1924 is forcing Ukrainians even out of the elementary schools. By this Law provision is made for the introduction of a régime in which half the instruction is given in Ukrainian, half in Polish. The régime can be introduced at the wish of twenty parents, regardless of the size of the village, and regardless of the fact whether the parents are of Polish or another (Jewish for instance) race. Officials of the UNDO Party have told me that the teachers in these schools are nearly always Poles, and that in practice the only subjects which are taught in Ukrainian are the Ukrainian language itself and gymnastics.

Complaints with regard to the Agrarian Reform Law are serious and well grounded. By this law a certain acreage of the large estates must be parcelled every year among the landless peasantry, or among those peasants whose holdings are too small to provide them with a means of subsistence. It is impossible, however, for Ukrainians to obtain land under this scheme. In the "frontier district," a belt of land running all round Poland, in principle some twenty miles deep but often widened by arbitrary decree to fifty miles, only Poles can by law obtain land. In other parts the name of the purchaser must be submitted to the authorities for their approval, and in the case of Ukrainians approval is rarely given. A Polish landlord living near Strij, who had been obliged to sell land, told me in March that he had had the greatest difficulty in finding a purchaser as no Ukrainian would be accepted. Like most other people in the district he had sold to Polish peasants coming from one of the central provinces. Not unnaturally the new arrivals were hated by their Ukrainian neighbours.

Other methods of polonization, not suggested in the

“normalization” agreement, were outlined to me by an American expert who came to Chust, and subsequently confirmed by both Ukrainians and Poles. Two of them are attributed to the army leaders. As one in every five soldiers in the Polish Army is a Ukrainian the army leaders are naturally vitally interested in the Ukrainian question. Their general trend of thought seems to be that only a man who considers himself a Pole can be a loyal soldier, and that the sooner the Ukrainian minority is liquidated the better.

One of their methods, given considerable publicity in the Government Press, is the mass conversion of the people to Roman Catholicism. The first of these “free” mass conversions took place in the summer of 1938. The way in which it happened is perhaps illuminating. In a certain village in the frontier district a Polish eagle was torn down from an administrative building. The commander of the local frontier force, a body which is supreme in the frontier districts, summoned all the villagers together and treated them to a half-hour’s speech. “For what you have done,” he is reported to have stated, “you should by rights be shot.” Later he stated that the Polish Government was lenient and that they would not be punished at all. A sign of grateful recognition on the part of the villagers, he indicated, would certainly be welcome. The recognition he suggested was that they should all embrace the Roman Catholic faith.

It is only fair to say that the incident aroused widespread dissatisfaction among very many Poles of all ways of thinking. In the Press, however, short notices were frequently to be seen in the spring indicating that another village had come over to the Roman

Church. The action, of course, had its parallel in Carpatho Ukraine where, in the early years after the War, the Czechs, for similar reasons, promoted the conversion of whole villages to the Orthodox Church. Had the Roman Catholic Church, instead of the renegade Roman contraption the "Czechoslovak" Church which hardly appealed to anyone, been the national one, there is no doubt that they would have tried conversions to the Roman Catholic Church instead. As it was they had to do anything that would get the people away from the Ukrainian tainted Greek Catholicism. Thus we have the curious spectacle of the Czechs, for a specific reason drawing the people into the Orthodox Church, and the Poles, for the very same reason, drawing them out of it.

Another method of polonization, also believed to be favoured by the army, and attractive in its ingenuity, is that of reminding certain Ukrainian peasants that they are in reality Polish nobles. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Poland was devastated by successive wars the kings were wont to settle empty areas with battalions of soldiers who had shown particular valour in battle. As an added attraction to the grant of land the soldiers were ennobled, which in Poland meant freeing them from their obligations as serfs and granting them a coat of arms. Under these conditions ennoblement did not amount to very much, but it was a privilege that was jealously guarded. Right up to the time of the last War it was possible here and there, in the remoter villages of Eastern Poland, to find a peasant going out to plough with the sword of the noble strapped to his side. A movement is now being made to unearth these nobles, many of whom have forgotten their origin, and thus to bring them back to the Polish

fold. Coats of arms are being re-granted, a register is being made and the Ukrainian termination to many of the names, "skyj," is being transformed into "ski." This method of dealing with the Ukrainian question cannot be expected to produce very great results, for it is not far-reaching. But it has the unusual merit of being constructive and of giving a certain satisfaction to those on whom it is practised. It is said to have had a good effect. For whereas a Ukrainian who has once put his foot on the ladder of intelligentsia is lost to the Poles for ever, the peasantry with whom this scheme deals are quite willing to accept polonism as the price of a social step upwards and the rediscovery of an ancient tradition.

The Polish answers to Ukrainian accusations are usually given in broad terms. Extremists simply say that Ukrainians do not exist. Others justify a refusal to grant autonomy by pointing to the very large numbers of Poles who are scattered over the Ukrainian districts. The granting of full territorial autonomy, they say, would merely lead to the creation of a new minority problem. Furthermore they have always stated that it would be absurd to grant autonomy to a minority of which even the most moderate political party has complete independence as an ultimate object of its programme.

In the autumn of 1938 events in Carpatho Ukraine introduced a new element of actuality into the question. In certain quarters it was urged that the Polish Government would best serve its future salvation by making immediate concessions to the Ukrainians. But it never seemed very likely that they would do so. In other quarters belief in the realization of the Polish plan for a Great Ukraine under Polish protection still held good. This plan had been discussed

in detail by the Polish leaders and Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, on the occasion of the latter's visit to the Bialowieza forest for a hunt in February 1938. The Germans, it was believed, were to receive compensation at Polish expense on the shores of the Baltic. (To the believed continued existence of this project were due vague recurrent waves of fear in Chust, lest the Germans should be planning a double-cross.)

By January 1939, however, it had become clear that the Polish Government was going to meet the new situation by relying on an eventual suppression of Carpatho Ukraine, and by the adoption of an even stronger hand in dealing with their own Ukrainians. They had before them the example of a Czech Government which had granted autonomy to Slovakia and Carpatho Ukraine and which, by so doing, had opened the way to every kind of foreign intrigue designed to encompass the complete and final downfall of the State. They were determined to take no such risk themselves. To make concessions, they thought, and no doubt quite rightly, would be to play directly into the enemy's hands.

After the events of March, which considerably lessened the danger of disruption from outside, and in view of the growing menace of a European war in which Poland would be involved, a few of the leading personalities in Poland felt that the psychological moment had suddenly arrived for a change of policy. But nothing was done. "The Ukrainian problem is a gaping hole in our stage," a leading Polish Government journalist remarked to me, "but the leaders ignore it, or else try and forget it by putting a little hay over it."

Perhaps one of the best answers to the repeated

queries of those who took up the lance on behalf of the Ukrainians as a suppressed minority is that given by many members of the Polish opposition parties. The Ukrainians, as a national minority they say, are not so badly treated; their battle is largely a battle for democracy; many of the rights which they ask are denied to the Poles just as much as to them.

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What, it may be asked, is the position of the "Ruthenians" in Poland, of the counterparts, that is to say, of the priest whom I met on the way back from Svalava?

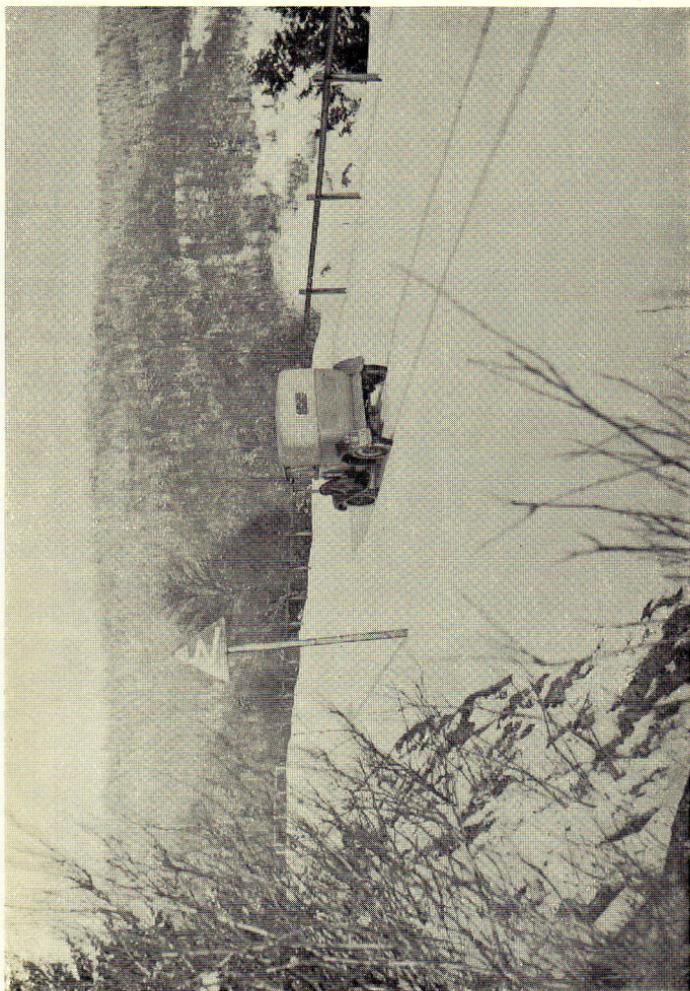
In Poland they are not strong, numbering, at their own estimate, no more than 400,000. But they have had a curious history. For the Ukrainian movement was the illegitimate and unwanted child of the Ruthenians.

The autonomist movement, Ukrainian or Ruthenian whichever you like to call it, started round about 1830. Szaskewicz had a great success with his *Dniester Fairy*, the first book written in Ukrainian in Eastern Galicia, in 1837, and eleven years later, in 1848, the famous *Ruska Rada* was held. The *Ruska Rada*, a council which met at the Saint John's monastery, which adjoins the Greek Catholic cathedral in Lwow and is now the home of Archbishop Szczeptycki, sent a memorial to the Emperor Ferdinand in Vienna demanding certain privileges. The Ukrainians claim that this council marks the inauguration of the Ukrainian movement, while the Ruthenians maintain that it was rather a meeting of Ruthenians, of people that is to say who considered themselves as forming one of the three branches of the Russian race, the Great Russians, the Little Russians and the White

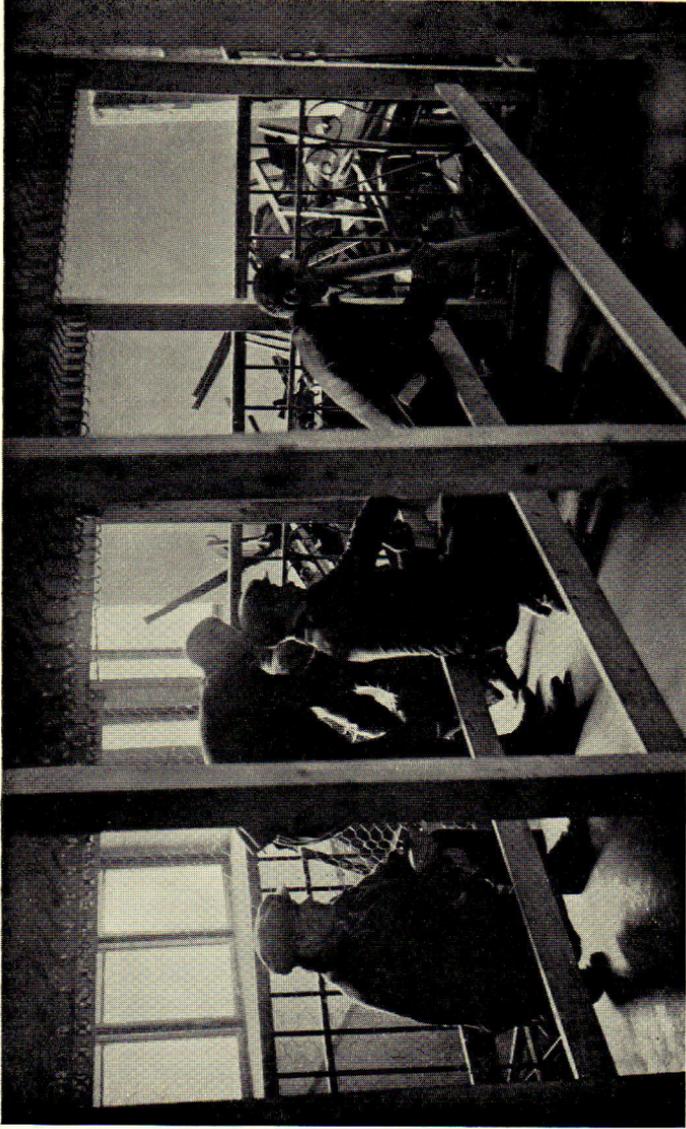
Russians, as opposed to Austrians and Poles. A definite differentiation between the two arose, however, at the close of the century. In 1891 M. Barvinskij and a small group of sympathizers declared in the Vienna Diet that they had nothing in common with the Russian race, and began to substitute the name Ukrainian for that of Ruthenian. From 1900 onward they were definitely known as Ukrainians. In 1900, too, another significant change was made. *Dilo*, the party organ, which used to employ etymological spelling, started to be written phonetically as were the Ukrainian organs in Kiev. This accentuated the difference between the language in which it was written and Russian, which continued to be written etymologically.

The Ruthenian Party in its present form dates from 1891, and consists of all those persons who remain faithful to the theory that they form one of the branches of the Russian race. In the offices of the party, which is led by Dr. Alexander Pavencki, are many pictures of Dostoevsky, Andrejev, Pushkin, and other famous Russian writers, which give a clear indication of the party's leanings. Dr. Pavencki, however, states that the party, although it looks towards Russia culturally, has no actual desire for political union with Russia, and that although some of the party members have Communist leanings the policy of the party is definitely anti-Communist. Their immediate aims are three in number. They want the Ruthenian dialect as the medium of instruction in their schools, with Russian as a subject; land for parcellation; and State money for their cultural organizations.

"We are better off under the Poles than under the Austrians," one of the leaders told me lately, "and



*For three months no traffic had crossed the Polish frontier (see p. 257)*



*Sitch defend our hotel against the Czechs (see p. 276)*

we prefer the Polish to a Ukrainian régime here. Now we have few advantages, it is true, but in a Ukrainian autonomous province we should be squashed out altogether."

At the present time the Ruthenian movement in Galicia does not seem very important. But yet much may be heard of it in the future. In November 1938, the leaders of UNDO feared that, if they did not continue their electoral co-operation with the Government, the Poles, obliged to have representatives of some sort for Eastern Galicia in the new Diet, would offer a number of places on the list to the Ruthenians. If the party can survive so long it is possible, too, that some turn of events in Eastern Europe might bring the movement, and all that it implies, into a position of even greater prominence.

# 13

ON Sunday, 26 February, I went down to Budapest for two days. The final downfall of the Czechoslovak Republic, the snatching of Carpatho Ukraine by Hungary, and the blotting out of all hope of building up a free Great Ukraine with Carpatho Ukraine as a basis were scarcely more than two weeks off. No one in Chust had an inkling of this.

When I left, great preparations were in train for the opening of the Diet, which was to have taken place on the following Thursday, 2 March. The Central Government had, indeed, made the summoning of the Diet and the presence of the Czechoslovak Prime Minister contingent on the successful conclusion of the negotiations with Prague regarding the financing of Carpatho Ukraine—but official circles confidently believed that the negotiations would be finally and happily settled within the next twenty-four hours. The venue had been changed back from Rachov to Chust, partly because of the clamour of the faithful in the capital, partly because the Government was afraid that if they kept to their original plan they would encourage an accusation that they were reluctant to hold the Diet in Chust because of the exceptionally large number of people there who had had the courage to vote against them in the elections. The German Minister in Prague was expected, and invitations had also been sent to the French, British and other Ministers.

Communications with Hungary were still disorganized. No one at Chust railway station, in the Government offices, or at the frontier station could tell me whether there were direct trains from the Hungarian frontier station to Budapest. To telephone to Hungary itself was out of the question; one was just told that the call had been put through, but that no one would answer. When I got into the train itself no one even knew how the trains ran on our own side of the frontier; and I was obliged to change three times within a distance of twenty miles.

When I reached it, Hungary almost seemed a paradise in spite of the fact that on previous occasions I had found the atmosphere of the country unsympathetic. In the train I ate fish, firm white salmon from Lake Balaton, and cabbage that was not sour, for the first time since I had left Prague. In Budapest I drove to my hotel with my head hanging out of the window, enjoying the flood of lights and the rich-looking shops like a child that has been taken to town for a Christmas pantomime. The appearance of wealth around me seemed unbelievable when compared with what I had left twelve hours before, though, curiously enough, my senses had become so drugged in Chust that they had already ceased to register how third-rate it was. The next day, from the moment when I got into a real porcelain bath with polished taps out of which hot and cold water gushed at will, until I ate my final meal in a restaurant where the plates were clean, the food well cooked and the music neither flat nor sharp, was like a quiet adventure.

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It was in Budapest that I heard the first rumblings of the coming storm. In the last week or so there had

been a sharp recrudescence in the Government and other papers of the suggestion, current in the autumn, that Hungary was soon to recover Carpatho Ukraine. The majority of responsible people thought that the trouble would begin with the emergence into Czech consciousness of the feeling that Carpatho Ukraine had become a troublesome liability instead of an economical and political asset, and that accordingly they might as well recall the army and leave the Ukrainians to their fate. It was thought that the Hungarians would then immediately march in, and that Germany would acquiesce, however unwillingly, because of her reluctance to alienate Hungary, which would be an invaluable granary in the event of war. Others again suspected a complete replanning of the map of Central and Eastern Europe by Colonel Beck and Count Ciano during the latter's visit to Warsaw. This rumoured replanning, which in the end led to nothing, is interesting if only for the light which it throws on Italian policy, a policy that has continually aimed at procuring an insurance against excessive German interference in Central and Eastern Europe.

The plan, it is believed, would have involved first the acquisition by Hungary of Carpatho Ukraine, and the usurping of the growing German influence in Slovakia by Poland (to both of which manœuvres Italy would lend her support); and then the final welding of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Italy into a chain slung across Europe between Germany and the Danube basin.

Strength seems to have been lent to the theory by the violent flirtation which the Poles immediately began with Slovakia. A flirtation had already been tried at the end of January when, according to reliable

reports, the Poles offered to hand back to Slovakia the Javorina district, which they had acquired during the final frontier negotiations last November. The first advances had been resisted, but now they appeared to have considerably more chance of success. *Slovak*, the official newspaper, published a leading article in which it was said that, in spite of the loss of Javorina, the only sensible thing to do was to make friends with Poland. Eminent Polish professors were invited down, a branch of the Polish railways' office was opened, and negotiations were initiated in Zilina for a Trade and Cultural Agreement with Poland. At the same time the Slovaks took the unprecedented step of banning the German *Völkischer Beobachter*. (The paper had published an article in which a Slovak bishop, who had banned the Nazified Hlinka Guard, was accused of having been influenced by a Jew.) But before these moves could bear any fruit Germany had made a panther's spring, squashed the whole scheme and, by the occupation of Bohemia and the virtual occupation of Slovakia, made herself supreme in Central Europe.

The first step against the Slovaks was taken when Herr Karmasin, German State Secretary in Slovakia, warned the Government that they had embarked on a dangerous path; the second, when Prague, fearing the possible results of the flirtation with Poland, started a process of what was widely called "repressing" the Slovaks. Slovak Governments were reconstructed by the President almost daily, Ministers were nominated and recalled so quickly that no one knew clearly who was a Minister and who was not, everyone suspected everyone else, and in the end firing started. This and alleged anti-German riots in Bohemia gave the Germans the chance they wanted.

They marched in to "restore order." No one now believes that the upheaval in Bohemia was spontaneous, and, according to reliable authorities in Bratislava, there was sinister double-dealing in Slovakia too. The Germans, it is said, were the first to inform Prague of the Slovak-Polish flirtation, at the same time pointing out its dangers and advocating the use of the strongest measures for suppression—only later to take the Czech methods, which they themselves had recommended, as a justification for them to suppress Czech rule altogether.

So much for the supposed Polish-Italian plan and for its inglorious finish. The only part of it that was realized was the acquisition of Carpatho Ukraine by Hungary—and I was soon to be an eye-witness of the process.

At the Ukrainian frontier station, where I got into a through carriage from Prague, which had passed through the strip of Hungarian territory locked, I was immediately back in my old surroundings. The train was crowded, corridor as well as carriages, and I could scarcely even push my suitcase in. Trunks, hampers, wooden boxes, baskets and great bundles rolled up in linen lay piled on one another, and on the top of all was perched the inevitable side-curved Jew. Apparently the Czechs had to pay 3,000 crowns (£22) for each waggon that crossed Hungarian territory and so tried to keep their number as low as possible.

Clattering along from the station in an open cab, I passed through streets full of people with paint brushes and paint pots and people slapping colour wash over their houses. The police inspector had decreed, with German thoroughness, that every house in Chust must be repainted within forty-eight hours,

so that Europe's newest capital should make a good impression on guests coming for the opening of the Diet. The remaining Czech signs, including even those that duplicated Ukrainian ones, were gone, and not a single Czech word remained to offend susceptible Ukrainian eyes. The Koruna was being furbished up by lads with close cropped heads newly arrived from Poland, a new bath and geyser had appeared, and painters were preparing a special room for the German Minister. The grand hall of the big Czech-built High School in which the Diet was to be held, was being decorated with the blue and yellow colours, and fitted with special stands to accommodate the two hundred and fifty foreign guests who were expected for the ceremony. Late in the evening I saw a group of old Jews kneeling in the street, their long beards sweeping the dust, as they put the final touches of paint round doorsteps and beneath the windows, while others were still clambering up ladders and balancing on rickety scaffolding. If members of the Government, though unsuccessful so far in reaching a financial settlement with the Czechs, were confident that all would go well in the end—for if all else failed there were always friends in the world outside—the man in the street was innocent both of the trouble with the Czechs and of what was being said abroad about the probable end of Carpatho Ukraine. On police instructions, all electric current had been cut off during daylight hours for the last two days, so that no one could use the wireless and receive Hungarian propaganda or other outside news.

Late that evening we heard that the opening of the Diet had again been postponed, this time until "sometime between March the sixth and ninth." What had happened? Karmasin and Esterhazy, the

leaders of the Germans and Hungarians in Slovakia, and Revay, most rabid of the Ukrainian Ministers, were all in Berlin together. Karmasin was no doubt reporting on the budding Slovak-Polish flirtation, Revay it seems clear was asking for money. He was met with a flat refusal. Meanwhile the vital negotiations between Chust and Prague were still going on and, as far as I could see, showed little signs of coming to the happy ending anticipated by the Ukrainians. Prague was willing to provide the necessary money, but demanded certain guarantees, such as a cessation of anti-Czech propoganda, the retention of General Prchala (the Czech Minister) in the Ukrainian Cabinet, and a full account of the use of certain money removed from Uzhorod and Munkacevo at the time of the evacuation, much of which, although all-State money, was believed to have been pocketed by the Ukrainians for the development of the Sitch. They also demanded that the anti-Polish activities of the Sitch and the more rabid Great Ukrainians should cease immediately, it being impossible, they said, to hope for peace in Eastern Europe so long as the frontiers were constantly being disturbed by incidents.

The demands seemed comprehensible enough. But the Ukrainians, like untutored children, would brook no control. Confident still in the support of Germany, should it be needed, they even put forward a series of counter demands. Revay claimed, for instance, in a signed article in *Nowa Swoboda*, the official paper, that all through the twenty years of Czech domination large sums had been promised annually for development purposes. This money had never been paid in full; about 75 per cent of it being the most that the province ever received in practice. The rest had been used for

national purposes, usually rearmament. Now the Ukrainians were going to demand the retrospective payment of all money owed; and they were not going to make its payment the occasion for political negotiations of any sort.

The prospect of the possible withdrawal of the Czech Army if they showed themselves too recalcitrant did not seem to worry the Ukrainians. In any case in a year, a high official was saying to me just before the final crash, they would be able to defend themselves; the Sitch would by then be fully organized and all schoolboys would be receiving military training as part of the school curriculum. The Hungarians would be poor rivals for the Sitch, he said, and although the Poles certainly had modern equipment, no equipment could help them in a battle with Carpatho Ukraine; they would be stabbed in the back by the Ukrainians in their own country.

Later in the week General Prchala and Father Volosin had several interviews lasting over three hours each, but even then it was not clear to us that things were going to move so quickly. We were cut off from the world in a little world of our own. There might be trouble with the Czechs, we thought, but the taking over of the province by Hungary, in face of a Germany which wanted it for the promotion of her further political aims, seemed virtually out of the question. So little did we think that anything serious would happen that we bought an old car for ten pounds and undertook some more expeditions.

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About this time considerable excitement was felt throughout Carpatho Ukraine as the result of the election of Cardinal Pacelli to the Papacy. Pacelli,

in contrast to Pius XI, was said to have shown marked sympathy for the Ukrainian movement. Soon after the election I was discussing the matter with one of the dignitaries of the Greek Catholic Church, and I asked him whether there were any concrete reasons for the optimism that was being so widely expressed. At first he was non-committal and merely said that when a man becomes Pope he loses any private leanings and becomes a universal father. Then he suddenly changed his mind, and said that the new Pope, as Cardinal Pacelli, had of course been one of the best friends the Ukrainians had ever had. He had shown his sympathy in many ways.

In 1927-30 he had built and organized the Seminary of St. Joseph in Rome for candidates for the Greek Catholic priesthood. The creation of this college had been of particular importance to the Ukrainian movement. Previously the Greek Catholics, the majority of whom are Ukrainians, had only had a very inadequate college in Rome, the little *Collegium Ruthenicum*, and most of the priests had had to be trained in local seminaries at home. Now a splendid common meeting ground had been provided for Greek Catholics, not only from all parts of the Ukraine itself but also from the large Ukrainian colonies in Canada and the United States. When they went home at the close of their period of training they would go as disciples of a common Ukrainian idea. The college had accommodation for seventy candidates, and was run by the Basilian brothers who form the most important religious order in the Ukraine.

It was also due to Pacelli, my informant said, that the Greek Catholic dioceses in Canada and the United States were reorganized. He had created one bishopric for the Ukrainians from Galicia and another

for those from Carpatho Ukraine, thus ending the constant friction between the two groups, a friction which had reacted badly on the prospects of the Ukrainian movement as a whole. In Carpatho Ukraine itself Pacelli had apparently been best known for his constant and very considerable assistance to the various local charitable and social works.

With Pacelli as Pope certain of the Ukrainian leaders in Chust hoped to see the realization of a plan which they had long cherished, namely, the creation of an Archbishop who would have control over all the Greek Catholic bishops, regardless of the country in which their diocese happened to be situated, and who would thus become head of what would virtually be a Ukrainian national Church. A deputation was to have left Chust for Rome to carry out certain soundings, but their departure was forestalled by the arrival of the Hungarians. The obvious candidate for such an appointment was Archbishop Szczeptycki. When I mentioned the plan to the Archbishop, on a later occasion, however, I found that he personally showed little enthusiasm for it. Apparently he feared that it might in the end lead to the Greek Catholics severing their four hundred year old union with Rome. Were there one supreme head of the Greek Catholics, responsible only to the Pope, a severance of the union would be a simple matter. Such action would at once give the Ukrainians a national Church, and one that was in no way bound up with the universal Church of Rome. It would thus in fact mean the creation of a new autocephalous Orthodox Church similar to the autocephalous Churches of Bulgaria and Rumania.

# 14

THE car we bought was very old. I do not know whether the purchase was more influenced by my appreciation of the car itself, or by my liking for its owner. It certainly was odd-looking, rather like a delivery van, but so neat and well-kept that it must always have been cared for as a friend of the family. The owner, who was a Czech frontier official from Akna Slatina, was pleasantly immune from the modern craving for speed. Naturally, he said, the car would not do more than thirty miles an hour, and if it had not got four-wheel brakes what did that matter? He for one certainly did not want to go careering along the roads and smash his head. He spoke all the time with enthusiasm and a certain naïveté, and I was disposed to trust the fundamental integrity of both himself and his car. Apparently he only used the car once a week; and no wonder, for we found it always took three-quarters of an hour of winding to start it. Incidentally, although it would do thirty miles an hour on the level, the speed it preferred was round twenty-five or twenty miles an hour. But I liked that car. It had much more character than any of those slick shiny vehicles from mass-production factories.

Our first expedition was to Nemecka Mokra, the most important of the German villages and one inhabited entirely by Germans. We set out by the

familiar road along the valley to the east, and then, at Bedevlja, turned up a valley towards the north. These journeys were always interesting, for although the general scene in Carpatho Ukraine was unvaried, we were constantly finding small but marked differences in the style of the buildings, and in every article employed by the peasants.

At Bedevlja, for instance, I was immediately struck by the construction of the cottages. The familiar huts built of tree trunks, or of poles roughly smoothed over, were nowhere to be seen. Instead each cottage was built of great sheets of wood cut from the centre of the tree, each one so broad that five or six would suffice for the whole height of the wall. The wood had turned a rosy colour and the interstices had been painted a particularly bright blue. Garden fences had been fashioned in the same manner. The effect of the bold stripes was striking and made a pleasant and cheerful change from the usual plain blues and browns. Except in villages further up this valley, I saw this style nowhere else.

Fences were different in almost every village, but within the village itself there was strict adherence to the common custom and no variety whatsoever. In one place, for instance, the fences were all made of bundles of twigs woven through upright sticks, the whole having a little roof of twigs, like a Wiltshire wall, though I wondered why anyone should find it necessary to keep rain off a fence. Further on the fences had a less bunched appearance, for the weaving through the uprights was done with single stout sticks only.

All up the broad part of the valley were village settlements with plenty of signs of life, smoke oozing out between the wooden tiles, linen hung out in great

strips along the fences to dry, and on the poles beneath the eaves beautifully embroidered shirts. But there was no one about. The women were at home washing and cooking, the men out working in the forests. The only movement was that of the little trains puffing down the valley with great bundles of pine-trees bound on to bogies and sagging dangerously in the middle, or of those going up the valley with big open waggons in which foresters lay on piles of hay or sat stiffly on little upright benches, their axes clasped between their knees. Then we came to the narrower head of the valley. Beech woods came steeply down to the river's edge, leaving only two ledges, one on either side, on which the road and railway were built. Here and there in open patches were odd-shaped little enclosures in which the peasants were growing potatoes. It was lonely up there, the only sound being that of the swiftly tumbling river.

Nemecka Mokra, approached over a slight rise, lies far up near the head of the valley. Below one the roofs of the houses and the barns behind them form four neat lines between the river and the steep grass valley side. In its neatness and unity, the street is attractive. The houses on either side are almost identical. They are built of wood with shingled roofs, but there is nothing of the Ukrainian primitiveness about them. Each is linked to its neighbour by a paling with a big and a small gate in it for each house, and there is an immediate feeling of architectural unity. When comparing these houses with others of Ukrainian type, the first thing one notices is that their windows, instead of being miserable little holes, are reasonably large and framed; also that all the houses have pots of flowers, without which no German can live, standing along the window sills. Half-way up

the village street, and forming a little centre, stands the white wooden church, in simple classical style, and two large schools. Round them are grass and the typically German lime-trees. Everyone who passed by was in ordinary drab West European dress.

We went first to the school to seek out the teacher to whom I had been recommended. He was just going out but promised to join us later. Finding a small restaurant and walkers' hostel, run by a Slav of some sort, we asked whether we could have some lunch. No, they had nothing at all. What about some cold meat? No, they had none. Or ham? No, they had nothing to offer, and with Slav apathy resigned themselves to a blank stare and a shrug of the shoulders. They could give us eggs, they agreed at last, but it would be much better if we went down the street to Zauner, who might be cooking lunch.

At Zauner's we had a very different reception. For him we were a problem that called for solution and that must be solved positively. Yes; come right in, of course we could have something. He went into the room behind the bar, closed the windows and drew two chairs up to a table between the beds—for this was the best bedroom. Eggs were collected from the chicken run, tins from the shop were opened and soon we were eating a hearty meal. There was no haze of apathy round Zauner's German head.

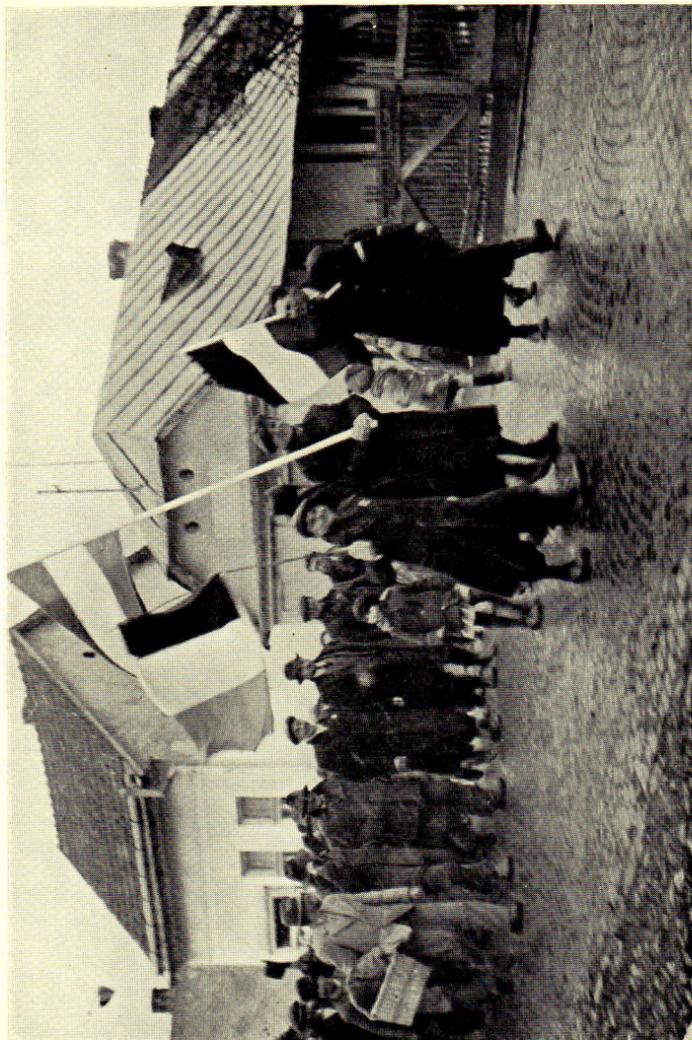
The schoolmaster, a precise young man with yellow horn-rimmed spectacles, soon joined us, and Zauner, as soon as he discovered who we were, disclosed that he was district leader of the German Party. He was also one of the local history experts. Nemecka Mokra, he said, in a voice that still bore traces of the broad Tyrolese accent, was founded in 1777 by twenty-five

families that had been brought by the Forestry Administration from the Gmunden district of Austria. A banner given by Maria Teresa to mark the event still hangs in the church. They had left Gmunden in March and, after travelling across half Europe in ox-carts, had reached Mokra in September, six months later.

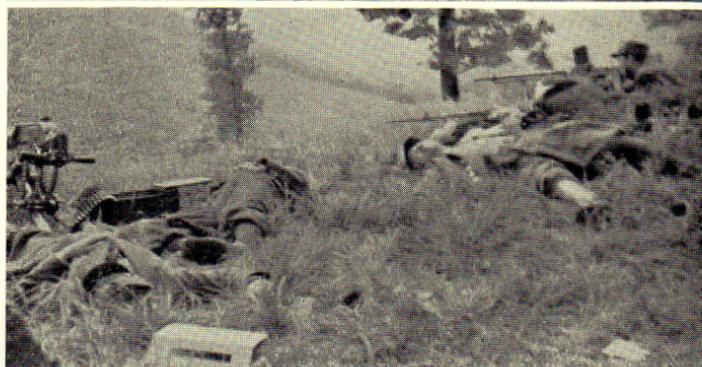
When they arrived they found that things were not nearly as rosy as they had been painted. There was nowhere on the spot where they could live, and as it was impossible to start building until the spring, they all had to spend the winter as lodgers in a Ukrainian village some way down the valley. Like those in Zipserei they were all contract workers and were paid largely in kind. They were also given small plots of ground and the right to graze their cattle, free of charge, on the surrounding upland pastures.

However, their troubles soon came thickly. The Hungarian authorities, who, Zauner said, regretted the concessions they had been forced to give in order to entice the workers to come, began to oppress them and gradually to whittle away the concessions. The climax came about eighty years ago, when the contract was taken away on the ground that it had to be copied. No one ever saw the contract again, and from that moment it was an easy matter for the Hungarians to do what they liked, for the villagers had nothing with which to substantiate their claims. The privileges disappeared rapidly then, and at last even the soil on which the houses stood (which it was understood had been granted "for ever") was taken away, and since 1880 the people have been obliged to pay dues for pasturing their cattle on the upland pastures.

I asked what the population consisted of to-day; whether all the families that had first come there were



*Hungarians in Chust go out to meet the Hungarian army (see p. 285)*



*Finis Carpatho-Ukraine*

still to be found, and whether there had been a large admixture of Ukrainian blood.

There were no Ukrainians in the village even now, they proudly told me, and only two Jewish families, each of which kept a shop. As for the German population, that had changed somewhat. Half of the original families had got tired of life under the unusual conditions of Carpatho Ukraine and longed for Austria again. Some had got into their ox waggons and lumbered slowly back to Gmunden, others had come to a compromise and gone to the more civilized German settlements near Marmoros Sziged or in the Zips district of Slovakia. The poorer ones, whose oxen had died and who could not afford to move, were obliged to stay in Mokra, whether they liked it or not. The population had grown considerably, however, both owing to natural increase and to a sporadic German immigration. Most of the new arrivals were wandering German apprentices who had married in the village and then settled down there. Others had wandered over the hills from the German settlements in Galicia. But new blood had been a comparative rarity, and there was no one in the village who was not the cousin of at least a score of persons. The result, I noticed, was weak-minded children who wandered about in the yards feebly chopping wood.

After this long historical interlude we went to see the school. As we entered, the children all sprang to their feet with the Hitler salute and a full-throated "Heil." Oddly enough, the priest who was giving them religious training turned out to be the one whom I had seized warmly by the hand in Chust only two days before, having mistaken him for another. I asked him if it would be possible, supposing the German children from Nemecka Mokra and the

Ukrainian children from Russka Mokra further down the valley could be placed side by side, to distinguish between the two nationalities.

"No, I do not think so," he replied, "for one often can't tell what people are. What do you think I am, for instance?"

I had no idea, but after some reflection decided that the answer calculated to disturb fewest people would be "Ukrainian."

"Thank God, no; I am a Hungarian," he said.

After that an icy atmosphere fell on the party. The priest made no bones about his allegiance, or of what hopes he had for the future, and there was naturally a deep cleft between him and the German leaders who accompanied me. The village nearly always received a Hungarian priest, for the inhabitants were all Roman Catholics, and in Chust the Roman Catholic Church is entirely in Hungarian control. But even the efforts of a succession of Hungarian priests can have had but little success in spreading Hungarian influence in Nemecko Mokra.

Outside we were joined by two more teachers. Each wanted to show or tell us something different, but everything was designed to emphasize the strength of the German tradition. One took me to peer through a window into a little room where an old man was teaching his son, who was standing with a massive sword held in front of him, the difficult numbers of the Sword Dance. Although the old Austrian songs are still commonly sung, and people still yodel in the mountains or to keep time when working in team, all other dances, such as the Schuplatten and other Salzkammergut dances, seem to have died out. Another of the teachers was a language expert. He said that the broad dialect, which I had already

remarked, is still the old local Salzkammergut one, but that it has become hardened by contact with Hungarian, and that certain Hungarian and Ukrainian words have been introduced. Most of the Ukrainian words were connected with agriculture.

Then a third teacher, a fat man who had so far remained shrouded in a thick cloak against the bitter wind, suddenly said that it was a pity we had not come in the summer, for the district was rich in ancient customs, and at that season we could have learnt something of one of them first hand.

“You could have had the pleasure of being beaten on the pastures by the girls of the village,” he said with a rich laugh. “Any stranger who goes up there has to submit to that, and even people from the village, if their visits there are rare. The girls looking after the cattle would have set on you and demanded the usual tribute. You would have been lain down on a bench with a comfortable pillow placed neatly under your face. Then each of the girls would have taken a stick and beaten you three times on the seat; once for herself, once for you and a third time for health. It does not usually hurt, but the girls are very susceptible to whom they are beating, and,” he added rather bitterly, “it can be made to hurt very much sometimes.”

“The men can get their own back at Easter time,” he continued. “On Easter Monday the men and boys go about tipping water over the womenfolks’ heads. As many drops as a woman gets on her head so many blows will she receive during the coming year. Early in the day everyone behaves very decorously. But in the evening, when everyone has drunk a lot, and got a little merry, the fun begins in earnest and it ends in real water battles.”

After that he wrapped himself up in his cloak again and did not say anything more all the afternoon.

At the end of the street where the village was merging into the forest we went into one of the houses. Two girls with long flaxen pigtailed were just leaving the courtyard, balancing on their heads big tubs full of the week's washing that was to be done in the neighbouring stream. One of them was so overcome by the sight of strangers that she succumbed to giggles and let her tub slip and roll on to the ground. It was completely smashed. The mother was furious; in a village where everyone had always been carrying their bundles or wash tubs like that, she never remembered having seen a tub let drop! The old father, sitting in the corner making sour milk pots, was quite unmoved. He could soon replace the tub, he said. No doubt he could, for he worked at tremendous speed, cutting the side planks of the pots and then fitting them into the rings of wood which his son set into shape, forcing them down over big conical wooden blocks. None of the men make anything except these pots. The women, too, unlike the Ukrainian women, make practically nothing. All they do is to spin old rags into strips for weaving into rag carpets. This thread they then take to Ukrainian women in some other village to be made up. They spin no other material, and do not now keep their own sheep.

"There are three reasons why we do not keep sheep now," I was told. "We were deprived of our free grazing rights on the upland pastures; we do not wear homespun clothes like the Ukrainians; and it costs a German too much to keep sheep. A Ukrainian can keep them very cheaply," my informant said sniffily, "because in summer he will sleep out in the

open air with them, and in winter has them almost indoors, but a German does not care to live on that level."

The German colonists in Carpatho Ukraine always retained this attitude of slight superiority, bred originally of the knowledge that they had been brought there to teach, and I was always curious to find out how they managed to retain the very much higher cultural level which gave them the right to do so. The only good reasons that I could ever deduce were their age-long tradition of cleanliness and order, their greater ability for regular work, and, perhaps most important of all, their smaller families and their ability to keep money in their pockets when they had it. The Ukrainian peasant, when he has money, puts on his best white coat and best astrakhan hat, sets off on a Saturday to the nearest small town, and stays there until he is so drunk that he becomes a nuisance and gets helped home by someone. Not so the German. He usually keeps his money, or else, if he feels in need of a drink, goes down to the village inn, has a brandy or two and then joins with everyone else in the inn in the singing of the old familiar round songs from the *Salzkammergut*.

After we ourselves had drunk something at Zauner's we all got into the car and drove back down the valley to another German settlement, Ustcorne (*Konigsfeld*) which we had passed through that morning. It was, in general, just as neat and German as *Nemecka Mokra*, but I was surprised by a lot of half washed-out "12's" on the gateways. They looked so very un-German and neglected. "12" in fact had been the number of *Conrad Henlein's* list in the Czechoslovak elections of 1935—the election in which the *Sudeten German Party*, with its demand for autonomy within

the Czechoslovak State, was first heard of! The election seemed already to belong to another age.

In the school we found the head teacher holding a conference with his subordinates, two blond young men from the Sudeten district. Signs of Nazi-ism were considerably more glaring than in Nemecka Mokra. Over the stage at the end of the room was a large inscription, "Ein Volk, ein Will, ein Führer" (one people, one will, one leader).

I commented on the substitution of "one will" for the familiar "one State."

"Because we have not got one State yet," the head teacher replied simply.

The slight emphasis on the word "yet," and the simple straightforward way in which he said it made me wonder whether he was seriously hoping for the creation of a Reich that would include even Carpatho Ukraine, and with it Ustcorne. It seemed a hope that had little chance of realization. But yet, I reflected, as in three years from the founding of the Henlein Party not the desired autonomy only but secession had been realized, why should not this also happen?

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One evening about this time I saw a young man outside the hotel with a camel coat, a book in his hand (Jane Austen) and a rather slouching walk. It was clear at once that he was an Englishman. He was in fact the first—and only—tourist to come to Carpatho Ukraine. When I met him later I learnt that his father was conducting financial negotiations with the Czech Government in Prague and that he had decided, with that complete disregard of political upheavals that characterizes most English people

abroad, to see something of Eastern Europe. His arrival caused quite a little stir in Chust and sent the porter darting off like lightning to Bilej, the police inspector. He had come immediately from Budapest and said he should probably return there next day; Chust, he confessed was "not quite what he had expected." Later we had dinner together at the Slovensky Dom, a little Czech restaurant. It was crowded, and we were only able to sit at a table specially brought out for us and placed directly under the band, a position in which one risked getting the violin bow instead of the food in one's mouth. The visitor thought it was all "wizard". I was very grateful to him; he was the only person who ever found Chust as entertaining as I did.

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Impatient of waiting for the opening of the Diet, that was constantly being postponed, we decided to make our long planned tour to the western part of Carpatho Ukraine. We started out on 6 March. The first day was wholly unsatisfactory, a series of difficulties presenting themselves one after the other. At first the car would not start. Then it stopped on the outskirts of Chust and would not go. In the end we left Chust nearly three hours late.

The road to Svalava, along which we started, seemed attractive this time—at least so my diary tells me. Previously I had thought it dull, but perhaps that was because I had only seen it from inside a crowded and evil-smelling omnibus. At Dovhe we had time to look at the remains of the old castle; four high walls with a gazebo at each corner, and inside a big lawn with a pleasant one-storied house decorated with little pilasters. I also saw the archaic-looking

lamps again of which I had had a fleeting but ever remembered glance on our first journey in January; tall rough wooden posts with an oil lamp balanced on the top.

At Svalava we lunched in the Sokol house and then went to take some photographs. C had made a series of pictures illustrating the timber industry in Carpatho Ukraine and wanted a picture of a large timber-yard to complete it. But a difficulty far greater than that of the morning was awaiting us. We went down to a high bridge over a railway, from which there was a splendid view over the largest timber-yard in the whole province. C would not take a photograph. He said he felt there were military objects about and anyway there were soldiers. Feeling rather annoyed at this Polish respect for the authorities, I said I would take the photograph myself. So I ran up on to the bridge and did so. Then we photographed the wooden church I had seen before, and the Law Court, a good modern building in the main street.

Half an hour later, as we were buying petrol before continuing our drive, C felt a hand on his shoulder. Had we taken a photograph from the bridge, a gendarme asked. Off we were dragged to the gendarmerie. At first it looked as if things were going badly, but when they saw my identity card all seemed in order. Then they found out that C was not an Englishman but a Pole.

"Jakubowski! That's a fine name for an Englishman," the officer had said.

"But he is not English," I replied with as much naturalness as I could command. "He's a Pole."

The head gendarme got very angry, said that now the whole matter was becoming clear and went off to find the local Governor. They dragged all our

luggage in and looked through it minutely. They looked inside the seams of my trousers and squeezed my sponge, they unwrapped a newspaper parcel of C's, doing it so delicately that they must surely have expected to find a bomb inside—not merely half a pot of marmalade!—and opened all our letters. Then a man came in and slyly produced some pictures of dead Polish terrorists who had been badly mangled by grenades, presumably with the object of seeing whether C showed any signs of recognizing them. Another man reported that we had also taken a picture of the Law Court, and that added a serious mark against us. Eventually I persuaded the chief officer to ring up the Risdorfers, with whom I had stopped, and Mrs. Risdorfer kindly said that I was not a crook, as far as she knew, but that I might be all the same.

In the end we got away with only the loss of the film. But it had cost us two and a half precious hours, and by the time we arrived at Perecin, on the border of Slovakia, where we were to spend the night, it was dark and late. In one place the road climbed up over a great hill where the car almost stopped, and going down the other side, which was very steep at the hairpin bends, it proved to have such a poor lock that it almost put us over the edge. After that we ran happily down the valley all the way.

Perecin, which looked so grand on the map, was in fact a miserable place; a swollen village that will presumably one day become a small town. It consisted chiefly of a chemical factory, a long straggling street and a few modern two-storied houses round a square. The restaurant attached to the factory has rooms where one can lodge, but it turned out that they were all occupied by soldiers, and so too was a

dirty Jewish inn. At last we decided to go and look for Professor Pankiewicz, an eminent professor of Slav culture to whom I had a letter.

It was snowing hard, and it took us an hour of inquiring at shops, tapping at curtained windows and falling into muddy pools before we could find his house. We were invariably told to look for a yellow villa with a red roof, a description that was not very helpful on a snowy night.

Eventually I found the Professor sitting in a small room crowded with good modern Ukrainian pictures, mostly impressionist landscapes, and plenty of local fabrics. It was eight-thirty. The professor said that most people in Perecin would doubtless be asleep, as it was "already the middle of the night," but that a colleague of his, a woman teacher, would probably be able to let us have a room.

The teacher, a pleasant little woman who was wearing widow's weeds for her father, immediately showed the ever surprising hospitality of Eastern Europe and gave us the sitting-room in her two-roomed flat and then, while we went out to look for dinner that, in a completely sleeping Perecin we did not find, herself prepared the beds for us and also a meal.

Just as we were going to bed the wireless announced an important change in the Ukrainian Cabinet. The fiery and violently anti-Czech Revay had been replaced by the more moderate and older Klotschurak, whom I had met at the Risdorfers', and General Prchala had been given the Ministries of the Interior, Finance, and Communications.

The Ukrainians were desperate.

"We have had enough of the Czechs, we have had them up to here," said the professoress, indicating her neck. For a time she moaned and cried, then suddenly

jumped up, shouting, "But just wait until Revay comes back from Berlin, then things will begin to move again, he won't stand any of this!"

Then her husband dragged her off to bed, and we started wondering whether we ought to go back to Chust. We decided to carry on with our tour, but to make it as short as possible.

Next morning I was out and about by nine o'clock, but that was not at all early for Perecin. The professor's husband got up every morning at five o'clock, for only by so doing could he be in time at the bank in Velky Berezny, a town some thirty miles up the valley, where he worked. After lunch the professor asked if she could drive there with us as it was our next stopping place. She uttered a prayer before getting into the car, and all the way along the road prayed and crossed herself.

Velky Berezny was superior to Perecin; more built up, with big official buildings arranged round a little square with a garden and trees, and quite a large villa colony for the officials. It also had main water and drainage systems, luxuries which even Chust did not possess. Velky Berezny apparently owed its greater importance to the fact that it lay with open country on the west, or Slovak, side, from which people came in to do their marketing and transact business, whereas Perecin lay enclosed by hills on both sides.

The professor took us to the bank where her husband worked, and there I made the acquaintance of her brother and a lawyer who was called in as being a folklore and general local expert. C, who always felt embarrassed in the presence of the Ukrainians, went off to look for an inn.

The lawyer, who had been encouraging the peasants

to embroider for the market and sell their goods to the tourists in summer, had a magnificent collection of some hundreds of patterns of peasant embroidery. Perhaps the most attractive of these came from Uzok, a village right up on the Polish frontier, which we were to visit on the morrow; the motifs included flowers, but the most typical was a star, or as some call it, a stylized rose. In the end the lawyer was persuaded to go with me to Uzok himself. It seemed an excellent plan, but like so much else in Carpatho Ukraine it was destined to founder on the hidden rock of national jealousy and antipathy. At the last minute the lawyer asked me again what I specially wanted to see.

"There are many things I could show you," he said, "one thing, for instance, is the work of the last twenty years."

"I am not particularly interested in the work of the Czechs here," I replied, "I am more interested in the present and the future."

I was about to add that I had seen many examples of the Czech constructive work when travelling about the country, that it was so good and plentiful that it rose up and hit one in the face. But before I had time he had picked me up and said that the Czechs had never tried to "denationalize" there. At the time this seemed a curiously inconsequential remark, but just then everyone started saying good-bye and for the moment I passed it over. Later in the evening, however, when we all met at the Czech restaurant, where we had agreed to dine, the lawyer merely said that he could not go to Uzok, and then went and sat alone at a table, and would not speak to me any further. I learnt that he was a Czech himself! Everything was due to my one accidental remark in the afternoon. It was a small but very typical example

of the racial antipathies that clogged all life and social relationships in Carpatho Ukraine.

One of the best things in Velky Berezny was the Czech restaurant. The food was good and served with a real talent worthy of connoisseurs. With boiled home-cured pig were served five small plates, potato *purée*, lentil *purée* with small pieces of fried bacon on top, sour cabbage that was not too sour, pickled cucumbers and a compote of prunes. All that cost tenpence. The proprietor had the dark round face and broken nose of a bulldog. As he unlocked, and with a grand gesture flung open the door of the very inadequate earth closet he threw his nose in the air and said, "Here we are in Carpatho Ukraine; this is only one of the disadvantages." The back part of the seat was as always the most soiled part; for the majority of people there are not used to lavatories, and when they are obliged to use one, squat with their feet on the seat as they are accustomed to squat on the ground at home.

The proprietor, we found, did not belong to Carpatho Ukraine at all, but was one of those curious racial mix-ups that to us in England are quite unknown. His father was from Bohemia, his mother was a German. The father had been porter many years before the War at the old Austro-Hungarian Legation in Berne, and had worked in the special railway section. On giving up this job he had been taken on by the Swiss Federal Railways, and had settled at Vevey where the son had been brought up. The boy had worked in the Grand Hotel there and later gone to Genoa and other places in Italy. He had married an Italian. It seemed curious that fate should have brought him after all this to Velky Berezny, an unknown little township in Eastern Europe

Apparently, he had gone to Uzhorod when that was a budding city and had come up to Berezny when Uzhorod was evacuated. Now, when Berezny has lost its temporary importance and the swarm of officials has been disbanded, what has become of him?

The only hotel that C had been able to find was a wooden shack near the railway station. It was L-shaped and all the rooms opened outwards on to a verandah. When I arrived I found the sheets had not been changed since the last occupant had left—they rarely were in those parts. Only the command of the professor from Rumania, whom I had found again and who was a leading Ukrainian in Berezny, could get them changed. The floor boards had holes in them, and the room had once served as a stall. But we slept like logs.

Early the next morning, while C was indulging in his daily three-quarters of an hour cranking the car, the professor arrived. He was going with us to Uzok, and we started at once. Our way as usual was up a valley, this time, however, a broad open one. The road had been built by Maria Teresa to improve communications with Galicia, and many of the original stone bridges are still to be seen. In each village was a wooden church. In this valley they again had their own individual style; big barn-like structures with gaily curved domes like those of Chinese pagodas.

One that we inspected at Kostrina was for sale. It had had a varied history. Originally it had stood in Galicia. But the peasant congregation in the village where it stood had grown too big for it, and in 1761 they decided to sell it and build themselves a new and bigger one. The people of Kostrina, which then only had thirty houses, were very poor and happened to

be in need of a church. So they bought it, and sent their carts to fetch it away. But ever since its arrival, which made Kostrina a meeting place on Sundays and feast days and generally added to its importance, the village had been steadily growing. Now in turn Kostrina has outgrown the church, and the inhabitants, like the Galicians before them, want to sell their church and build themselves a new one. The price is not high. It will probably fetch about five hundred pounds.

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Towards Volosanka, a village and small tourist resort, lying at the head of the valley and just beneath the pass leading over the crest of the mountains into Poland, the road became very snowy, and we needed more petrol. The petrol problem made motoring in Carpatho Ukraine miserably difficult, for outside the largest towns it seemed almost unobtainable. None of the villages had any and at Volosanka we found that the tourist hostel sold petrol only in summer. The co-operative store could not produce any, while the chemist to whom we were directed could only offer us a pint from a glass bottle on his shelf. The doctor, it was suggested, might let us have some out of his own car, but it turned out that he had scarcely a gallon himself. At last we learnt that we might obtain some at the railway station, for the inspector had a rail car. But the inspector was up the line. In the end we had to telephone ingloriously back to Velky Berezny and have three gallons sent up by rail.

The Vrchovina, as the long band of mountain country lying along the Polish frontier is called, is known to be the poorest in the whole province. The countryside, consisting in the main of great rounded hills, dotted with park-like fir-trees, and seared across

by deep valleys in which quickly moving streams carry the water from the snow crests down into the plains, appears beautiful and rich. But the soil is poor and the peasants' huts, though they look picturesque enough from the middle distance, are really nothing more than hovels. They are of a beautiful honey colour, but long, straggling and half tumbled down, with the thatch, which here replaces the familiar shingled roofs, invariably rotten and sprouting grass. The balconies running the whole length of the house give shelter to a mixed herd of children, goats and prehistoric looking sheep with long woolly coats and thin pointed noses. There are from six to eight children in most of the families, in some far more. An old peasant told us that of all the Vrchovina the Volosanka-Uzok district was considered the poorest. He himself had no work to do as all work in the forests had been stopped as a result of the broken communications. On his acre of ground he had to support ten people. He had a cow and a horse, he added, but the horse was not the luxury it might seem, for in normal times it was by hiring himself and his horse to the forestry department that he made most of his income.

At lunch in the tourist hostel we were joined by the local schoolmaster. He and the professor started whispering: a characteristic habit of people in Carpatho Ukraine. C and I felt constrained to start whispering too, although we certainly had nothing to whisper about, and for some time we indulged in a kind of whispering match. Rumours were flying about, but no one knew what was happening anywhere. We had only heard for certain that the deputies had met secretly to decide what reply was to be made to the arbitrary appointment of the new

Cabinet. On the steps the professor, in a voice that obviously called for criticism of anything Czech, asked what we had thought of the lunch, and before I could answer started criticizing it himself.

As soon as the petrol arrived, we started for Uzok, which lay at the top of the pass right on the Polish frontier. The road leading there from the village twisted up through the snow in great hairpin bends. Little boys standing on skeleton sleighs, drawn by one or two horses, flew up and down the road, scattering the snow in clouds. On the outskirts of the village we passed a derelict park that, until the Russians destroyed the place in 1914, had been the local spa. Avenues of trees lead to a statue of Hercules standing lonely and forgotten in the snow. We tried the water at the spring by the roadside. The professor had brought a bottle to carry some away, but the iron in it was so strong that the cork popped out every quarter of an hour. At the bottom of the hill were marks where the wood had been dragged down from the forests, but further on the snow was quite virgin except for the footprints here and there of the frontier guards. With the closing of the frontier by the Poles no traffic had been that way for months. When the car came to rest the professor and I got out and walked. Behind us was a splendid view right down the valley, while on either side fresh peaks were ever appearing. At first they had been bluish white and glistening, but now the setting sun turned them a warm rose pink.

On the crest we found the railway station, a wooden hotel and, by the roadside, a small post for gendarmes. In summer the place would have been crowded with sturdy brown-legged hikers, and with people buying postcards in the little round booths and drinking endless coffees and beers. Even in a normal winter

there would have been ski-ers coming and going from the hotel. Now, however, every window was shut and barred and not a soul moved. Not even frontier guards had appeared to ask us who we were. Only when we went into the little cemetery opposite the frontier post did a man run up. He seemed more pleased that someone should come and break his silence than hostile or suspicious.

The cemetery was a large place, and had been built by the Russians in 1914. In the War there had been great battles here. The Russians in their first victorious months had pushed down through Austrian Poland as far as the Hungarian border, which ran along the crest of the Carpathians. There they had been held up. Although at this particular spot they had managed to push some way down the valley towards Uzhorod in general they had got little further.

Beyond the cemetery lay Poland. Open fields stretched away before us, sloping gently downwards between forests to the long white Polish frontier station, which lay in front of a line of dark forest in the distance. It had been built in the spacious Hungarian days, for even then there were certain articles liable to duty between Hungary and Austria, such for instance as tobacco and spirits. Close at hand a tall post with the red white and blue stripes and the rampant lion of the Czechoslovak Republic, and a little further down the road the red and white Polish post topped by an eagle, and a little wooden hut in which the Pole was sitting, no doubt watching our every movement, marked the line between the two countries. In general the "promised land" of Galicia looked very much like the land we were in. The landscape, forest and open upland meadows, the little huts of the peasants with their tall steeple-like

rotting thatched roofs, were almost identical. No one moved anywhere. Everything was grey and frozen, not even smoke rose from the hut roofs. It was curious to reflect that here were Czechs sitting on one side of the frontier and Poles on the other, each defending people from neighbours against whom they did not want to be defended. For the Ukrainians on both sides of the frontier wanted nothing better than to see the frontier disappear.

From the cemetery we went into the gendarme's hut. He was sitting beside his telephone reading a penny novel to pass the time. The work was always lonely, he said, for the road is usually blocked by snow for five of the winter months. This year, even without snow, no one had passed by for three months, and then it had only been a party of gendarmes going for a conference with the Poles. But there had been plenty of excitement of another sort. There had been the emigrants from Galicia to catch and, of course, the activities of the terrorists.

Of the activities of these terrorists I had already heard much. They constitute perhaps one of the blackest, though least known stories of last year's very black autumn. It will be recalled that when Czechoslovakia was being dismembered, Hungary, with the diplomatic support of Poland, was making frantic efforts to obtain the whole of Carpatho Ukraine. Even after the Vienna Award the two countries did not slacken their efforts, and they were never at a loss for a frontier incident, or for some kind of disorder in the province, which would serve as fuel for their contention that Carpatho Ukraine was a source of constant unrest, and thus a "menace to her neighbours". These frontier incidents were all directly due to the activities of the Hungarian and Polish

terrorists, and there is no longer any doubt that the terrorists were supported by their respective Governments.

Up here on the Polish frontier they had worked only at night. Their objective had been to sow disorder and uncertainty by disrupting communications and generally disturbing public life. They had tried to blow up bridges, and had cut telephone and telegraph wires, attacked the gendarme posts, police stations and post offices. Most of the men were recruited from a low class of adventurer, but some of the leaders are believed to have been officers of the regular army. Their simple uniform consisted of plus fours and leather waistcoats, while they were armed with old Austrian rifles, and a plentiful supply of hand-grenades which, it was alleged, were of modern design, and similar to those in use in the Polish Army. Working in bands of anything from ten to fifteen, the terrorists would usually come over the frontier at night, but sometimes remained on this side for several days. Their procedure in the latter case was to attack a peasant's house early in the morning, tie up the occupants and then make themselves comfortable in the kitchen. The gendarmes who might be going their rounds could not search every house daily and thus they usually escaped detection.

The terrorists' methods met with a good deal of success, and the whole district was in a state of apprehension bordering on actual fear for weeks on end. One village which we visited had been constantly on the alert for two months. When a troop of gendarmes, numbering sometimes two to three hundred, was in the village, the inhabitants could sleep peacefully, but when they were not there they had to take their own precautions. The fear of this menace

weighed heaviest on those people who had at some time or another immigrated from Galicia. One lawyer, a prominent worker for the Great Ukraine, whose head was said to be worth a lot of money to the Poles, sat at his window with a loaded rifle on his knees for many nights on end, while three old comrades sat similarly guarding windows at the other corners of the house.

At the frontier post some miles north of this village we saw evidence of these terrorist activities for ourselves. There were the battered walls of a gendarme post that had been destroyed by grenades in the night, and holes in the grass meadow at the side where other grenades had burst. I had the impression that they were being artificially preserved as objects of propaganda. But there was nothing artificial about the Sitch lads who were encamped in a building opposite, and who had been sent up as subsidiary frontier guards. Nearly all of them came from Galicia. I asked one fellow, a former student from the high school in Lwow, who took my hand in a vice-like grip, what he thought would happen if any of them got captured by the Poles.

"That's a thing we never think of," he said, "for it will never happen. If we were captured we should only go before a firing squad. So we would rather die on this side." What happened to him later, I wondered, when, with the Hungarians advancing up the valley and the Poles in the rear, he and his companions were only rats in a trap made by their own patriotism.

At first the Czechs were unwilling to use military force against the terrorists, for neither the Poles nor Hungarians would take official account of their activities and the Czechs feared that use of the army might lead to further and more serious international

complications. Then a Polish officer was killed. He was buried on this side of the frontier somewhere in the forests. The peasants, however, were bribed by the Poles to say where the body lay and it was dug up in the night and smuggled back to Poland. He was given a State funeral in Przemysl. After that the Polish authorities could no longer deny the terrorists' activities, and the Czechs were enabled to use stronger means against them. A huge force of gendarmes and tanks were brought up and in spite of the difficult nature of the country the situation was soon in hand.

The gendarme told us, that in the Uzok district itself the terrorist activities had been comparatively slight, for the guards on opposing sides of the frontier had always been on friendly terms with each other, and had in their own interests tried to keep things as quiet as possible. The frontier too was easier to guard at that point than at others, for although it was thickly forested the forests were comparatively easy of access. Most important of all, perhaps, the Czech gendarmes and frontier guards were very strong in number here. For Uzok lay at the head of the main road to Uzhorod, and it had been realized early in the game that the plan of the Hungarians and Poles should they attempt to capture Carpatho Ukraine by force of arms, would be to try and advance along the valley from either end, meeting in the middle, and thus cutting off the tail of the province which could then be easily overrun. The gendarme was particularly proud of the system of defence that his commander had worked out. Machine-guns, he said, had been placed in nests commanding the whole length of their territory, and were manned night and day. For weeks on end they had been living under war conditions, or under con-

ditions that were worse than war, for no one knew where a blow might fall. Every tree had been a potential ambush.

One of the most difficult tasks that had confronted them during the past few months had been to decide whether a captured man was a Ukrainian emigrant or a Polish terrorist in disguise.

“It is a pity we did not immediately shoot all doubtful characters,” the gendarme said, indicating a convenient wall outside, “we should have had much less trouble in the end.” Then a cloud passed over his face as he added, “The Poles or Hungarians would certainly have done so, but to shoot people without a trial or a hearing—no, that’s something *we* cannot do.” All doubtful people, he went on, were always taken down to Chust and given a hearing at the gendarmerie there. Their papers, if they had any, were looked at, or their story was proved by other means. The gendarmes would ask, for instance, if there was anyone else from their village in Galicia who could vouch for them. One of the surest and safest means of finding out whether a man was a Ukrainian or a Pole, however, was to wait until he made the sign of the cross. The Greek Catholic makes the first point on the right shoulder, while the Roman Catholic, which is practically synonymous with Pole, makes it on the left. In innumerable cases it was found that a man might have learnt his whole part to perfection, but would give himself away on this one little point of instinct.

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In the valley night had fallen already. Through the uncurtained windows of the cottages we saw rich golden flames leaping up through the darkness and

silhouetted against them the dark figures of the peasants.

We got out of the car and entered one of the cottages. "Your health," said the professor as we bent beneath the low lintel of the living-room door. "Your health," replied a flat unconcerned voice from the fireside. The dark figure of a woman was outlined against the flames of an open wood fire burning brightly in the usual corner by the door; she was slowly peeling potatoes, with the meditative movements of one for whom time has no value. Away from the fire I was at first aware only of a golden brown darkness, and the vague form of a loom on which was a half-finished towel. There was no chimney to the fire and a thick pall of smoke hung all over the top of the room. Only by crouching down could poor people like ourselves, used to the amenities of a modern civilization, avoid running eyes and violent fits of coughing. Other people who came in and stood about in the darkness, watching us in complete silence, seemed immune from it. Then the woman rose and lit a lamp. The room was little more than a potting shed. The uneven floor was of rich dark brown earth. The furniture, placed haphazardly about, consisted only of two chests and a derelict-looking wooden bed with a heap of rugs on it. A large pile of wood stood by the fire, and next to this was a heap of potatoes that kept getting kicked and rolled about the floor. In a rack were a few wooden spoons, and in the corner hung scythes and other farm implements. Brown earth dust lay thick on everything.

From the professor's point of view the visit was not at all a success. The woman's brother started talking about the political situation.

"Everybody keeps talking about the new freedom

of Carpatho Ukraine and of the wonderful future that lies before us," he said, "but I can't see myself that there's anything in it. I have no work to do and I have even less bread than I had before. No, this much talked of freedom means nothing at all to me."

Whereupon the professor said it was time to go and hustled us off; such things were not for strangers' ears.

In exactly a week from that date Hungarian troops and frontier guards, gay feathers in their hats, were to come marching up the valley, and the "new freedom" to disappear. But how many of the peasants would actively mind? Probably only a mere handful who had joined, or had in some way or other been influenced by the Sitch. The others would watch the procession as apathetically as the woman had peeled potatoes. Their minds are centred on one thing, bread. The Czech period was for them a good period. The magnificent constructive works of the Czechs left them comparatively unappreciative, but there was plenty of work. The short period of autonomy left them cold. Had it lasted longer they would, no doubt, under the weight of propaganda, have all become good Ukrainians, but the popularity of the régime would still have depended on the Government's capacity to give them work and bread. The return of Hungarian rule will certainly not mean a return to the constructive policy of the Czechs, for the Hungarians have neither the aptitude for work of that kind nor the money with which to carry it out. But if, as will probably happen, work in the forests takes on its old intensity and the flow of seasonal labour down into the Hungarian plains, now no longer held up by the Czechoslovak-Hungarian frontier, begins again, there is no reason to suppose

that they will not accept the return of Hungarian rule with goodwill. The peasants will judge the régime entirely on its capacity to provide them with bread.

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While in Velky Berezny I heard a curious story of an alleged attempt by the Slovaks to obtain possession of the railway line that runs up the valley from Uzhorod through Perecin and Berezny to Uzok and so into Poland. If the story is true, as there is every reason to believe, it may be found to have been a definite part of the German plans for the reorganization of the Czechoslovak territories. A few days previously, it was said, on the night of Friday, 3 March, telegrams from Bratislava had been received at all the stations along the line, requesting the station-masters to send all their spare stocks of cash to the Railway Administration in Bratislava. The local officials, very puzzled by the order, had immediately telephoned to Chust, and for the two following days strong guards of Sitch men had been maintained all along the line to forestall any possible Slovak adventures there. The Chust Government sent an inquiry to Bratislava, and eventually received an apology, in which it was stated that the telegrams had been sent in error by a minor employee. In Ukrainian official circles it was believed that the telegrams were the first step in a manœuvre whose object was the acquisition of the large stocks of railway material that were lying about the line. They thought that if the Slovaks had found the railway officials seriously embarrassed by the telegrams, they would have marched in, seized the railway, carried off the stocks, and then, admitting that the line was on Ukrainian territory, given it back—without the stocks.

Another explanation is also possible—that the whole plan was engineered by Germany, so that this railway, of supreme strategical importance, in the event of an attack on Poland, should already have been incorporated in Slovakia when the Germans declared the Protectorate a week later. It is perhaps significant in this connection that the Hungarians, as soon as they had occupied Carpatho Ukraine, strengthened their hold on the railway by marching into Slovakia and seizing from the Slovaks a deep strip of territory, so that the frontier was moved well to the west of the railway.

# 15

THE experience of being in Chust for the last few days before the Hungarians arrived was like being in a mad house with the inmates let loose. Rumour and counter-rumour filled the air. Everyone was the potential enemy of everyone else. Moreover, we were absolutely cut off from the outside world. Newspapers arrived days late, or not at all; communication with foreign countries by telephone or telegram was forbidden, and the internal service was so bad that it might take twenty-four hours to get a call through to Prague; radio sets were almost non-existent.

On the last Friday (10 March), the day after our return from Velky Berezny, I had my first talk with General Prchala. He received me in a first floor room of the officers' mess which had been arranged as a bed-sitting room. There was a big desk under the window and a small white iron bedstead behind a curtain in the corner. The General, who was a man of middle height, had a determined, slightly foxy face, and looked tired and worried. Throughout our conversation a gendarme and two civil officials stood in the background.

The chief trouble in Carpatho Ukraine, he said, was that the people preferred talking high politics to working, and that most of the leaders had come in from corners of neighbouring countries and had nothing directly to do with the province at all. The

people must be made to work, and to work hard; and he hoped that by the following week, when road construction could be begun, things would be going better. As for the emigrants, it would be "inhuman" to send them back, he said, but they could not be allowed to settle in Carpatho Ukraine and make trouble for Czechoslovakia's neighbours. Many local workers were going to Germany, and, he added with pleasant irony, there would doubtless be room for these Ukrainian immigrants in one of the battalions.

I asked him what he thought the future held for the land. He picked up my question before I had finished it, and then paused a long time before answering. I noticed that when he was embarrassed he had a curious action with his hands, holding them with the fingers interlocked and working them upwards and backwards.

"One thing is clear," he said, "Carpatho Ukraine might breathe as a part of a Great Ukraine, but it could never live alone. For the immediate future there are three alternatives; union with the Czechs, the Poles or the Hungarians. There is talk of Carpatho Ukraine becoming another Switzerland. But as long as she has poor neighbours," he said, returning to an ironical vein, "this is impossible. She could only do so if she had rich neighbours like France, Germany and Italy who would bring tourists. Now no one comes here save adventurers and the curious."

"One must reckon with one's pencil in one's hand, not with fantasy in one's hand, and always stop close to earth—that's the best way," he said as he bade me farewell. No wonder the Ukrainians, with their hopes and childish enthusiasms, regarded him with hatred.

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No sooner had I left the mess than I began to hear rumours. On the previous Monday the President of the Republic, deciding to adopt a policy of the firm hand in Slovakia and Carpatho Ukraine, had forced the resignation of Julian Revay and the appointment of the milder Klotchurak, while Fedor Revay, President of the Government Party, had also been compelled to resign. Now it was said that Volosin, the Prime Minister, had been dismissed by telegram, and one Brascajko, who it was hoped would be a puppet, appointed in his stead. In Slovakia also, we heard, a puppet Ministry had been formed.

Official relations were in complete disorder. Klotchurak had been in Prague at the time of his appointment. The Czechs, without reference to Chust, had suddenly informed him that he was a Minister for Carpatho Ukraine. Klotchurak had at once got into communication with Father Volosin. "I am one of your Ministers now," he called down the telephone, "do you know anything about it?"

In the Koruna the young men were saying that they would not sell their souls to the Czechs by coming to terms with them on financial and other matters.

"Do you, then, consider absolute independence possible?"

"No."

"Then what are you going to do? Surely it is essential for you to come to some agreement with the Czechs, for if not you will have no money."

"We will not surrender an iota of our spirit. We would rather go hungry," they said.

The wine boy came in and, as if in deference to the developments of the day, started removing the picture of Father Volosin from the wall. We almost expected

to see that of Brascajko go up in its place, but after refixing the nail he put Volosin back again.

Stories were running round like wildfire. Earlier in the week, it was said, all the spare rifles had been stolen from the Chust gendarmerie, by the Sitch with the cognizance of the police. Generally the building was guarded at night by two Ukrainians and two Czechs, working in four-hour shifts. On the night in question the guard was effected by three Ukrainians and one Czech, working in six-hour shifts, an arrangement which would allow the thieves more chance of carrying out their work and then of making a good get-away. The rifles had been taken out by a small window and loaded on a car. Then, on the Wednesday, Rohac, the one-time theological student, had published an unusually fiery article in *Nova Swoboda*.

"A Czech," the article said, "whose influence can only be harmful, has been sent here, to a land that wants to have nothing to do with Czech beggars. If the things that have been happening here had happened in any other land the people would have defended themselves with weapons. We have kept quiet, but the day may come when we too shall appeal to our Gods, and in that event no one can guarantee that blood will not flow." The paper had been confiscated by order of the Public Prosecutor, but hundreds of copies had been stolen from the store by members of the Sitch and distributed throughout the town during the night.

These two events brought the growing hostility between the army and the Sitch to a definite head. General Prchala wanted to adopt summary measures; to have Rohac arrested and to disband the Sitch. Volosin would agree to neither project. To disband

the Sitch would mean spilling blood, he said, and for that he could not take the responsibility.

What was the German attitude to these happenings in Carpatho Ukraine? In the last days this question was ever uppermost in our minds, for it seemed that the future of the land rested more in Germany's hands than in anyone else's.

In the morning I had met the new German Consul in the passage of the Koruna. I had known him for a considerable period elsewhere, and he was an acknowledged specialist in the question of Carpatho Ukraine. He had only arrived two days previously, when his predecessor, whose appearance on the eve of the elections had caused so much excitement, had left. As he had received his transfer order by telegram, I immediately suspected that something was in the offing.

His opinion of the situation, for what it is worth, was as follows. Germany, he said, was not interested in Eastern Europe now. Besides, she had a pact of friendship with Poland, and any development of the Great Ukraine idea would be detrimental to the interests of Poland. Germany definitely did not intend to use Carpatho Ukraine as a jumping off place for the Great Ukraine. The place was not yet even organized itself, and was in no way ripe for such a plan. The task, at the moment, was how to retain Carpatho Ukraine itself, and not let it slip into Polish or Hungarian hands. Kleiss, he confirmed, had been brought sternly to task by official circles.

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On Saturday morning I met Rohac. He was jubilant. The previous evening, he said, he had been to see Volosin and informed him that Prchala was

planning to disarm the Sitch in the night. Volosin pointed towards a second door, and said that Prchala had just that moment left the room, after telling him that the Sitch were planning to disarm the army in the night!

Travellers from Prague reported that, although the trains were still running normally, all stations in Slovakia were in the hands of the military, and all vital points covered by machine-guns.

In official circles it was anticipated that the rioting in Slovakia would be finished in a few days and that Slovakia would emerge as an independent land under German protection. In this event, they said, the Ukrainians would of course throw in their lot with the Slovaks, and the two provinces would form some sort of union. If Slovakia did not win her freedom, Carpatho Ukraine would find some other way out. Revay, who was then in Berlin, would be back in a few days and then everything would be all right. In the Ukrainian mind Revay had become a demi-god in whose control nothing could founder.

In the evening I dined with the German Consul. We heard on the wireless that Sivak, the Czech's puppet Prime Minister in Slovakia, had resigned, and that Sidor, the popular hero of the moment had been drawn home from the station by an excited crowd, and was making fiery speeches. He asked me what I thought about the situation. I said that in my opinion everything now depended on the turn of events in Slovakia. In the autumn of 1938 Slovakia had been the chief centre of interest, but, as soon as German interest switched over to Carpatho Ukraine, Slovakia had lost importance. No individual solution would be sought for the province, for it had become only a corridor, leading to Carpatho Ukraine. Now,

however, with Germany's abandonment of interest in the Great Ukraine idea attention had switched back to Slovakia again. I also said that whichever side Germany supported, Czech or Slovak, that side would win, and that if the Slovaks won the Ukrainians would presumably go with them. He said that a German journalist had given him an identical answer on the previous evening, and that he thought that on the whole it was probably correct. But was it certain that Carpatho Ukraine would go with Slovakia, he asked? Might it not go to Hungary as a counter balance to Germany's increased influence? His attitude towards the Ukrainians seemed to border on disdain, and I felt sure of one thing, namely, that if the Germans ever came into Carpatho Ukraine the Ukrainians would get very short shrift.

For the small band of foreigners in Chust the future was still a big question mark. That the Czechs should have taken so determined and definite a line without German consent seemed unthinkable. Yet how was German consent to be reconciled with the violent anti-Czech Press and wireless campaign that had followed? On the whole we were inclined to believe that Germany would support the Slovaks, but we no longer had much faith in her helping Carpatho Ukraine. Everything seemed to suggest that she had lost interest in it. The best Carpatho Ukraine could hope for, we felt, was union with Slovakia.

Sunday and Monday were days of rumour, and it was evident that the tension between the army and the Sitch was increasing all the time. But nothing definite happened. Only two things stand out. On Monday morning Prchala stated that he could disarm the Sitch in half an hour if he wanted, but that he did not want to spill blood. In the afternoon an

aeroplane appeared over Chust. It was a Czech military machine, and circled three times round the town before landing on the military air field. It was the first aeroplane we had seen in Chust and we suspected it had brought orders from Prague.

In the late afternoon we walked out to call on a Scotch preacher, Mr. MacGregor of Renfrew, who, we had heard, lived in the town, and in the evening a party of us, including Mrs. McCormick the American columnist and her husband, who had just arrived, dined together. Mrs. McCormick was to leave next day, Tuesday, for Budapest, and I was planning, all being well, to go there on the Thursday. We went to bed feeling fairly happy and suspecting no immediate development.

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At quarter-past six next morning, Tuesday, I was woken up by a banging in the courtyard. At first, in my innocence, I had thought they were beating carpets, while C had been dreaming that the new house his parents were building had just reached the stage when the final nails were being hammered into the roof. Then I heard excited voices shouting. Jumping up I looked out of the window, then shook C violently to wake him up and dived straight under my bed. In the archway that led to the back street a boy was standing with a smoking revolver in his hand. Rifles were banging off in all directions and from the other side of the building came the rat-tat-tat of a machine-gun.

Then I realized that the Czech gendarmes and military were at last making the long-planned attack on the Sitch. A dramatic twenty-four hours in which a free Ukrainian Republic was to be born and die had just begun.

In twenty-four hours we lived in three different States. We woke up in the Czechoslovak Republic. By the evening Carpatho Ukraine was a free land. Next day the Hungarians came in. The Germans, who had occupied Prague early that morning, were, it was announced, "not interested" in Carpatho Ukraine, and thus the little Republic, which all Europe believed was to be the germ of a Great Ukraine, was crushed at birth.

A few minutes after the firing started all the guests had collected in the passage running down the middle of the building. Bullets came pattering through the windows and shattered the plaster on the bedroom walls. Our Sitch lads returned the fire from the attics and other points of vantage and the going was merry. One of them, who was stationed at the small lavatory window, was nearly blown up by a hand grenade, while a bullet came right through the outer wall of the German Consul's room and landed about six feet above his head. Two Sitch boys, their shaven heads suggesting that they had just come out of a Polish prison, patrolled the passage with knobbed sticks and pistols, which threatened to go off accidentally any moment.

Then two tanks arrived and it seemed likely that gendarmes would soon come bursting up the stairs. I was seriously afraid of what might happen if they started firing along the passage, for we had absolutely no means of escape.

The porter rushed to the German Consul, and begged him with outstretched arms to take the guests under his protection. The Consul, with a calming gesture of boredom, said that he could not see what protection he had to offer them, and that anyway he wanted to go on shaving. Admittedly he could scarcely

have given any help, for to have hung a swastika flag out of the window would have been to invite the Czechs in their present mood to fire straight into the room. Later he endeavoured to telephone to General Prchala and ask him at least to let the guests out, but either the post office would not give the connection, or else, if they did, the answer came that none of the adjutants had time to speak.

Suddenly there was an appalling noise of splintering glass and a shower of bullets came whizzing through the windows of the big corner room. By this time we were all lying flat on our stomachs on the cold cement floor, but the porter crept along and gingerly opened the door. All eyes were transfixed as the opening gradually widened. Across the threshold two legs were lying immobile. I thought their owner was dead. Then one of them moved slightly, and a man came crawling out of the room, followed by two others. They were Slovak lorry drivers on their way to fetch salt from Akna Slatina and had quite by chance spent the night in the hotel. One of them was so shaken that he lost the power of speech for a full half hour.

After about two hours, when all the furniture had been thrown down the stairs to make a barricade, and the firing was beginning to get on everyone's nerves, there was a sudden lull. Curious to see what was happening elsewhere I called over the stairs to the gendarmes below, and asked if they would let me out. The leader said he would, on condition that I climbed down over the barricade. This the Sitch were loath to allow; they said that while I was climbing down over the chair and table legs the gendarmes would approach the barricade, and that no one could fire at them for fear of hitting me.

About half an hour later a messenger arrived from Volosin and ordered the Sitch to surrender. He said that the Hungarians had taken advantage of internal dissension to renew their claims to the district and were already advancing over the frontier. All were to combine together to keep them out. At first the Sitch would not believe the story. They thought it was merely a Czech excuse to persuade them to surrender. However, through the half open door of the Consul's room, I saw the messenger excitedly pointing out places on a large map, and I knew at once that the story was true.

The square beneath the hotel was still absolutely deserted. All the heavy iron shutters were down and no one moved. The only living things in sight were a horse, standing in an unattended cab in the middle of the square where it had apparently remained throughout the firing, and a soldier looking very comic as he crouched behind the petrol pump and covered a nearby window with his rifle. Six Sitch men had established themselves there and refused to be dislodged. A car drove into the square, but the occupants, noticing that something was amiss, turned back again towards the country. In the hotel everyone's nerves were beginning to get strained. The little waiter took refuge in drink. "The Czechs are pig-dogs, the Poles are pig-dogs," I heard him shouting up at C. The restaurant was a shambles; no furniture, the mirrors shattered, the curtains torn down, the walls pitted by bullets, dirt and paper everywhere.

For another hour the six men defied all efforts to remove them from their lair. Then all was quiet. The gendarmes entered into possession of all focal points in the town, and the Sitch were taken into

arrest. In the attics of the Koruna a large ammunition depot was found.

Life at once returned to normal. In a few minutes I saw a peasant from Apsza, with a bundle of carpets over his shoulder, hawking along the street, and a Jew setting off with a chicken under his arm to be killed by the ritual slaughterer. The outside of the hotel, all pitted and blackened by bullets and grenades, was a sorry sight, while the Sitch barracks, which were the main object of attack, had had every single window blown out.

One thing I had learnt—that war is a curiously impersonal thing. No one in the hotel had shown any signs of fear during the attack, and in the intervals when the firing died down people in other houses, including Mrs. McCormick who was no longer young and who invariably relieved the drabest scene in Eastern Europe by dressing as if for a Mayfair luncheon party, had popped out into the street to see what was going on elsewhere. Even the dead temporarily lost significance. Only the aftermath was bad; for days afterwards, every time I heard a bang I would hesitate, half expecting to be hit.

The story of the events leading up to the shooting appears to have been simple. On the Monday evening Volosin had ordered the gendarmes to hand over their surplus arms to the Sitch, so that the Sitch, if need arose, would be in a better position to help with the defence of the frontier against the Hungarians. Prchala, as soon as he heard of this, issued a counter-order to the effect that the arms were not to be given; but it was too late, the Sitch had been given them half-an-hour before. Almost immediately afterwards the Sitch, in possession of the new arms, marched on the Government building and a fight took place

between them and the gendarmes. Prchala, it was said, decided on his own initiative—or was it as the result of an order brought from Prague in the aeroplane?—that the time had come to take decisive action, and ordered that the Sitch barracks and the Koruna should be attacked, and all important points occupied by the gendarmes or military. The only difference between the Czech and Ukrainian versions was as regards the responsibility for the firing at the Government building. The Czechs said the Sitch had deliberately attacked it, the Ukrainians that the Czechs had fired on a peaceful demonstration.

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Czech rule was shortlived. At one o'clock it was announced over the wireless that Slovakia had proclaimed its independence. This inevitably meant the end of the Czechoslovak State, and the future of Carpatho Ukraine was in the balance. Would it join Slovakia in a kind of federation, or would it become independent? In the afternoon a Council of Ministers decided that it would follow the example of Slovakia and proclaim its absolute independence. So the slaughter of forty people in the morning had been to no purpose.

What of the Hungarians? Czech officers confirmed that they were in fact in the country, but that a deputation had been sent to negotiate with them. The Germans, they added, had ordered them to hold back and so far they had advanced neither on Svalava so as to cut communications with Prague nor yet towards Chust. Officials began to dribble into the Government building. What work, one wondered, were they going to do on such a day?

At about six-thirty, in falling snow, we all collected

outside the Government building to hear the Proclamation of Independence read. There were only about seven hundred persons present, and it was surely one of the queerest proclamations of independence ever made. Father Volosin, the Prime Minister, Gren-Zedonsky, a patriotic writer, and other representative persons spoke from the balcony. A new Ministry was announced, with Julian Revay as Minister for Foreign Affairs. But before the proceedings began no one demonstrated, no one sang, no one even raised a patriotic shout for the new Republic. Even after the speeches there was little enthusiasm. Gendarmes, who, even if they were not of Czech race, were in the normal Czech uniform, guarded the doors, and Czech soldiers in cars and lorries, preparing for evacuation, continually ploughed their way through the crowd without a single hostile shout being raised. The people seemed drugged by bewilderment.

No mention had been made in the speeches of German protection. Volosin was still full of hope, but so far a telegram which had been sent to Hitler at midnight on Monday-Tuesday, asking that Carpatho Ukraine should be accepted as a full German Protectorate, had not been answered. No answer, in fact, was ever received. The fact that the German Consul had taken care to absent himself from Chust for seven hours in the afternoon and evening seemed to suggest that he at any rate, through whom the communication had passed, had not expected an answer.

The only really happy person was Capla, the school inspector. He came bubbling along, saying that they would soon have a German Governor, and that the German Army would of course protect them against

the Hungarians. I could not help observing that if Carpatho Ukraine were to be a German Protectorate, as he believed, it really seemed hardly worth while to appoint a Ministry. I disliked Capla. Seeing him for once in a position when he was hardly likely to be able to do me any harm, I felt all my hatred of his suspicion of me, and of his short-sighted attitude towards the Czechs, rising strongly within me. I should have liked to tell him in clear terms how little freedom he could hope for now that the short-sighted policy advocated by himself and his fellows had finally resulted in the expulsion of the Czechs. But a curfew had just been announced, and C and the McCormicks were clamouring for supper, so I was fortunately saved from the possibility of a scene.

We went to bed in a free Ukraine.

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On our last morning in Chust, as on our first, we were woken by the Sitch marching down the street and singing patriotic songs. They had been released from gaol late the night before, had been re-armed and were to take over the defence and policing of the country. The Czechs, who no longer had an interest in Carpatho Ukraine, were in full retreat. Boxes were being carried downstairs, furniture, bicycles and people were being piled on to military lorries. A small boy was waiting for transport with a huge white pig held by a rope round its hind leg.

The Ukrainians were at last a free people. Every house was flying a yellow and blue flag. Blue and yellow were in every buttonhole, on every horse, on every café table. The Jews, in terror, were even painting bands of blue and yellow round their shop windows. The first meeting of the Diet, so long

postponed, was to take place that very afternoon. Apart from members of the Government, we seemed to be the only people in the whole town who knew that the Hungarians were advancing. But where were the German aeroplanes? That, for the people, was the one source of misgiving. They walked about with eyes now on the street, now on the clouds, and ears stretched for the drone of engines, but nothing came. Only we, knowing about the unanswered telegram to Hitler, realized that the people would search the sky for German aeroplanes in vain.

With the future of the country decided both the McCormicks and ourselves felt that there was no reason for stopping longer in Chust. But by what route should we leave? The Hungarians had again halted temporarily, it was said, as negotiations were in progress between them and the Government in Chust. It seemed quite likely, therefore, that we should be able to get straight through into Hungary. We piled fifteen pieces of luggage into my ten-pound car, while the McCormicks, C and five more pieces of luggage were squeezed into a taxi, whose driver we had bribed heavily to leave the shelter of his garage.

When we left the town at mid-day all the gendarmes had disappeared. The streets were being policed by the Sitch, and by German colonists with swastikas on their arms who had been brought down in large numbers from the German villages. We felt as if we were leaving helpless children to be slaughtered.

At Sevlus, some fifteen miles west of Chust, we found a very different scene. Here there was not a single flag; all the shops were shut and barred, and only a few of the curious were creeping about the streets. I suggested that, before proceeding further,

it might be as well to inquire from the local commander what were the conditions on the frontier. We went into the big building which was the headquarters of the frontier guard. There was no guard at the door, no one in the passages; and the commandant's room was deserted and bare. We wandered about at will, for no one, after the hasty departure, had even troubled to lock the doors.

We eventually found the military commandant in a small office across the road. The remnants of the Czech Army were to evacuate the town in ten minutes, he said, and the Hungarians were only three kilometres away.

"I suppose we can go through all right?" asked Mrs. McCormick.

"You can of course do whatever you like," he said, "but listen!"

From down the road came the steady rat-tat-tat of a machine-gun.

"We shall have to go back," I said.

"Oh no, it will be quite all right," said Mrs. McCormick, "we're Americans, no one will shoot us."

Throughout this escapade, the optimism of the McCormicks and their immense zest and interest in everything that took place, made of what might otherwise have been a pretty grim adventure something more akin to an amusing diversion.

In the end we decided to go back to Chust, and then try to cross into Rumania by the first bridge over the river. But just as we were driving out of the town C remembered that the Polish Consulate was in Sevlus, and suggested that we should take refuge there until the advancing troops had passed by, when we should automatically be in Hungary.

We hurried back, ran our cars into the Consulate's garden and were given coffee and liqueurs by a hospitable Consul while the battle went on outside. There was a good deal of noise, but it was not a serious affair and no one seemed to get killed. From the verandah we heard the command "Forward, boys!" and saw the first Hungarians, the "irregulars," with rifles slung over their shoulders on pieces of string, come clambering over the fence into the Consulate orchard. The porter wanted to take his revenge on the departing Czechs and Ukrainians, who, he said, had "suppressed" him for twenty years, by throwing two hand grenades out of the window at them, and only the Consul himself was able to restrain him.

Then came the Hungarian Army. Most of them were old warriors, some with falling moustaches, and they drove in aged cars most of which had been temporarily confiscated. The main body of the forces had advanced by a route further west, with the object of cutting communications between Chust and Slovakia. The local population, the majority of which is Hungarian, gave them a hastily improvised welcome. Here there seemed to have been almost as many Hungarian flags hidden away against the great day as there had been Ukrainian flags in Chust. A group of boys advanced with a huge flag tied to a bean pole. Unfortunately they had put it on the wrong way round, so that the colours were those of Italy. The atmosphere was friendly, like the welcome given to an English football team.

As soon as the troops had passed, a lawyer in the house opposite darted out and put a Hungarian name-plate on the door. It was the fifth time he had changed it in the last twenty years, he said.

After the Colonel had come and drunk sherry with

the Consul we proceeded on our way. We were in Ukrainian registered cars—but no one stopped, or even questioned us. It had almost become like the charade of a war.

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By the evening the Hungarians were on the outskirts of Chust, and next day they captured it. The little coterie of Ukrainian leaders, all hope lost, scattered over Europe as best they could. Most of the more important personalities managed to escape into Rumania, and thence to Bratislava, Zagreb or other towns in which Slavs had been, or were still demanding privileges, and in whose atmosphere they thus felt at home. The Sitch fought valiant guerilla actions in the mountains. Several hundred were killed outright, two hundred escaped into Rumania but were put back across the frontier, while over a thousand reached Bratislava and later found hospitality in German labour camps.

In Bratislava, at the end of March, I met one of the highest Ukrainian personalities. He was one of those who had emigrated to Carpatho Ukraine from elsewhere. Father Volosin and his advisers in Chust, he said, had believed up to the last that they would receive German support. He himself, he declared, happening to be in Germany during the critical days and in touch with official circles, had seen what was going to happen some four days earlier. Commenting on the fate of Carpatho Ukraine, he said, "The turn of events has naturally been a blow for us. But Carpatho Ukraine in itself never meant anything to us. It was a means to an end. We were only interested in the Great Ukraine idea—and that still lives."

