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The Republic of Ukraine

BY

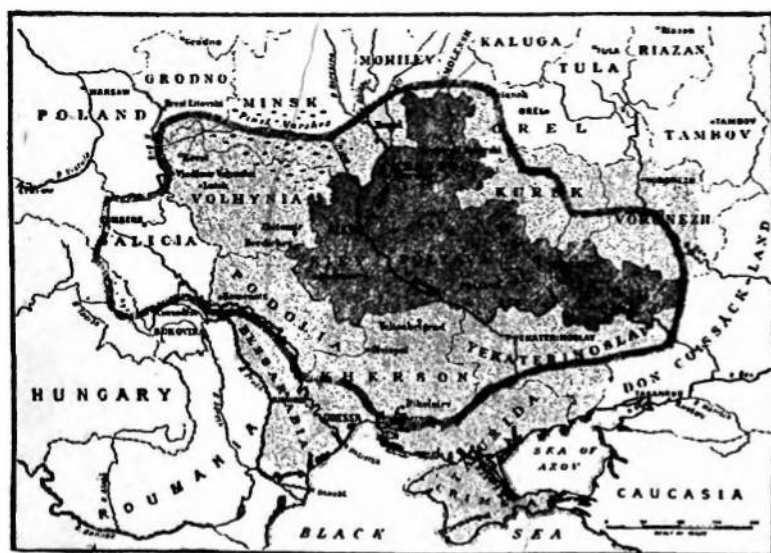
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URBANA



UKRAINIA

KEY TO MAP—The heavily shaded area is the original Little Russia. The lightly shaded area shows the territory which is now Ukraina as claimed by the Ukrainian national assembly or the Rada. The territory where Ukrainians predominate is enclosed in the heavy belt.

THE REPUBLIC OF UKRAINE

The newly formed Republic of Ukraine stretches from the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Asov northward into the heart of what was formerly European Russia. Within her somewhat loosely defined borders are included the former Russian governments of Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev, Kherson, Tchernigov, Poltava, Kharkov, and Ekaterinoslav covering an area of about 150,000 square miles and having a population of approximately 35,000,000 souls. It is thus composed not only of Little Russia (Ukraine proper) but also of Southern Russia, the new realignment having placed under the control of the Ukrainian government the northern part of the Black Sea littoral with its rich hinterland and with its important harbors of Odessa and Nicolayev. On the other hand Eastern Galicia and Northwestern Bukowina, which were at one time parts of Ukraine, are not included in the present Ukrainian Republic. The greater proportion of the inhabitants of this new political unit are Ukrainians, better known as Little Russians. They are a branch of the Russian Slavs although some recent leaders of the separatist movement working from and with the aid of the Imperial governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary have been trying to prove that there was nothing in common between the Ukrainians and their northern neighbors—the Great Russians. The seeds of discord which the workers for the dismemberment of Russia have been sowing found a fruitful soil in Ukraine because of the policy pursued by the old Czarist government of ruthlessly repressing every manifestation of national individuality.

Ukraine means borderland and borderland this country has been through many centuries of its turbulent existence; borderland between the frivolous aristocracy of republican Poland and the autocratically ruled, communistically inclined Muscovites; borderland between the nomadic tribes sweeping from the plateaus of Central Asia and the sedentary populations of the Mediterranean regions. Over its large stretches of gently undulating steppes swept one after another the Huns and the Avars, the Khazars and the Pechenegs, the Kalmucks and the Tatars. Living on a frontier, constantly fighting, pillaging and in turn being pillaged, attracting to themselves all the lawless and all the liberty loving elements of the adjoining lands, the Ukrainians have developed certain qualities of mind and heart which distinguish them from their kinsmen, the Great Russians and the White Russians. As

warriors they have evolved in Zaporogia, which was the soul of the old Ukraine, a peculiar military organization of Cossacks. The Cossacks were ruled by a "Hetman" elected each year from the ranks of the people and responsible to a general assembly, called the Rada.

The early history of Russia is closely linked with that of Ukraine; there, in the ninth century, on the banks of the river Dnieper, arose the first important Russian principality, that of Kiev. It was from Kiev that the Scandinavian princes who ruled over the Russian Slavs made their expeditions against Byzantium and it was through Kiev that the Byzantine influences gradually penetrated northward and westward into Russia, making themselves felt in Vladimir and in Smolensk, in Novgorod and in Moscow. Prince Vladimir of Kiev accepted the Greek form of Christianity in 988 and after that for about two centuries Kiev, "the mother of Russian towns," played the leading role in the political and cultural life of the Russian Slavs. The Kieville Russia became a victim of internal dissensions; it disintegrated even before Ghenghiz Khan with his Mongolian hordes in the thirteenth century swept over the country, filling it with terror and devastation, and exacting tribute from all.

Submerged for over two centuries and a half beneath the flood of the Tatar invasion the Ukrainians were too weak in the fifteenth century to withstand the encroachments of the Polish-Lithuanian State; they were conquered, but not subdued. Frequent bloody uprisings took place in which the ruthless and fiendish brutality of the Ukrainians was matched by the refined cruelty of the Poles. It was in 1653, when one of the most ambitious attempts to regain freedom had failed, that the Ukrainians offered their allegiance to Czar Alexei Mikhailovich. The cautious Muscovite Government at that time showed little inclination to make common cause with the unruly Cossacks. However, after lengthy negotiations the eastern part of Ukraine came under the suzerainty of Russia. For over one hundred years the Cossacks continued to enjoy autonomy, this being destroyed by Catherine II in 1775. The second partition of Poland brought under Russian control the rest of the Ukrainian lands, those west of the river Dnieper, with the exception of eastern Galicia and northwestern Bukowina, where there dwell at present about 4,000,000 Little Russians known under the name of Ruthenians.

Since the second half of the eighteenth century Ukraine ceased to be the land of wild freedom and of stormy strength. The Syetch, the chief military post of the Dnieper Cossacks, disappeared, and with

it went the restless spirit of adventure, of rebellion, of continuous offensive and defensive warfare. Ukraine became an integral part of the Russian Empire which established itself firmly over the vast territory of southeastern Europe, for many centuries the battleground of tribes, races, and nationalities. Peaceful communities, peaceful because of the iron hand from Petrograd, spread gradually over the beautiful land of Little Russia with its broad navigable rivers, its rich black soil, its huge deposits of metallic and non-metallic minerals. The sword and the musket gave way to the plow and the scythe. As cultivators of the soil, the Ukrainians, to whom were added many other ethnical groups of the Russian population, spread southward into Taurida and eastward into the region of the Don. They transformed the plains and the hillsides into fields of wheat, rye, and corn, of sugar beets and tobacco, into fruit orchards and vineyards; they dotted the country with farm sites, hamlets, and villages, where the only reminder of the old days of bloody strife and of military glory is the song of the *kobzar*. Some of the Little Russians achieved distinction in Russian literature, art, and sciences; some of them have become prominent in industrial and commercial pursuits; others have occupied responsible governmental positions under the old regime, but the majority of them are peasants and shepherds, having little inclination and aptitude for manufacturing and trade activities. Most of the cities of Ukraine as well as of Southern Russia owe their development and prosperity to the Great Russians, the Jews, and the foreigners.

The peasants of Little Russia do not lack natural intelligence; they love poetry and music, but they are poor and ignorant; they still use in many parts of the country the wasteful three field system of agriculture; they have no modern implements and machinery, and thus, notwithstanding the favorable climatic conditions and the fertile soil of their land, they do not get on an average more than ten bushels of wheat a year per acre. Occupying the "Black Earth Belt" of the old Russian Empire, they produced before the present war about 35 per cent of Russia's wheat and close to 80 per cent of her sugar beets and tobacco; they also raised about 40 per cent of Russia's live stock output.

In the Donetsk basin of Little Russia are found large supplies of coal, iron, manganese, and limestone. This proximity of fuel, metals, and fluxes, coupled with heavy import duties on iron, attracted foreign capital and led to the establishment of important iron and steel works. In 1914, Ukraine produced over 70 per cent of the coal, 60 per cent of

the iron, and all the mercury of Russia. Ukraine possesses also important salt deposits, particularly in three districts—the Carpathian foothills, the Donetz plateau, and the Pontian-Caspian salt-lake and liman region. Scattered through the country are pottery clays, kaolin, slate, chalk, gypsum, and many other non-metallic minerals. Some gold, silver, lead, and copper are also found, but the output of these metals is comparatively small.

The most important cities of Ukraine are Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Nicolayev, and Kherson. Kiev is situated almost in the center of the basin of the Dnieper where the main stream after having gathered its upper confluent carries the concentrated traffic of all its tributary territory to the Black Sea. The University of Kiev ranks third among those of Russia. Odessa is the leading seaport of the Black Sea, and it is, next to Petrograd, the most European-like of all the towns of Russia. Both Odessa and Kharkov, the latter in an intermediary position between the Dnieper and the Don, are intellectual centers; they possess flourishing universities and many schools. Nicolayev is a naval station as well as a commercial harbor. Kherson, near the mouth of the Dnieper, although less important than Odessa or Nicolayev, is an active business town; it exports large quantities of wood, cereals, and hides.

The movement to free Ukraine from the despotic control of Russian autocracy began long before the present war. The renaissance of the Ukrainian language and literature started in the early part of the last century and under the stimulus given to it by the great poet Shevchenko as well as by many other writers it made considerable headway when Russian authorities took alarm and passed in 1876 a decree forbidding the publication of works in the Ukrainian language. Those who protested against this drastic measure were thrown into prison or sent into exile. The result of the decree was the driving of the Ukrainian movement into Eastern Galicia, where it was welcomed by the Austrian government partially as a weapon to be used against the Austrian Poles, partially as a means for eventually disrupting the unity and the power of the Russian Empire.

After the revolution of 1905, the use of the Ukrainian language was once more permitted in Russia, but this concession did not satisfy the Ukrainians; it did not satisfy the Ukrainian masses whom the revolutionary aftermath left with a feeling of bitter disappointment; they had won a shadow of representation at Petrograd, but they had not suc-

ceeded in throwing off the yoke of petty officialdom, the heavy burden of taxation, the poverty and the squalor of their every day existence; neither did this concession satisfy a coterie of Ukrainian literary men who aspired towards nothing less than a complete emancipation of their native land from what they termed foreign domination. When Czarism fell, a number of the latter constituted themselves into a Rada or Council and presented demands to the Provisional government for the recognition of Ukraine as a separate administrative unit. In vain did Kerensky's government point out to them the needlessness and the dangers of their action at a time when strong enemy armies were fighting their way into Russia and when the Revolutionary government was doing its best to solve the many perplexing problems left by the old regime. The Rada insisted that the principle of self-determination of peoples proclaimed by the Revolution applied to the Ukrainians not less than to the Poles, to the Finns, or to the Letts. "Ukrainia for the Ukrainians" became the watch-word of a number of politicians many of whom had just arrived from Vienna or from Lemberg; with this watch-word they stirred up the slumbering nationalistic feelings in a part of the Ukrainian peasantry bringing it to the support of the separatist movement. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Provisional government the Rada issued on June 26, 1917, a Manifesto announcing that the Ukrainian people would henceforth manage their own affairs. The Provisional government had to give way; it recognized the General Secretariat of Ukraine as the highest administrative power of Southern Russia; the future constitution of the country was left to the decision of the Constituent Assembly which was expected soon to convene.

With the overthrow of the Provisional government by the Bolsheviks, the conflict between the North and the South of Russia became most bitter and intense; its character, however, changed materially. The Bolsheviks cared little for the integrity of Russia as a unified state; what they wanted was the spreading of the doctrine of social revolution into Ukraine; they were opposed to the Rada not because of its insistence upon Ukrainian autonomy but because it was, according to them, bourgeois and counter-revolutionary in character.

Threatened by the Bolsheviks on the one side and by the Russian nationalists on the other, the Ukrainian Council decided that it had nothing to gain and perhaps everything to lose by delaying radical action; and accordingly, on November 20, 1917, it proclaimed the establishment of the Ukrainian People's Republic. In a manifesto

issued at that time the Rada stated that it took this step in order to spare the country the horrors of a civil strife; it disclaimed any desire to bring about the disintegration of Russia, the establishment of the Ukrainian Republic being, according to the statement, merely a stepping stone towards the formation of a federation of free and equal peoples of Russia.

On February 9, 1918, the Ukrainian Republic, whose representatives sat at Brest-Litovsk, alongside the delegates of the Bolshevik government, concluded a separate peace with the Central Powers. It is impossible at the present time to state with any degree of certainty whether the ease with which peace was negotiated can be attributed to the fact that many leaders of the Rada belonged to the secret Austrian *Bund* and were supported by German money. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that Ukraine was the first country to withdraw from the war and to give to the Central Powers a decided temporary advantage in the gigantic struggle.

Great Russia and Little Russia are mutually complementary geographic and economic regions; for over a century and a half the life of these two parts of the Russian Empire has been linked together, the Russian language having become the language of trade, of literature, of official and social intercourse between the various nationalities dwelling in the southern provinces of the country. Many parts of the present Ukrainian Republic never belonged to Ukraine and the people inhabiting these parts have not expressed the desire of renouncing their Russian citizenship. They feel, and think, and hope in the terms of the great country stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea and from the borders of Austria-Hungary and Germany to the shores of the Pacific.

The effect of the breaking away of Ukraine from Russia can be best compared with the effect which the separation of our own Southern Section would have produced upon the United States. Economically it is utterly undesirable and under a truly democratic regime in Russia it is unnecessary either politically, socially, or culturally. An independent Ukraine means the setting up of hundreds of miles of artificial boundaries within the confines of which national or quasi-national jealousies and animosities will solidify and grow, and will lead to the creation of many complicated problems which would not occur if Great Russia and Little Russia become parts of a Federated Republic united by a community of economic interests and by the ties of mutual understanding.

