

Ukraine's Struggle for Self-Government

Leader in Nationalistic Movement Tells How Race Kept Its Individuality Under Alien Masters—He Was Not in Favor of Complete Independence

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The pamphlet from which portions are printed below was written by Professor Michaelo Hrushevsky, now President of the Ukrainian Rada, or Parliament, one of the foremost leaders in the movement which has created a new nation in Europe. Professor Hrushevsky wrote the article before the outbreak of the European war for an English periodical, but shortly after the declaration of hostilities he was arrested by the Czar's Government and exiled to Siberia. Eventually his article was published in *La Revue Politique Internationale* at the end of 1914.

In view of the fact that the entrance of the Ukraine into the company of independent nations is the culmination of the nationalistic agitation which is traced in its every step by Professor Hrushevsky, this article, by one of the new republic's most eminent men, acquires a peculiarly timely interest.

THE history of the Ukrainian question, as it offers itself to us today, dates from the middle of the seventeenth century, that is, the time of the great Ukrainian revolution of 1648, which had given a glaring publicity to the problem, and caused at the same time the partition of the Ukraine between the Muscovite Empire and the Kingdom of Poland. From that day began the decadence of National Ukrainian life.

About the middle of the sixteenth century Ukrainian life had lost much of its strength. The aristocracy, deprived of any participation in politics, was forced to submit to the paramount race, (Poles and Lithuanians,) while the middle classes were subjected to every kind of vexation.

The peasant had lost the right to possess either house or land. He had become a serf. Numerous taxes weighed him down till he was a mere accessory of the earth. The Orthodox Church, which in those times was the representative of the nation, had become dependent upon a Government as ill-disposed toward it as to the peasants. It underwent a crisis which nearly brought about its dissolution. Up to this period Lithuanian Ukraine had progressed slowly, but from the middle of the sixteenth century it progressed more rapidly under the influence of the Polish institutions. Moreover, about 1509, nearly all the districts of Lithuanian Ukraine were taken from its rule and simply annexed to the Polish Republic. They were Volhynia, Eastern Podolia, Podlachje, (the western Bug district,) and Kyjever. The Polish aristocracy came in numbers to reside in its new territory, the Ukrainian aristocracy became influenced by the Poles, and the individual life of the Ukraine ceased to exist.

This did not take place without a reaction and a desire for a national renaissance. Having regard to the special circumstances in Western Ukraine, where the aristocracy in particular had been nearly demolished, one will see that the intellectual and national regeneration could not hope to succeed in the long run. It found support, however, in a new social and political factor which at this critical moment appeared in Eastern Ukraine, that is to say, the Cossacks.

The Cossacks did not hesitate to proclaim the immunity from all jurisdiction, all foreign suzerainty, all taxes, and all personal service of those who submitted to the power and jurisdiction of the Zaporogue (Cossack) Army. Thus they drew toward them an enormous number of peasants, who at the end of the sixteenth century were leaving Western and Northern Ukraine for the east in order to escape the heavy burdens of serfdom. About 1590 the Cossacks came

into conflict with the Polish Government, and their disagreements grew more serious as time went on. Each struggle inspired fresh energy in the Ukrainians, till at last prolonged reprisals (1638-47) led to a revolution. In 1648 the people rose, led by Bohdan Chmielnitzky.

The Polish Army was beaten, and the rising spread over the Ukraine, even to the distant regions of the west. In spite of the number of insurgents, who totaled about 300,000 men at the beginning of the war in 1648, their leaders did not consider the liberation of the people possible by the means at their disposal. Chmielnitzky hesitated between two methods. The one was to create a federation of the Orthodox States, Muscovy, Ukraine, Moldavia, and the Slavs of the Balkans. This alliance would have been directed against Poland and Turkey. Several reasons, and above all the weakness of the Turkish Government, inclined Chmielnitzky to decide for Muscovy. For some time Muscovy had not dared to accept the Protectorate of the Ukraine. It feared war with Poland and remembered the cruel defeats which that nation had inflicted at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Not till 1653 did Moscow decide to extend its protection to the Cossack Army and to the Ukraine by committing itself to war with Poland. In March, 1654, the treaty was signed bearing the name "Articles of Bohdan Chmielnitzky"; therein was defined the position of the Ukraine to Muscovy.

These articles were drawn up in haste, without going deeply into the problem, and many questions were left undecided. The pourparlers which preceded the signing of the treaty showed at any rate that Chmielnitzky did not hesitate at any concession, provided that the Muscovites went to war with Poland. The uncertainty attaching to several points in the treaty explains why the theorists of political law, whether Ukrainian or Russian, have never been agreed as to the true nature of the juridical relations established between Muscovy and the Ukraine by the treaty of 1654. Some of them see in it the establishment of a theoretical union, some a real union. Many experts are of the opinion that the treaty made the Ukraine a vassal of Muscovy; others, on the contrary, that it assured it a national autonomy on a broad basis.

From the moment the Empress Catherine came to the throne the days of the Ukrainian autonomy were, however, over. In order to crush the opposition of the ruling classes, who were the most prominent politically, the Empress made use of a method frequent in Russian politics. This was to proclaim that the reforms undertaken were for the sole purpose of protecting the people from exploitation at the hands of the "Starchina." This did not, however, prevent Catherine from subjecting the Ukraine to serfdom in its most cruel form in 1783, nor from abolishing such of their old liberties as the Ukrainian peasants still continued to enjoy.

In 1772, when Poland was first divided up, Western Ukraine, now Eastern Galicia, became part of the Hapsburg Kingdom in virtue of certain long-standing claims of the Hungarian crown to this country. Some years later, Bukovina, (the present region,) which formerly belonged to Moldavia, was added to it. This passing of Western Ukraine into the rule of Austria awoke a new national fervor in the country. Insignificant as were in reality the reforms brought about, this attitude nevertheless created a deep impression upon the Ukrainian population, which once again

enjoyed a sense of nationality and lost the feeling of despair with which it was stricken during the later years of Polish supremacy. Even after the Austrian Government, under the influence of the Polish aristocracy, had characterized its Ukrainian policy by a strongly reactionary feeling, the energy of the national movement was not completely dissipated.

On the other hand, the Ukrainian territory which had fallen to the share of Russian rule on the partition of Poland had no cause to look for any revival of nationalist aspirations. The rigor with which the Polish or Polonized aristocracy ruled the Ukrainian peasantry became now more merciless still, supported as the Poles were by the authority of Russia.

The longing to see the old Constitution restored made itself manifest from time to time, especially on such occasions as the Russian Government sought to recruit the Cossack militia in the Ukraine. This happened in 1812, and again during the Polish rising in 1831, on both of which occasions the authorities sought to blind the eyes of the people with various promises of ameliorative measures. During the Crimean War, especially, the enrolling of volunteers aroused intense excitement among the peasantry, in whom national aspirations were still vigorous. All expectations of this kind met only with disappointment, but they helped to keep alive the nationalist feeling among the Ukrainian people.

The study of ethnography, and dialects, the researches into the life of the people, the renaissance of the Ukrainian language and literature, such as we see at the end of the eighteenth century and especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, brought together the intellectual classes. This movement removed the lack of sympathy between nobles and people, which had been one of the causes of the political weakness of the Ukrainian upper classes, in addition to the national decadence and the Russianization during the eighteenth century.

Under the influences of which we have just spoken, and thanks to the ideals imported from Western Europe, Ukrainian political thought abandoned its aspirations toward an independence that was no longer feasible in order to replace them by a realizable political program. The oldest of these programs that was in any way realized dates from 1846. It was started by the Ukrainian organization of Kiev, known as the Guild of Cyril and Methodius. They desired a democratic and liberal Constitution which would abolish privileges and classes and everything in fact of a nature to debase the people. Absolute freedom of speech, of thought, and of religion was to be guaranteed. Actually all this practical activity was killed at birth. For, in the year 1847 one of the students informed on the leaders and denounced them, with the result that they were arrested and condemned. This repression put a stop to any development of political thought in the Ukraine, now that the most talented and active leaders were reduced to silence. When they returned from their exile and assumed their patriotic task, circumstances, such as the suppression of serfdom in Russia and the amelioration of the lot of the peasantry, compelled them to labor chiefly for the comfort of the peasants. They were occupied in teaching the agricultural classes and in educational work of various kinds as well as in creating a popular literature, &c.

In spite of such moderation in thought, the Russian Government regarded this

activity with an unfavorable eye, because at the outset it hated any national Ukrainian movement, however moderate it might be. Moscow held strongly to the doctrine of "the unity of the Russian people." Moreover, it regarded as dangerous any desire to establish a separate Ukrainian literature and any endeavor to awaken national feeling in this unfortunate race. For these several reasons then, the activities of the Ukrainians of Kiev were suppressed, no matter how modest or how politically innocent they might be. Any establishments or organizations where Ukrainian scientific workers congregated were forbidden, and in the Spring of 1876 the celebrated ukase appeared determining the fate of the movement for many years. This ukase forbade the publishing in Ukrainian of any work other than those of a historical or literary nature.

The Ukrainian movement, however, was not to be extinguished by such coercive measures. The educated classes of the Ukraine fought incessantly in Russia for the national movement from 1880 to 1900, and endeavored to turn to their own advantage any possibilities which offered themselves. When the movement became no longer possible in Russia, it sought an outlet beyond the frontier in the territory of Austrian Ukraine.

The exodus of the Ukrainians or the divergence of the national activity toward Austrian Ukraine, toward Lemberg, which became a centre for the national life, was weighty with results not only for the Ukrainian movement in Russia, but also for the development of Austrian Ukraine itself. Already, about the year 1860, after the first prohibition of the Ukrainian language in Russia, this event had contributed to the sustenance of the Ukrainian national life in Austria at a very critical moment in the development of this section of the subject people. After the movement had gradually grown weaker in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, under the pressure of the general reactionary movement in Galicia, the year 1848 poured a refreshing breath over the Ukrainians of Austria. The Austrian Government sought in the Ukrainian population something to set off against the Polish revolutionary movement. The final liberation of the serfs, the admission of the moral and political rights of the Ukrainian people, (or Ruthenians,) the creation of the first institution of any importance in the domain of culture and politics, the nationalization of the schools, the formal promise of a university for Lemberg, the administrative separation of the two Galicias, (Ukrainian and Polish,) which had been artificially united in 1772: all these influences assisted the birth of a new era in the life of the Austrian Ukraine.

But these years that were so full of hope soon passed, to be followed in their turn by the reaction of 1850, which brought to the Ukrainians of Galicia the most bitter deceptions. The promises made were completely forgotten for the most part, and the Ukrainians of Galicia, after having aided the Austrian Government in its combat against the rising of the Polish aristocracy, were left to the unscrupulous rule of these same nobles, into whose hands the whole administration of Galicia passed once again in the year 1850.

Thus arose a painful crisis in the national life of the Ukrainians of Galicia. Dissillusions and doubts followed one another, and the way was open for the Russophil current toward which the Polish aristocracy was eagerly driving the Ukrainian element.

The arrival of fresh Ukrainian immigration, coming in 1863 to employ their activity on Galician soil, after the sup-

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pression of the Ukrainian movement in Russia, cannot, under the circumstances, be too highly appreciated. At a critical moment this influence brought the necessary aid to the Ukrainian element, chiefly of the younger generation—which had remained faithful to the program of 1848.

From about 1880 this "popular" Ukrainian movement, as it was called, took a firm hold of the people in Galicia, nor did it fail to keep in touch with the Ukrainian movement in Russia as well.

One can easily understand that this movement, almost entirely banished from Russia, took up an irreconcilable attitude in regard to the centralizing policy of the Russian Government. It was further equally intransigent in its hostility to the Polish oppression in Galicia. It goes without saying that the Russian Government, always hostile to anything which would favor Ukrainian "separatism" in a broad sense, put a stop to any opportunism in the Ukrainian movement. In Austria, Polish supremacy raised an insuperable obstacle between the Ukrainians and the Government; any compromise with the latter was subject to the assent of the masters of Galicia, which meant, of course, the surrender of all Ukrainian aspirations:

The end of the century was signaled by a rapprochement between the two Ukraines. This had a most happy result for the national life, thanks to the reciprocal control exerted on political questions.

From this moment the progress of national culture in Russian Ukraine has made rapid progress, in spite of all attempts made to stop its course.

The stormy years of 1904-1906 brought to the fore the whole question of the Russian reactionary powers. The Petrograd Academy addressed a memorandum to the Russian Government proving that the current conception that the Russian literary language (Great Russian) was employed by the whole of Russia, was false, and did not include the Little Russians, (Ukrainians.) In the most positive manner this memoir affirms the right of existence to the Ukrainian language and literature. In spite of this, the delay brought about in the progress of the language was not immediately dissipated; this only occurred in 1906, when the law concerning newspapers was repealed. This law did away with all restrictions in respect of special idioms, under which term the Ukrainian language was included.

It looked at this period as if the most

joyous future were in store for the Ukrainian movement in Russia. Influenced by the aspirations toward political liberty shown by their brethren, the Austrian Ukrainians also claimed universal suffrage. Galicia was moved by a stronger national impulse than it had ever known before. It was hoped that once "ecumenical" Ukraine achieved freedom in Russia, its intellectual and political power would be strong enough to release its sister States from foreign hegemony. These hopes, however, were not realized. A new reactionary movement disappointed all hopes, and all the promises made to the Russian people in 1905 and 1906 were completely forgotten. This blow was especially hard for Ukrainians.

Nor were the Austrian Ukrainians spared the most cruel disillusion in their turn. They saw their chances of improving their condition disappear as the hope of a solution of the Ukrainian problem in Russia faded away. Polish domination lost none of its rigors. Moreover, the Government, not wishing to quarrel with the Poles, stipulated for a compromise between them before they would promise any amelioration in Ukrainian conditions. Under Governmental pressure and in spite of the opposition of Ukrainian opinion; a compro-

mise was brought about at the beginning of 1914, on the basis of a reform in the law concerning the elections to the Galician Landtag. This arrangement soon proved itself to be insecure.

Under the blow of the survival of the old aspirations and the disillusion they had received there arose a party in the Ukraine who wished to attempt once again the fight for the independence of the country. Such hopes which are found in the associations of the nationalist youth at the end of the nineteenth century awoke once again with renewed energy in spite of the ill-luck which had always hitherto pursued them. But the majority of educated Ukrainians only see in such aspirations a Utopia whose realization would bring about a political cataclysm.

Since it has been shown that the position of the Russian Ukrainians has no attractions for their Austrian brethren, while on the other hand the lot of the Austrian Ukrainians governed by the Poles does not seem at all enviable to the Russian Ukrainians, the educated classes of both Ukraines have come to the conclusion that it is preferable to strive for a broad administrative autonomy suitable to both monarchies, without having recourse to extreme measures.