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THE AWAKENING OF THE UKRAINE

BY ARTHUR E. ADAMS

For one who has too often clashed with Ukrainian nationalist scholars over the question of the role of the Ukraine in modern history, Professor Rudnytsky's study is both refreshing and encouraging. I am sincerely grateful for his objective analysis of a subject so fraught with nationalist passions that rational discussion is frequently impossible.

Above all, Professor Rudnytsky must be applauded for his courageous assessment of the insignificance of the Ukraine as a political entity prior to 1917. By emphasizing the discontinuity of its political history, its lack of territorial integration, the conditions which made overt political activity impossible before 1905 (except for Galicia), he has performed a valuable service, for this clears the air of a certain amount of nationalistic dross that has long hampered effective investigation in this area. As he puts it: "The fact that the nineteenth-century Ukraine lacked territorial integration was a sure sign that a Ukrainian nation, in the full meaning of the word, did not exist at the time." I am in complete agreement with this conclusion and consider it the necessary starting point of any rational effort to understand the role of the Ukraine in modern history.

I also agree with Professor Rudnytsky's identification of the "central problem of modern Ukrainian history" as that of "the emergence of a nation: the transformation of an ethnic-linguistic community into a self-conscious political and cultural community." Since there is no meaningful political history of the Ukraine as a whole prior to 1917, those who wish to examine prerevolutionary history, as Professor Rudnytsky points out, must study social-economic developments (or more specifically, the effects of the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the rise of modern industrialization late in the nineteenth century) and the evolution of social thought (in particular, the development of the nationalist movement in the several regions of the Ukraine). Taken by itself, this definition of the area of fruitful study is somewhat narrow. The roots of Ukrainian thought and action run far deeper than the nineteenth century and far wider than the boundaries of the Ukraine, as the author duly recognizes in other passages of his paper.

A basic disagreement lies in our approaches to the revolutionary era following 1917. Essentially this concerns a question of periodization, which, to my mind, has great significance. Although Professor Rudnyt-

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sky says at one point that "the making of the nation was basically completed during the revolutionary years 1917-20," he clearly treats 1917 as the cut-off date, the climax of the national awakening. It seems obvious to me that the more active period of the "raising of a 'natural,' ethnic community to a politically conscious nationhood" only began in 1917. The following years, 1918-20, completed the process and were indeed the most crucial in the whole history of the Ukrainian national movement.

Professor Rudnytsky also attributes greater significance to the nationalist movement as a factor in bringing the Ukraine to an awareness of itself as a nation than I believe it actually deserves. While it was undoubtedly important, I do not agree that it was the magnetic center toward which all other forces in the Ukraine "pointed in the same direction" were pulled, "as if drawn by an irresistible attraction," until they "merged with it." Certainly the nationalist movement had little influence on the great majority of people living in the Ukrainian lands during the nineteenth century and the first sixteen years of the twentieth. Professor Rudnytsky appears to be of two minds on this topic. "It is clear," he says at one point, "that until the eve of the 1917 Revolution, Ukrainian nationalism retained the character of a minority movement. (This refers to the Russian Ukraine only; the situation was different in Austrian Galicia.) The peasant masses were, until 1905, little touched by the nationalist movement." They were "politically amorphous." This is correct. Equally correct is his statement that the upper classes of the Ukraine "were mostly Russified and, except for those engaged in the Ukrainian movement, regarded themselves as belonging to the Russian nation." I would emphasize that the main cities and the growing class of urban workers also considered themselves to be Russian. Despite his acknowledgment of these facts and of the territorial disunity of the Ukrainian lands, Professor Rudnytsky believes that the nationalist movement "erupted, in 1917, as a nascent nation of over thirty million." And in the last line of his article, he concludes: "By 1917 the entire Ukraine was swept by the torrent of a national revolution."

It is my belief that while Ukrainian nationalist groups did help to bring about a national awakening, the nationalist movement itself was but one component of a complex process involving other forces, events, and ideas of equal, or perhaps greater, significance. Moreover, I would contend that the awakening itself began on a limited scale in 1917 and became an almost universal phenomenon only in the next two years. The following examination of developments during and after 1917 indicates the nature and operation of several of the above-mentioned "other forces, events, and ideas" and demonstrates the limited role of the national movement.

With the collapse of imperial power in St. Petersburg and the estab-

lishment of a provisional government in Russia's capital, a tiny and isolated group of nationalist intellectuals proclaimed the Rada (council) Government at Kiev. This organization thereafter spent some eight difficult months bickering with St. Petersburg for limited Ukrainian autonomy within a federation of Russian states. While the Rada was a daring and noble experiment, it neither inflamed the imaginations nor captured the loyalties of the people of the Ukraine. Nor was it vigorous enough to introduce an effective central and provincial administrative system. When the Bolsheviks came to power at St. Petersburg in November, the Rada was too weak to halt the Red Guard units sent to remove it. To secure their government against the Bolsheviks' incursion, Rada representatives signed a treaty with Germany early in 1918, and soon thereafter, at the Rada's invitation, German military forces occupied the Ukraine. This sealed the Rada's doom, for the occupation authorities demanded great mountains of food supplies for the German homeland. Unable to fulfill its procurement quotas, the Rada in April lost its power to Hetman Paul Skoropadsky, a puppet of the Germans, who devised harsh and effective measures for separating the Ukraine's peasants from their produce.

If anything served to arouse in the Ukrainian people a genuine awareness that they represented a nation, it was the German occupation and Skoropadsky's officious regime. The "nationalism" that flared up in the Ukraine in the summer of 1918 had little in common with the literary nationalism of the intellectuals. Angry peasant *haidamaky* attacked Germans with age-old partisan methods, fired by hatred of the "foreign robbers" and the hetmanate. This was a nationalism of xenophobia, of local patriotism, of men desperate for farm lands they considered their own, and of families forced to fight to stay alive in the face of enemy depredations. In mid-1918 this movement was chaotic, disunited, led by many centers and parties, both Ukrainian and Russian. It is at least arguable that emotions—hatred of the unbearable tyranny of foreigners and a lust for land—not the influence of nationalist intellectuals and their ideas, were the predominant motivating factors. I should emphasize here that it is not my intention falsely to minimize the role of the nationalist movement. Members of the village intelligentsia who were dedicated to the national movement often led local partisan bands and zealously propagated the nationalists' ideas and ideals; yet, it must be remembered, other groups found themselves under such widely diversified leaders as ignorant peasants, reactionary officers, ex-soldiers, Jew haters, and representatives of the Russian Menshevik, Bolshevik, and Social Revolutionary parties.

In the latter months of 1918 the process of "raising a 'natural,' ethnic community to a politically conscious nationhood" through internecine strife continued. After the German war effort collapsed in early November, Skoropadsky wavered toward federation with Bolshevik Rus-

sia. The Germans permitted Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ukrainian National Union to launch an insurrection which established the Directory, piloted by Vynnychenko and Symon Petliura, as the executive organ of a new Ukrainian republic. Space does not permit extensive description of this government, nor does the full story of its brief tenure need recounting here. The most pertinent facts for the present discussion are these: In mid-November Petliura summoned "all Ukrainian soldiers and Cossacks to fight for the independence of the Ukraine against the traitor, the former tsarist servant, General Skoropadsky," and his appeal was enthusiastically answered by thousands of peasants and Cossacks. Within weeks he possessed an army of over 100,000 men, led by Cossack atamany, peasant rebels, Skoropadsky's former officers, and disciplined nationalists from Galicia.

This fervent taking up of arms appears to have been a magnificent display of a people uniting behind a government it recognized as its legitimate national center. The angry men who flocked to Petliura's colors perceived in the Directory's first Universals their own objectives: land, vengeance upon the big landowners who had been protected by Skoropadsky, and a chance to shoot at the hated Germans. But, tragically, the nationalist leaders failed to implement their promises, and the Ukrainian people separated from the Directory almost at once.

Within the space of the first month of 1919, Petliura's great armies dwindled until barely 20,000 men remained. A convergence of many factors hastened this nationalist disaster. Cruel, reactionary, and uncontrollable officers like Ataman Peter Balbachan, who commanded the Left Bank for Petliura, quickly disillusioned the peasant-soldiers. Military pressures from the Bolsheviks and internal political dissent so harassed and paralyzed the republic's embryo government that it could neither gather strength nor make bold decisions. With the Germans fleeing and the Directory's promises going sour, Petliura's "nationalist" squadrons simply melted away. Many, hearkening to the Communists' siren song of equality, self-government, and radical social reform, went over to the Bolsheviks. Others, mainly bold Cossack leaders or peasants like Nestor Makhno, taking advantage of the Directory's weakness and the Bolsheviks' chaos, harassed German stragglers and local authorities. By the time the Bolshevik army reached Kiev in the first days of February, its ranks largely composed of deserters from Petliura, the Directory was helpless. It withdrew westward.

Petliura was able to keep some forces moving in the western Ukraine and even to occupy Kiev again for a day in August, 1919, after the White General, Anton Denikin, had driven out the Bolsheviks. But the cause of the nationalist intellectuals was lost in February, 1919, primarily because they had failed to satisfy the demands of the Ukrainian people for national leadership and radical social reform. Lest this be taken as a condemnation of the nationalists, it should be noted that

the Directory was born in a period of chaos. It held Kiev only six weeks, during which time it suffered Bolshevik invasion as well as Allied intervention. It was unable to secure strong allies, and the complicated political and social problems it faced defied rapid solution. The fact remains that the nationalist movement did not so strongly attract the unleashed social forces of the Ukraine that they merged with it. Rather, most of the people of the Ukraine, borrowing some ideas from the movement, passed on in search of objectives which chaos and conflict were making imperative.

An account of the transformation of the people and the lands of the Ukraine into a self-conscious nation cannot be halted with the departure of Vynnychenko and Petliura from Kiev. The process was to continue all through 1919. Just as German occupation and plundering and Skoropadsky's hateful land policies served to stimulate Ukrainian self-awareness, so did the coming of the Bolsheviks in the early weeks of 1919. And just as peasants, Cossacks, and townfolk had deserted the Directory when it failed to live up to their needs, so from March to August, 1919, they abandoned the Bolsheviks, repudiating the Communist autocracy and such institutions as the Cheka and the agricultural commune. Almost immediately after the Bolshevik, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, and the Aleksandriia Cossack, Ataman Grigorev, had driven the French from Odessa, desertions and rebellions within the Red Army of the Ukraine rose to such heights that the Bolsheviks' strength was dangerously weakened. Soon after Grigorev's rebellion and Makhno's dismissal from the Red Army (May and June), General Denikin's White Army forces advanced through the Ukraine, driving the Bolsheviks before them, repelling some native groups and attracting others. One might almost picture the actions of the peoples of the Ukraine during this period as those of a blind but purposeful mass seeking a leader, following one, then another, but soon pushing on because no major political party would accept the popular goals. Certainly this process was neither conscious nor planned; yet the pattern is there.

The thrust and counterthrust of opposing armies continued into early 1920. By that time the Ukraine had become a nation in fact as well as in the minds of its people. The years of revolution and civil war had united the ideas of a wide variety of political and intellectual movements with the aroused xenophobic passions and patriotic pride of the masses. Among the most important components in the cauldron that brewed the Ukraine's awareness of itself as a nation were the peasants' desire for land and the urban workers' thirst for social justice and self-government. The final product, a widespread belief that the Ukraine was a unique political and cultural nation, was so powerful that the Bolsheviks themselves were compelled to come to terms with it.

In the process of national awakening described above, a number of

important influences should be singled out for special emphasis. Of these the roles played by non-Ukrainian political parties deserve much more attention than they have been given in the past. The Bolshevik wing of the Social Democrats might be mentioned here, because the Bolsheviks' positive influence is so seldom acknowledged and because even the devil should be given his due. It is evident that many Bolsheviks who worked in the Ukraine during the years of revolution and civil war quickly recognized the Ukraine's need for special treatment. This appears to have occurred not so much because they were exposed to the Ukrainian nationalist ideology as because experience persuaded them that the Russian Communist Party's ideas and practices had to be adjusted to suit the Ukrainian environment if Bolshevism was to succeed. To mention only a few examples, there were men like Vladimir Zatonsky and Iurii Piatakov, who helped to establish the Communist Party of the Ukraine (KP[b]U), only halfheartedly supported by Lenin, and proceeded to struggle against Lenin's declared wishes for the right to make independent decisions. While these two lost their fight early, others carried it further. Even Leon Trotsky, working in the Ukraine in mid-1919, saw the sense of such an attitude; and the Old Bolshevik, G. Lapchinsky, after the victory of Denikin in late 1919, bravely declared the need for a reconstituted Ukrainian Communist party that would be independent of the Russian party.

Impressed by defeat and the exhortations of his lieutenants, Lenin, in December, 1919, and January, 1920, issued detailed instructions to Bolsheviks working in the Ukraine to encourage the use of the Ukrainian language and to make every effort to avoid offending the Ukrainian *amour-propre*. Obviously he introduced these changes, hoping they would ease the work of regaining power in the Ukraine; nevertheless, such decrees, along with the widely propagated principle of the right of every nation to self-determination, were instrumental in persuading many Ukrainians that they should control their own destinies.

Another contributing influence should be heavily underlined. Identifying certain social forces which were of special significance, Professor Rudnytsky includes "symbols and ideas derived from the Cossack tradition," which, he declares, "played an important role even as late as the 1917 Revolution." Once again I would agree with his thought, but would go further both in time and emphasis. In 1918 and 1919 men calling themselves Cossack atamany seemed to spring up everywhere. Cossack captains, crafty illiterate rascals, or cool and well-trained officers called out the local villagers, adopted the title "ataman of this or that," wrote stirring appeals for action based upon references to the traditions of the Zaporozhian Sich, and fell to fighting. Such men compounded homespun political philosophies of varying portions of Cossack lore, Social Democratic or Social Revolutionary ideas, anarchism, and so forth. Above all they saw themselves as Cossacks of the seven-

teenth century fighting for freedom. These chieftains ruled much of the countryside and led the military forces, personifying in word and deed the Cossack ideals. Because such leaders exercised direct and important influence upon men and events, the impact of the Cossack tradition upon the final stages of the development of Ukrainian political consciousness was immense.

Finally, the action of yet another social force demands special emphasis. This is the Ukrainian peasant. Professor Rudnytsky has mentioned the "self-reliance and enterprise" of the peasants of the southern steppes. During the revolutionary years, when the bars of effective civil and military authority were down, the peasant displayed all the courage and anarchic willfulness of the fabled hero Il'ia Muromets. The prideful intransigence of Nestor Makhno and his followers is but one symbol of this character. While Makhno himself gained his anarchist ideas in a Moscow prison, the uneducated steppe dwellers who fought for him were moved by their own elemental, anarchic love of liberty. In his heart and mind the Ukrainian peasant bore memories of the murderous, rampaging *haidamaky* who had been his ancestors; he held a grudging respect for the Cossack traditions of his neighbors; above all he was driven by a towering hatred of outsiders and tyrants and by the desire for land.

The bloody rebellions against Germans and their puppets, against Petliura and the Bolsheviks, and the brutal pogroms—all testify to the irrational fury of the peasants' demands. One is tempted to suggest that the nationalist intellectuals and Russian political leaders did not so much teach the peasant as flee before him. At least in part, the final years of the awakening of the Ukraine should be viewed as a history of a peasant *jacquerie* that crushed all lesser forces beneath its boots, until, at last, peasants and land were so exhausted that Bolshevism's patient workers were able to slip into power almost unchallenged.

It has been the destiny of the awakened nation to remain a "captive" of Moscow for over forty years.