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THE NAMES „RUS“, „RUSSIA“, „UKRAINE“  
AND  
THEIR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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## FOREWORD

During the past four decades, Canadians and Americans have witnessed a remarkable manifestation of the second largest Slav nation in Europe. The people who for many centuries have inhabited the vast fertile lands north of the Black Sea, who were submerged in the Russian Empire of the Romanovs and the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs, and who in Europe were vaguely known as "Little Russians" or „Ruthenians", suddenly at the end of the First World War, following the collapse of Tsarist Russia, emerged as Ukrainians, having established the short-lived Ukrainian National Republic. This republic had immediately received de facto recognition from Britain, France, and the Soviet government. At the present time, the preponderant majority of this national group is formed within the confines of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, where there exists a strong movement of resistance to Russian domination.

Puzzling but unique to the Canadians and Americans was, and still is, the crystallization of national-consciousness and the change of national designation of the settlers of this same ethnic group in North America, who today number approximately 400,000 citizens in Canada, and some 800,000 in the United States of America. The immigrants of this group who arrived on this continent before the First World War were designed by government officials and public men either according to the region of origin, ie. Galicians, Bukowinians, Austrians, Hungarians, and Russians, or according to what was believed to be the national origin, ie. Ruthenians, Russians, Little Russians, Ugro-Russians, Russniaks, and even Poles. This variety of names for a people who spoke a similar language and maintained similar customs was confusing not only to the general citizenry but to the very members of the ethnic group. Under the impact of the establishment of the Ukrainian state in 1917, which enormously accelerated national sentiment, the

people of this group in North America thereafter regarded themselves as Ukrainians. They emphatically insist that Ukrainian should be the only Slav name to be applied to them. The statistics bureaus have complied with the wishes of the group. The only section of the people which is anthropologically, linguistically and culturally related to the Ukrainians and which has partially resisted the adoption of the name are the Carpathian Slavs, still known as Ruthenians or Russians in the United States. Their region of origin, however, adopted the name Carpatho-Ukraine in 1938 and since 1945 has been a component part of Soviet Ukraine.

Interesting testimony to the transition which has taken place within the ethnic group on this continent are place-names. Early pioneer settlers had selected the names "Rus" and "Ruthenia" for places of settlement and for public schools. In the second decade of this century, "Ukraine" was chosen as the name for several new places and new schools. There is no known case where the name "Russia" has been applied by this group.

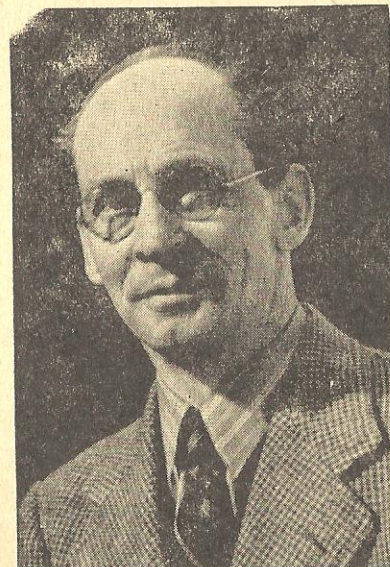
The identification of the Ukrainians with the Russians is deeply resented by the former. Although possessing a common Slav origin, the Ukrainians are as separate a nationality as are the Teutonic Swedes or the Latin French. Furthermore the Russian Academy of St. Petersburg, in 1905, officially recognized the Ukrainian language as separate, which in itself implies recognition of a distinct nationality.

Professor G. W. Simpson's account of the historical development of the terms "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" in relation to "Rus", "Russia", and "Russian" sheds much needed light on this subject. Written by an eminent authority on the Slavs and Slavic history, it will prove useful to the reader who wishes to gain reliable, authoritative information on the proper use of these names.

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## THE NAMES "RUS' ", "RUSSIA" AND "UKRAINE" AND THEIR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to one Egyptian account of creation it is said that the great god Neb-er-tcher first made his own mouth and then brought himself into being by uttering his own name. This god-like feat is in the realm of mythology but it truly indicates the fundamental significance of language, and particularly names, in the establishment of reality and truth. When truth and reality flow along the liquid channel of time, changing form and content, then the question of identity and continuity becomes a problem of vocabulary and names.

The historian is familiar with this problem of identification. As he moves from century to century he must explain that the political designation of this age does not represent the political reality of a former period. Canada in 1600, in 1700, in 1800, and in 1900 are quite different units in fact. He may talk about Germany in 1500, but if he does so, he will have to be voluble in preliminary explanation to avoid multiple confusion. He may talk about English history in 1850 as a matter of habit when he should use the term "British", or some other designation, unless he wishes to offend the susceptible Scots and other touchy elements in the enlarged political circle of that expansive era. The historian thus learns that while his task is to show continuity he should neither confuse nor offend by the careless use of names.

While the historian may be disciplined by his craft in the careful use of names the political manipulator may use names not to ensure historical accuracy or continuity but as a deliberate attempt to establish new situations or to revise old political patterns. On occasion he may even attempt to confuse and confound. A change of name may be a sensible recognition that a new situation has arisen. In our own history we have gone through an evolution of concept expressed in the successive

terms, "British Empire", "British Commonwealth of Nations", and finally, "Commonwealth of Nations", without the qualifying adjective. On the other hand the continuance of a name may represent a refusal to recognize existent facts, as for example the use in the eighteenth century of the name, "Holy Roman Empire" for an entity which according to the hackneyed quotation was "neither Holy, nor Roman, nor Empire".

In the matter of group designation neither the historians, nor the politicians have the sole power of fixing terms by which the groups may be known. The people within the group may have their own stubborn preferences, prejudices and predilections, and thus refuse to regard themselves by the names which do not correspond to their traditional habits of thought, or to the future hopes which they envisage for themselves.

Since names become so intimately associated, or identified, with individuality a change of name becomes a matter of major importance not only in the matter of marriage, bankruptcy and crime but also in the ordinary field of human relationships. If a leopard changes his spots the animal kingdom must be duly informed in order to avoid the unpleasant embarrassments which may arise from mistaken identity.

Thus the battle of names is not a sham battle. Behind the dull armour of etymology, philology, and the refined verbal argument by subtle inference there beats a human heart conscious of human dignity, and also susceptible of pride. On occasion it may even fear defeat, humiliation and death. To the casual onlooker in the battle of names the air is thick with flying nouns, detached prepositions, and uprooted roots, and the ink flows freely, soaking many a printed page, and spattering fugitive bits of old manuscripts. To the careful observer there is more at stake than a victory of words or a grammarian's funeral. The identification of language with actuality, or a clarification of terms is a prerequisite for understanding in any field of knowledge or for any intelligent policy and action.

Among the political designations which have been the centre of much furious word fighting in recent years are the terms "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian". In English the accepted

pronunciation of "Ukraine" is "You-kran". "Ukrainian" is pronounced "You-kran-e-an". In the Ukrainian language itself "Ukraine" is sounded like "oo (as in boo)—kra-ye-na". A foolish attempt to retain a similar pronunciation in English has only resulted in various corruptions of it. One of the most objectionable corruptions is "You-k" an abbreviated slang designation sometimes used as a substitute for "Ukrainian".

In 1900 few general geographies in English used the term "Ukraine". Twenty years later some geographies were employing the name. At present all general geographies contain this designation. It is the history behind these names which the present article will give in outline.

In the present-day maps Ukraine is a designation applied to a large political unit situated north of the Black Sea and extending roughly from the Carpathian mountains to the lower and middle Dnieper river and eastward to the Donets river. It covers some two hundred and sixty thousand square miles and is inhabited by some forty-three million people. It is organized as a Soviet Republic within the political structure of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The capital city of the Ukraine is Kiev on the Dnieper river. The bulk of the Ukrainian people have always lived within this area and Kiev was the centre of their first state which emerged from a more or less primitive stage of tribal development in the ninth century of the Christian era.

The emergence of the Kiev state was associated with the raiding, trading, and state-creating activities of the Scandinavian adventurers who at this time were swarming across the North and Baltic seas and who were to leave their energizing impact on so many regions from Normandy and England to Iceland and Greenland, and from the coasts of the Mediterranean to the river mouths of the Black and Caspian seas. The Northmen appear as an episode in the history of the Kiev state but their coming established a prolific dynasty stemming from the Viking hero, Rurik, and they also caused the prolongation of the name "Rus" whose origin is still the subject of violent controversy. Some maintain that the name is exclusively Scandinavian in origin

while others contend with considerable plausibility that the name had indigenous roots and became attached to the new state structure as a distinguishing designation. In any case it is certain that the name "Rus" was used officially in treaties in the tenth century by the governing group in Kiev. It is probable that the common people within the Kiev state only gradually gave up their tribal names and adopted the name "Rus" to apply to the country, or the derivative name, "Rusin" to apply to themselves as inhabitants of the state.

As the Kiev dynastic state enlarged the area of its control the name "Rus" which was associated with the Kiev centre became also extended in its use to the much wider region. In the eleventh century Kiev was the dominating political capital of Eastern Slavdom, but, as elsewhere in Europe, the centrifugal forces proved in the end too strong for the maintenance of political unity. The Kievan power broke down into a loose group of rival, warring principalities alternately attracted to one another and repelled by trade advantages, dynastic relationship and religious affiliation. Kiev lost its ascendant position and other rival centres appeared. The Tatar invasion in the first half of the thirteenth century completed the shattering process of the Kiev state and prepared the way for the appearance of new political centres of gravity. Among these centres was Moscow in the upper Volga region, Galicia in the upper Dniester and Bug rivers, and Lithuania which began to extend its control over Slavic areas from its base on the upper Niemen river.

Moscow was established at the comparatively late date of 1147. Under Tatar supremacy it began to gain an ascendant position among the other subjected principalities of the Upper Volga. Its Grand Dukes pursued a purely local, or Moscovite policy. For three centuries they hammered, bludgeoned and extended their acquisitions into a compact submissive state in the continental north. With the downfall of Constantinople and the retreat of the Tatars in the fifteenth century their rulers adopted the title, "Tsar, Ruler and Autocrat of All-Russia". While the outside world continued for some time to speak of Moscovy the use of the term "Russia" (Rossiya) tended to link the establish-

ment of the Moscow monarchy with the ancient Kiev "Rus" tradition.

Meanwhile the Kiev principality had in the fourteenth century become part of the Lithuanian state, at this time a much larger area than the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Subject to western cultural and political influences the people were given a different orientation and developed further distinctions of speech and outlook as compared with their north-eastern neighbor of Moscovy.

A third centre of Eastern Slavic culture had developed in Galicia and Volynia. The people in that area cherished their traditional cultural ties with ancient Kiev. In the thirteenth century they had enjoyed a period of prosperity under dynastic rulers who traced their inheritance from the original Rurik line. In the fourteenth century Volynia was united with Lithuania and Galicia to Poland. In this same century, at a later date, Poland and Lithuania were joined in a dynastic union. Thus was created a huge Slavic political unit stretching from the Baltic sea to beyond the Dnieper river. The country was organized on a feudal basis so that regional differences and landlord-serf relationships were of more general concern than the concept or welfare of the state at large.

As the Tatar menace to the south and east receded Kiev again became a flourishing centre, and there developed in the sixteenth century a sturdy frontier movement in the re-occupation of the rich southern steppe lands. The movement was accelerated by a growing harshness in the landlord-serf relationships within the Polish Kingdom which exercised nominal sovereignty over the area. This area of the middle and lower Dnieper with its centre, Kiev, finally broke out in violent rebellion against Polish rule. The population in revolt was made up of descendants of the original inhabitants of the region re-enforced by immigrant refugees, and adventurers, and those intrusive, fugitive ethnic elements which never cease to mix and modify the human breeds. In the consciousness of the group in the region as a whole there was a sense of distinctiveness and a sense of continuity with the past. To mark the distinctiveness two terms emerged in common and official usage.

The first of these terms was "Ruthenian". This was a Latinized version, derived from the term "Rus". In 1595-6 when the Church Union of Brest officially subjected the Greek Orthodox Church in Poland to the authority of the Pope the name applied to the people involved was "Ruthenian". While the Union was not wholly successful and finally was restricted to the south-western section of the area which had once formed part of the early Kiev state the term came into popular as well as official usage. This section ultimately fell to Austria through the partition of Poland in the eighteenth century.

While the term "Ruthenian" was used for a time in the Dnieper area as equivalent to the old term "Rus" it was replaced in the middle of the seventeenth century by the term "Ukrainian". The word "Ukraine" is to be found in an old Chronicle as early as 1187. There is still controversy as to its origin. Some scholars tend to trace its origin to the root "krai" meaning country or region, and together with its prefix "U" denoting a border land or frontier area of the old Kievan Rus. Such an explanation fits into the nationalistic historiography which views Ukrainian separatism as a frontier phenomenon in Russian or Polish development. Ukrainian etymologists also derive the term from "kraj" or "krajina" but connect it with the proto-Slavic "krajon", "krojiti" or "krajati", meaning to cut or divide. Its original meaning, according to these scholars, was: "The country divided into land property among the clans, or the country which the tribe regarded as 'cut out' from 'the holy earth' as its private property and dominion".

Whatever its origin, the term began to be employed at the end of the sixteenth century to refer to the Kiev area. In the early half of the sixteenth century it was used along with the designation "Ruthenian". The great political and social uprising associated with the name of Khmel'nitsky, — the Ukrainian Cromwell, — and which resulted in the temporary freeing of the area by Cossack leadership from Polish control in the middle of the same century brought the names "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" into lasting prominence. They were popularly enshrined in the epics and songs connected with the great events

of this liberating movement. "Ukraine" was officially recognized in diplomatic correspondence. It made its appearance on contemporary maps. The name received recognition by other states.

The great hopes of 1648 were not however realized. The Ukrainian movement for freedom was crushed between the Russian hammer and the Polish anvil. The "Ukraine" of the maps was divided between the two countries in the later seventeenth century, and in the following century was almost completely engulfed by the rising imperial power of the Moscovite Tsars. The term "Ukraine" was dropped in official usage and slowly faded into a twilight haze of memory prolonged by the poignant strains of old songs and verse.

The Russian rulers adopted a new designation for the area which they now proceeded to reduce, in spite of prolonged local resistance, to a regular administrative part of their social and political imperial system. The name applied to the region was "Little Russia" and the people were called "Little Russians". This name had its origin in ecclesiastic language to distinguish an original area of administration from its later area of development and organization. Thus the patriarch of Constantinople had applied the name "Micra Rosia" or in Latin "Rossia Minor" to the old Rus territory about Kiev. The territory radiating from Moscow had received by way of distinction the designation "Great Russia" (Rossia Magna) and the people were alluded to as "Great Russians". This was similar to the terms "Asia Minor" and "Asia Major", or in ancient history, the distinction between the Greece of the Balkan peninsula and the "Magna Greece", referring to the outer colonized area of the southern Italian peninsula.

The name "Little Russia" adopted by the Imperial administration was designed to indicate an affinity between the two people and to emphasize the fact that six centuries previously there had been a common dynastic state. The mass of the people in the Ukrainian area continued to regard themselves as "Rusins" without any qualifying adjectives. Unfortunately in the Western European languages no distinction in translation was usually made between "Rusin" and "Russian" (Rossiayanin), the latter

being the term properly applied to the Great Russians. Thus a continuing popular distinction was lost in translation and served to conceal from Western political observers an important political factor in Eastern European politics. It is true that in the eighteenth century when the term "Little Russia" became current official usage the society in that area was being more and more forced into an aristocratic mould with the common country folk being reduced to serfdom. Under the hard conditions characteristic of an essentially peasant society there was little latitude for the development of that wider group consciousness which we associate with modern nationalism.

This consciousness began to develop more distinctly in the nineteenth century. As elsewhere this consciousness was expressed in the deliberate revival of folk songs and music, interest in history and folk lore, and in the use of the vernacular in prose and poetry. The past with its rich association in tradition and song was to be used as a means of promoting that solidarity and strength necessary to throw off current oppression and despotism. Taras Shevchenko (1814—1861) in his verses of liquid fire recalled the past glories of Ukraine, particularly the period of the Cossacks in the seventeenth century when the term "Ukraine" was generally used. His immensely popular verse tended to bring the term back into usage. Its use however was restricted and the movement for freedom developed with painful slowness in the Russian Empire.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 gave considerable impetus to all national movements within the Russian Empire, but it was the March Revolution of 1917 which finally crystallized national aspirations. The word "Ukraine", already beginning to be used before 1914 expressed the full measure of separateness which the people now felt. By its use there was no longer the easy confusion between "Rus" and "Russia", between "Little Russians" and "Great Russians", or those color distinctions "White", "Red" and "Black" which had also infiltrated into usage through curious historic paths. The ambiguity of the term "Ruthenian" was also superceded. While regret was felt in some academic quarters for this departure from one of the traditional

names, and while the names "Rusin" and "Ruthenian" were retained here and there by little groups who maintained it with that stubbornness peculiar to people who suffer from the inverted conservativeness of oppression, the name "Ukrainian" spread with amazing swiftness.

"Ukrainian" was the name adopted by the people who achieved their autonomy after the March Revolution of 1917 and elected their Central Rada or Parliament. After the Bolsheviks had seized power in Russia there was proclaimed in Kiev the independent Ukrainian National Republic on January 22, 1918. In the same year on the first of November, following the collapse of Austria-Hungary the West Ukrainian National Republic emerged. These two states were joined into a United Ukrainian Republic on January 22, 1919, thus bringing about a nominal union of the bulk of the territory inhabited by people who now accepted the term "Ukrainian" as an expression of their ethnic identity. The subsequent political fortunes of this territory is a special story of tragic proportions but from the standpoint of names the significant fact is that the terms "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" have remained. They have been adopted by friend and foe. The Bolsheviks themselves made great use of the name for their own purposes. Some of the Poles continued for a time to maintain a confusion of different names for the same people but finally abandoned the attempt.

It was the people themselves who had the final and decisive word. For them the distinctiveness of the word "Ukraine" has appealed not only to their poetic and historic sense but even more to their determination to have their own group life. The communists were among the first to exploit fully this deep sense of group consciousness identified now by this name. At the same time scholars of language have now, almost universally, adopted the term.

In Canada until the term "Ukrainian" was generally adopted there was considerable confusion of names. The great majority of this ethnic group who came to Canada were from the Austrian province of Galicia. Most of them also belonged to the Greek Catholic Church. Sometimes they were called by Canadians



"Galicians" and sometimes "Ruthenians" not only in popular speech but also in official reports and documents. Until 1910 the term "Ukrainian" was only occasionally used. In that year a new publication appeared in Winnipeg which took the name "Ukrainian Voice" (Ukrayinskiy Holos). Its promoters were regarded as somewhat advanced and radical in their views so it is not surprising that when a newspaper was established two years later to represent the Greek Catholic interests that its promoters adhered to the traditional name "Rusin". When the Church society was incorporated the following year it retained the traditional ecclesiastical title "Ruthenian".

It was the great war and revolutionary events in Europe with the adoption of the official names there, as already related, which quickly spread the term "Ukrainian" in common usage in this country. The amazing rapidity with which the term was adopted caused some confusion in Canadian minds and not a little stumbling in Canadian tongues. By 1920 the people directly concerned were insisting, usually with accompanying patient explanation, on being called "Ukrainian" by their fellow countrymen. By 1930 most people had accepted the term. By 1940 the victory was complete on both official and unofficial fronts with only rare isolated pockets of resistance still fighting for the lost cause of names fading into obsolescence.

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