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MARIYKA



by

JOSEPH BILOUS

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*A FASCINATING STORY OF A NATION
IN A STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE*



Printed by the Publishers of the New Pathway

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PREFACE

The contents of this story is based upon the historical preparation of the Ukrainian uprising against the Imperial Russian Government in 1917. The rebellion that followed, and the preparation for the military uprising described herein, destroyed the decayed foundation of the House of Romanoffs, and the despotic rule of the Czars was driven into oblivion. Once more after centuries of slavery under the double headed Eagle—a new state was establised—the Ukraine.

Thousands of Ukrainian men and women have sacrificed lives for the independence of their beloved Ukraine; thousands were imprisoned, but the heroic struggles never ceased, and finally in the fateful 1917 a DREAM became a REALITY . . . Ukrainians have had achieved their aim. In Kiev, the old Capital of Ukraine—a flag of sky blue and golden yellow, (the golden yellow symbolizes the color of the Ukrainian steppes with its ripened golden grain)—freely fluttered above . . .

It was a glorious achievement of the people that had suffered much in every way not for decades, but for whole centuries.

I sincerely hope that this story will be appreciated not only by the Ukrainians, but also by the whole Anglo-Saxon world. Myself, being a descendant of the Ukrainian Nation—I consider it as a duty to make this humble and insignificant contribution, thus commemorating the Ukrainian heroes, that sacrificed their lives in order to make their country live.

It is with great regret I have to state, that after few short years of freedom, the Ukraine was once more enslaved by the enemy—the red rulers of Kremlin, by Poland, semi-feudal Rumania and Czechoslovakia. The partition of the Ukraine, nevertheless, did not conquer the freedom loving souls of the Ukrainian population, and the struggle for the freedom and independence of the Ukraine continues with greater efforts than ever, regardless of sacrifices.

CHAPTER I

'Twas an early Spring evening. The ancient large hall of the house, with its armor and shield worn by bygone Doroshkewyches and conserved to the present day, echoed to the sound of ribald merriment. Smartly groomed Czarist Russian officers and lovely ladies, many of questionable virtue, whirled around the polished floor to the music of a modern orchestra, while they waited for their hostess to make her appearance. It was during the lull in the music that a sudden exclamation from a portly officer focussed every masculine eye on the great staircase that led from the upper part of the house. Mariyka Ivaniwna Doroshkewych was descending slowly.

* * *

During the six hundred years of the existence of tradition of Doroshkewych's time had recorded many patriotic, fighting men for the independence of Ukraine.

Now in the Spring of 1917 everything was changed. The loftily ceilinged rooms echoed to the roistering laughter and heavy tread of Russian officers and higher graded officials of the Imperial government. Officers of the Cossack regiments came and went at will in the gray house, often called "The Little Castle", by the whole neighborhood.

A wanton now reigned in this castle, where once brave men and lovely women had lived so proudly. A shameless, beautiful creature was Mariy,ka Ivanivna Doroshkewych, shunned by the neighboring gentry, hooted and hated by the humble folk of the countryside—the Ukrainian peasants.

A Doroshkewych . . . The last of Doroshkewyches, with her proud heritage, bestowing her favors upon the Russian foemen, upon the hated Cossacks of the ruthless Czar . . . From pompous colonels commanding regiments, down to the most verdant subaltern just fresh from Moscow, they all paid her open court.

The Doroshkewyches, like all Ukrainian gentry, were an impoverished people, yet she and her brother Wolodymyr lived luxuriously. 'Twas obvious she bartered her love for the luxuries that the military men of Russia could

provide. It was obvious she held the privilege of resplendant living in higher regard than the honor of the Doroshkewyches, higher than her Ukraine, otherwise never could she have welcomed the Imperial Cossacks to her fireside. Such was the opinion of the peasant folk.

II

Yet, centuries of pure Ukrainian stock had produced Mariyka Ivaniwna Doroshkewych. Given her a face and body that set the red blood racing in the veins of any man who saw her.

Tonight she was particularly ravishing, from the sheath of a flame-colored gown which clung seductively to her superb figure, revealing every line, every delicious curve. Her full white breasts and lovely shoulders rose like gleaming alabaster to the small regal head with its coronet of tousled black hair. Her wide blue eyes, smudged with a faint darkness on the lower lids that is the heritage of every Ukrainian beauty, gazed with faint contempt upon the uniformed men who waited at the bottom of the stairway, seeking the favor of the first dance with her.

Major Sokoloff, Chief Intelligence officer for the Ukrainian territory, was the lucky man. His predatory eyes alight with triumph, he put one arm about her slim waist and whirled her out on the floor. For weeks the astute Russian had wooed the girl passionately, but his progress had been very slow. He had dined and ridden with her whenever she would give him the opportunity, but competition was so keen that the occasions had been few. Usually so suspicious of everyone, the idea that she might be extracting information from him never entered his mind. Mad with desire to possess her, he was blinded too much that he might otherwise have observed.

Gliding around the floor with her in his arms, he racked his usually fertile brain for an excuse to get her alone before the evening was over. He was still seeking a plausible excuse when a colonel, decorated with medals cut in and he was forced to relinquish her to rank. Comforted by a parting pressure of her fingers, he bowed and made his way to the long buffet to seek further solace in a stiff vodka and bide his time.

As soon as the dance was ended Mariyka was surrounded by a score of officers. Chat-

ting gaily, she kept alert for chance scraps of information that might be of value. To-night, however, nothing of importance came her way. When Major Sokoloff sought her out she yielded to his entreaties to walk in the garden.

There was a bright moon and the air was warm enough to make a wrap unnecessary. Laughing and chatting, she allowed the tall major to lead her to a marble bench, half concealed by shrubbery. When he had lighted her cigarette she leaned back and gazed absently across the moonlit garden combined with an orchard spread beneath them.

After they were seated, Mariyka looked up towards the sky and in a half tone started to sing the famous Ukrainian love song, so popular throughout the Ukraine . . .

“Nich yaka, Hospody” . . .

“Moonbeams are silvery, star-rays are tremulous:
Such is the splendor of light.
Forget your weariness; come to me, precious one,
Come to the orchard to-night.”

Sokoloff's eyes were wide open. — He stared at her passionately. She was very, very beautiful . . .

Mariyka kept on with the song.

“Here let me sit with you, whispering pleadingly,
Under the cranberry tree,
My sweet and dearest one, see how the mists arise
Over the fields and the lea.

Moonbeams and starbeams are falling so tremblingly,
Putting the orchard to sleep;
Only the aspen trees, whispering lovingly,
Still at the cherry trees peep.

Look at the heavenly spaces so limitless,
Silvery, starry and blue,
And see those grasses gleam, yon by the aspen trees,
Proudly with opals of dew.”

(Courtesy Honore Ewach)

In the whole world there's probably no artist who could paint this living beauty as she dreamily gazed up to the stars, probably sending them a message . . .

She sat still; her eyes gazed into space for a moment, then sighed, and turned to Sokoloff.

“Things seem very quiet these days, Ma-

gor," she said. "Have you at last succeeded in taming my wild countrymen?"

The officer's thoughts were on other things and he scarcely realized what he said when he answered.

"It is the quiet before the storm, Mariyka. To-day I've obtained information of great value. Rifles and machine-guns have been smuggled into the district and concealed in various places. Later to-night we are going to raid them."

Her body went rigid and a faint pulse began to throb at the base of her white throat. Absorbed in his lustful imaginings, the Russian failed to observe her momentary agitation.

"You must have excellent sources of information," she finally said. "Do tell me something about your work, Major."

The momentary hesitation before she said the last word made the Major lean forward. Ignoring the question, he caught her arms and drew her toward him. His hot lips met the fragrant coolness of her partly exposed breasts.

"Mariyka, Mariyka," he panted, all semblance of control gone, "I want you. I love you, girl. I adore you."

She pushed him away.

"This is no place for that, Sokoloff. There will be other nights and more discreet places. I must go in now; they will be looking for me."

The Major pleaded for a few moments. She was adamant and in a few moments he surrendered her to the eager arms of a subaltern for a promised dance.

Laughing and talking mechanically with her partner, the girl's mind was burdened with what she had learned from the intelligence officer. She knew, that no time must be lost in dispatching a warning. For Mariyka was not what she seemed to be.

In her early twenties she had been the toast of Kiev, Moscow and Petrograd. Then suddenly, without explanation, she turned her back on Moscow, and Petrograd and returned to her ancestral home in the Ukraine. There had been many puzzled comments. Women who had been her unwilling rivals whispered

that at last she had grown tired of using her wits and the prestige of an ancient name to snare a wealthy husband.

None guessed the real reason, nor would they have believed it if she had told them.

III

Mariyka had met Bohdan Tymochko, the Ukrainian writer, for the first time at a fashionable dinner in Petrograd. Between the beautiful girl and the tall young writer, with his steady gray eyes and wide, humorous mouth, there seemed to come a sudden current of mutual understanding. Rising from the table, they had sat in a quiet corner and talked. Silently she listened while with passionate vehemence he had told her the story of Ukraine's woes and before the tale was finished, her deep breast was rising and falling with anger. When he had finished and sat staring before her, she leaned forward and in a barely audible voice demanded what a woman could do to help.

He turned and looked searchingly into her blue eyes, with their long lashes that swept her cheeks. What he saw there, seemed to

satisfy him, for when he spoke, it was as to a trusted friend.

“There is much to do for such a woman as you, Mariyka. The value of your services would be more than a thousand armed men.”

In a low voice, as though afraid that unfriendly ears would hear, he told her of the secret Ukrainian Revolutionary Organization, whose membership embraced hundreds of thousands. His eyes glowing, he spoke of the struggle that these organizations were making against the Russian rule. He was a leader of one himself, he told her, and was in Petrograd to arrange the purchase of rifles and machine-guns from a foreign munitions firm. When he left at her apartment that night, Mariyka had sworn the Ukrainian Revolutionary Organization's oath and knew what her duties would be as a member of the organization.

Within ten days Mariyka had returned to her ancestral home. Her brother Wolodymyr, a surly, brooding man who managed the impoverished estate, had greeted her with ill-concealed surprise. He was even more amazed when he learned the reason for her return. Then he told her tersely that he also was a

member of the URO, and one of the leaders in the district.

Ten days afterwards Bohdan Tymochko appeared at the home of Doroshkewyches. To Mariyka and her brother he announced that he had moved his headquarters from the adjacent town to a small house in the neighborhood. Wolodymyr glanced from the writer to his sister when he heard the news, but had offered no comment. Before the writer left that evening, plans had been made for Mariyka's work.

Weeks had passed and "The Little Castle" was thrown open to the officers of the regiments billeted in the district. They came to dance, dine and drink.

There had been a meeting of the URO leaders that morning at Bohdan Tymochko's quarters. Reports had been read that indicated clearly that the time was nearly ripe for a general uprising all over the country, and that Russia may soon have her own revolution on hand within her own ethnographic boundaries.

The arms purchased had been smuggled into the country by small vessels through Odessa, and were now concealed under the

earthen floors and in the thatched roofs of the peasants' cottages. Here and there small bands of armed men, proscribed by the Russians, kept up a constant guerilla warfare that served to distract the attention of the soldiers from the large bands of men who were secretly preparing themselves for the secret uprising.

IV

As soon as the dance was over, Mariyka eluded several eager men and slipped out of the room. In the long corridor outside she met one of the maids and sent her to summon Ostap, the groom, to the library.

When Ostap entered the book-lined room, whose long ancient windows gave access to the terrace, she handed him a note she had written.

"Take this to Bohdan Tymochko at once, Ostap. Tell him that I have just learned that the Cossacks know where the arms are hidden. They are going to raid the cottages tonight. The arms must be moved at once. You understand?"

The man nodded. Placing the note in his pocket, he moved toward the windows, but

before he could reach them, a voice sounded from the library door.

"Just a minute there, my man. Give me that note."

A grim-faced Russian Cossack's Captain, his heavy service pistol in his hand, strode into the room.

A startled gasp wrung from the girl's lips and she swayed uncertainly on her feet. The Russian, the muzzle of his weapon trained on the servant, turned to her with a sneer.

"So, the lovely Mariyka is nothing but a rebel spy . . . Lucky I followed you from the hall and overheard what you said to this man! . . . He paused and in a gloating voice said brutally: "Well, your usefulness is at an end. A woman in prison can obtain but little information of value."

Catching one of her wrists, he pulled her towards him.

"I think that I'll take that kiss you refused me the other night, my dear," he gloated.

To his surprise she did not resist, but instead, her rounded arms encompassed his neck and she pulled his head down until his lips were close to her own.

Slowly, as though hypnotized by the alluring beauty of hers, his hand stole around her waist and cupped one of her lush, high-pointed breasts. Red glints of fire gleamed from his eyes; he licked his lips and breathed heavily. Her body trembled with apparent agitation as he pressed the seductive curves of her form closer to his stalwart frame.

“Don’t make such ridiculous accusations, Captain,” she murmured. “The man is only taking a note to a friend who failed to arrive tonight.”

Behind his back her fingers were signalling to Ostap, who with alert eyes had moved slowly closer to the Russian. The officer could not resist the allure of the red lips so close to his own. With a quick movement he pressed his own to them. It was the opportunity Ostap had been waiting for. With a bound, he was at the officer’s side and had wrenched the pistol from his hand.

The girl stepped back suddenly. The Captain’s face was distorted with passion; he cursed foully.

“What good is that going to do you?” he snarled.

Mariyka’s face was white and grim as she

signalled Ostap. "This man must be taken care of, Ostap. "He knows enough to ruin us all."

The groom nodded, stepped to the officer's side. The pistol in his hand was bored into the other's back.

"Come with me," he ordered. "One cry for help and I'll shoot."

The Russian knew that he was doomed if he obeyed. His eyes narrowed as he calculated his chances. The girl saw his intention, but before she could voice a warning, the officer leaped for the doorway. He never reached it. The gun in Ostap's hand roared twice and, shot through the head, the Russian crashed to the floor.

Like a flash, the girl was at Ostap's side and pushed him toward the window. "Run" . . . she panted. "I'll say someone came through the window and shot him."

Throwing the gun to the floor, Ostap darted away. Before his footsteps had died out, the girl opened her mouth and shrieked piercingly.

Shouts sounded from the other end of the terrace and running footsteps came from the corridor. The girl bent swiftly over the dead

man. Then the room was filled with excited women and officers.

Mutely, Mariyka pointed to the dead man. Slowly she swayed to her feet, collapsed, as a dozen men sprang forward to catch her. Outside someone fired and shouted.

Willing hands placed Mariyka on a convenient sofa. Half a dozen men rushed to fetch water while their seniors gathered around the apparently unconscious girl. Before the water was brought she opened her eyes and sitting half erect glared wildly around.

"He shot him . . . He shot him! . . . she moaned.

A dozen masculine voices asked excited questions, but it was several moments before the girl had recovered sufficiently to tell them what had occurred. Under half-closed lids, she gauged the eager impatience of the men around her. Every moment she could delay them would mean added safety to Ostap. At last, in a slow, halting voice, she began to speak.

"I came in here to rest for a moment and Captain Poujakow followed me. While we were talking, a rough-looking man stepped through the window. Poor Captain Poujakow demanded to know what he wanted and then

the man attacked him. Somehow in the scuffle he managed to get the Captain's gun. Then he shot him and . . .” She allowed her voice to trail off weakly and sank back with her eyes closed.

At the same moment an excited Cossack, his gun in his hand, burst in from the terrace.

V

“I just took a shot at a man I saw running through the grounds,” he panted. He broke off at the sight of the dead man on the floor.

The highest ranking officer presently gave curt commands and, drawing the weapons that they always wore, the Russians left to search the grounds. When they had gone, Wolodymyr helped his sister to her bedroom. Then he closed the door and turned on her quickly.

“Who shot him,” he demanded.

Briefly she explained what had happened. He listened silently and when she had finished, began to walk back and forth the length of the room, with a deep scowl on his handsome, but weak face.

“I don't like it, Mariyka,” he grumbled. “One of these days we aren't going to be so

lucky and then we'll be in real trouble. I'm going to talk to Bohdan about this tomorrow."

She was on her feet in an instant, her eyes blazing.

"You'll do no such thing. Understand?"

He quailed before her and mumbled something about "seeing how things are going downstairs", and shut the door behind him. Slowly Mariyka undressed and got into bed. For a long time she lay staring into the darkness. But at last she fell asleep.

VI

Major Sokoloff was an early visitor at Doroshkewyches' house next morning. Wolodymyr and Mariyka were at breakfast when he alighted from the front seat of a military truck, loaded with soldiers, and came into the breakfast room. He accepted a cup of coffee and then asked Wolodymyr's permission to search the grounds for traces of the man who had killed Captain Poujakow the night before. When Wolodymyr nodded, he walked to the window and signalled the sergent in charge of the soldiers who waited below. Seating himself opposite Mariyka, he drank his coffee slowly and exchanged opinions with her bro-

ther regarding the relative merits of various breeds of horses. Once the girl met his eyes squarely and she thought she read a question in them.

When he had finished eating, Wolodymyr pushed back his chair and announced that he had to go to the stables. After he had gone the officer pulled out his cigarette case and extended it to Mariyka.

"I wonder if you can give me a few more details as to just what did occur last night," he said as he held a match for her.

She blew a thin stream of smoke from her delicately shaped nostrils before she answered, and then in a low, even voice she repeated her story of the night before. Major Sokoloff did not look directly at her, but seemed interested in the ash of his cigarette.

"I wonder if you could give me a more detailed description of this mysterious man, my dear?"

Promptly she gave a vague description that might have fitted anyone. When she had finished, the officer rose to his feet and ground out his glowing cigarette in a convenient ash-tray.

"There was some talk last night of how easy it would have been for you to shoot Poujakow yourself," he said suddenly.

Her head came erect and her cheeks crimsoned.

"I hope you had manhood enough to stop it at once," she snapped.

He grinned, showing canine teeth. "Why, of course, I did. You'd never shoot a man for trying to make love to you," he said deliberately.

She smiled back at him, but her eyes were still furious.

"How well you know me, Major," she purred. "It so happens that for once Captain Poujakow was not trying to make love to me when this terrible thing happened. Still, I might shoot some men, you know."

He came round the table and caught her hands. "I think you have the courage to," he smiled, "but of course I flatter myself I am an exception."

She allowed him to kiss her, veiling her eyes with long lashes as he did so.

When he left to direct the search of the grounds, she rose swiftly and went to the

stables. Ostap was currying her favorite mount and touched his forehead when she entered.

“You got through safely, Ostap?”

Ostap nodded and a grim smile flitted across his face.

“Certainly, Mariyka. Someone shot at me, but I got to Tymochko's quarters and spent half the night helping move the guns.”

“Have the soldiers been here?” she asked.

“Yes, they have, Miss Mariyka. Their tough luck. They asked questions galore and got the same number of answers.

She smiled at him and said: “You saved me last night, Ostap. I shall not forget.”

Great devotion showed for an instant in Ostap's eyes. He caught her hand and raised it to his lips.

“'Tis myself and thousands like me that would die for you, Mariyka.”

He dropped her hand and turned away to saddle her mount. Then he helped her into the saddle.

VII

During the next ten days the Russian soldiers were in constant activity. Truckloads after truckloads descended on the peaceful

villages and tore holes in the thatched roofs of scores of cottages and dug up the earthen floors in a vain effort to find the smuggled arms. Discomfited, they climbed back into the trucks with curses of the peasants ringing in their ears.

The Ukrainians who lurked in hiding decided that this was the opportunity to conduct a guerilla warfare — partyzanka, and they ambushed several trucks. These sporadic outbursts kept the troops constantly on the alert and in consequence their officers had no time to visit the home of Doroshkewyches.

Now that the officers were busy, Bohdan would often lunch at the Doroshkewyches home with Mariyka. Their conversations were not always about the approaching rebellion. Weeks ago, the girl had interpreted the light that came into the writer's eyes when he looked at her, yet she never encouraged him to speak of his feeling for her. The writer seemed to sense that he must wait, but in a thousand inconsequential ways he mutely let her know he cared.

Late one evening when Mariyka, dressed in a negligee, lounged before the huge fireplace, a servant ushered Major Sokoloff into

the room. Wolodymyr had gone down to the military barracks to play cards, as lately had become his nightly custom. He claimed, that he was able to pick up information there, but Mariyka had noticed that when he returned, often the worse for too many vodkas he had nothing to report. She guessed that the Major, seeing him there, had seized the opportunity to catch her alone.

The Russian's face looked drawn and he relaxed into the chair with an audible sigh. They chatted for a few moments and then the officer's eyes began to rove over the girl's half-concealed figure. Suddenly he got up and walking over to the sofa on which she reclined, seated himself beside her.

"You haven't told me that you missed me," he said angrily.

"You sound like a love-sick school boy," she answered with a laugh.

A sudden flush stained his cheeks and with a smothered oath he caught her in his arms. The filmy negligee she wore came open, disclosing the frail brassiere and chiffon step-ins that was her only clothing beneath.

At the sight of her white body an animal-like whimper escaped the Major's lips. He

pressed them savagely into the soft valley between her breasts and strained her to him. The girl made no effort to free herself, but lay limply, her eyes half-closed. It was only when he released her to tear at the fragile clothing that she sat up with a swift movement. Evading his clutching hands, she moved away from him. She drew the negligee around her white loveliness and waved him away when he started toward her again.

"Are you mad, Major?" she demanded. "Either Wolodymyr or a servant might come into the room."

He stopped and shook his head violently in an obvious effort to clear it. His voice was a hoarse croak.

"My God, Mariyka — this can't go on. I must have you."

Her laughter was faintly mocking.

No doubt that you do, Major. You make it plain enough. But there are certain properties that must be observed. I am not a cow that I should succumb to your bull-like tactics."

His pale face crimsoned. He lit a cigarette with trembling fingers.

"Pardon me, Mariyka, I forgot myself," he said stiffly. "I have been working rather hard this last week and in consequence seemed to have lost all my control." He paused, and then added with a heavy attempt at gallantry: "But if you could see yourself, you would not blame me."

She flashed him a dazzling smile. "Now let us forget this nonsense for a little while and just talk."

He smothered a curse and handed her his cigarette case.

VIII

In clipped sentences he began to speak about what had occurred since the night of the dance. He spoke of the fruitless raids and the ambushing of the trucks. As it was all familiar to her she allowed her attention to wander, but she became suddenly altered as he said:

"...and we're going to try again tonight. I received some information an hour ago that may be more reliable than what I had last time. It had better be if the informer knows what is good for him." The last sentence was uttered with a viciousness that startled the girl.

She tried to keep her voice steady when she spoke. "You mean that you've found the real location of the guns, Major?"

He nodded, glanced at his wrist watch and rose to his feet. "Yes. I think we have. I'm going to lead some of the raiding parties in an hour. We have fifty places to raid tonight. It seems, that night is the best time to make the raids".

Mariyka's face was immobile, but her heart was pounding. "Where on earth do you manage to get your information?" she asked. "I've often wondered how you intelligence officers get results."

He laughed and some of his habitual caution seemed to return. "One of the first things we learn, my dear, is never to divulge the source of any information. Well, I suppose, I must be off."

He picked up his cap and gloves and, carrying them in his hands, came over to where she sat watching him. Leaning down, he kissed her. She rose to her feet, accompanied him to the door.

"I am giving a dance tomorrow night," she said. "Shall I expect you and the rest of the regiment?"

"I think our business will be finished by daylight. Anyway all the rebels in the Ukraine couldn't keep me away," he boasted.

When the door had closed behind him, she ran swiftly upstairs and changed into a skirt and a blouse. Making her way down the back stairs, she ran to Ostap's cottage behind the stables. He immediately answered her knock.

"Take a horse and ride to Bohdan Tymochko's at once," she ordered. Tell him the Cossacks are going to raid again tonight and someone has disclosed where the guns are hidden."

Ostap wasted no time. In his shirt sleeves he ran to the stable and saddled a horse. Within five minutes he was spurring madly down the drive towards the URO leader's quarters.

Mariyka went slowly back into the house. She had done her part, she knew. The results now rested in the hands of God.

IX

Someone in this room is a traitor . . . The Cossacks would never have shot such a large number of men last night and found the arms if they had not been told where to look!"

Bohdan Tymochko's clear voice with its

faint touch of the brogue echoed the silent room like a trumpet as he flung the accusation. The other four men stirred restlessly in their chairs and then turned to look at Mariyka.

She leaned back in her chair and blew a small cloud of smoke toward the ceiling. Her booted legs were crossed and her blue eyes half concealed by their long lashes, gazed at the five men with a vague insolence. Early that morning Bohdan had sent word for his lieutenants to come to his quarters. By various routes they had answered his summons. Wodomyr and Mariyka on horseback, as though taking their usual morning ride. The burly, blackhaired Sirko in his everyday guise as a carpenter, ostensibly to perform a repair job. Paliy, on whose head was one thousand rubles reward and who never stayed long in one place, flitting from one end of the country to the other with his fiery speeches, always a rallying point for the guerrillas, came from some unseen direction. The last man to arrive was the local teacher, Chumak.

The girl got to her feet and walked to a point from which she could look out the window. She knew that the men were upset and

nervous over the successful raids that the Cossacks had made the night before. In spite of her warning, seventy five percent of the weapons had been found and many men killed, because they resisted the soldiers.

The sunlight touched her black hair and gave it a bluish tint. "We all know that, Bohdan," she said softly, "but who is it?"

Paliy laughed bitterly. "Yes, who is it?" he echoed. "Faith, but the Ukraine is full of traitors these days. Men and women who believe that Russian gold is a more tangible reward than a free Ukraine."

Sirko grunted something, his shrewd eyes flitting from face to face.

Chumak filled and lighted his pipe before he spoke.

"There are six of us who knew where all the arms were hidden. Some of the men might have known one or two caches, but none a score. Yes, undoubtedly, one of us is responsible."

Mariyka spoke again. "We can eliminate Paliy," she said thoughtfully. "The Cossacks would pot him on sight. "I know that I am innocent, even though the rest of you do not.

Therefore, as far as I am concerned, that leaves only four suspects. Those of you who are innocent have the same number to guess about.”

The men stirred uncomfortably. Paliy grinned bitterly and pushed back the hair that was falling over his eyes. Sirko got up and began to pace back and forth. It was Bohdan who broke the silence.

“I have sent a report to headquarters in Kiev. They will send stooges to watch us all. Perhaps the knowledge will make the traitor leave before they arrive.” On his face a bitter smile appeared as he said it, his handsome face again appeared worried.

Mariyka laughed savagely. “To run would be to admit guilt, Bohdan. We will still be six when the agents arrive, unless . . .” she hesitated, “. . . we are betrayed to the Russians before then.”

Her brother rose to the feet with a yawn. “Let’s go, Mariyka,” he suggested. “I don’t think there is much more to be said, is there, Bohdan?”

The leader shook his head. “No; all we can do is wait and watch. This traitor must be found or else . . .” He left the sentence un-

finished.

Wolodymyr walked toward the door with Mariyka at his heels. On the threshold she paused.

“Good morning, comrades,” she said, and then to Bohdan: “Are you coming to the house tonight?”

He nodded his head and with a gesture of farewell she left the room. When the door had closed behind her, Sirko spoke for the first time. “She’s a swell looking girl,” he said softly, “and if you’re asking me, sound as steel.” The other men nodded silent agreement.

X

Mariyka and her brother rode home in silence. Both seemed wrapped in their thoughts to the exclusion of all else. At the stables they turned their mounts over to Ostap. As they climbed the broad steps leading to the main entrance, Wolodymyr broke the silence.

“Some of the officers coming to dinner tonight?” he asked.

She nodded. “A dozen, I think. Some girls may be here from town. Bohdan and one or two others may drop in after dinner.”

They parted in the hall, the man going into the library to pour himself a drink, while the girl climbed the stairs to her bedroom.

When she had undressed, she filled the tub in her bathroom and bathed. Drying herself, she went over and studied her nude body in the full-length mirror set in the wall. Slowly her eyes travelled from the small, high-arched feet up the beautiful modeled legs and thighs, paused briefly at the rounded hips and then continued to the swelling breasts. She nodded to her reflection and spoke aloud.

"Yes, I think any man would pay my price," she said slowly.

XI

Major Sokoloff was delighted to find himself seated on his hostess' right at dinner. He looked at her white shoulder so close to his own and it required all his self-control to keep from touching it.

"God, she is beautiful . . ." he thought. "The man who could boast that such a woman was his would be a man among men". Little red lights began to gleam in his bloodshot eyes and his tongue licked his suddenly dry lips.

"I hear your raids were successful last night, Major." Her voice indicated polite interest and nothing more.

"Yes, we got some machine-guns and a thousand rifles." He paused and added with sadistic relish: "We had to shoot quite a number of peasants who resisted our search. These rebels need to have an object lesson once in a while."

The girl's body seemed to freeze and under her slight make-up her face turned white. Then before the Intelligence officer could notice her reaction, she laughed shortly.

"You sound savage again, Major. Surely there must be an end to all these shootings and burnings. Haven't you killed all the rebels yet?"

The Major leaned forward so that his voice was audible to her alone. "Not quite. But I expect to learn the identity of the leader shortly, and when I do . . ." He allowed the sentence to remain unfinished, but the look in his eyes was sufficient to complete it for Mariyka. Her hand shook as she reached for the wine glass before her, but her voice was steady.

"You can tell me all about it after dinner,

Major. I find I am beginning to develop quite an interest in your work since last night."

Major Sokoloff gave her a quick look as she turned to speak to the man on her left. He thought he had understood the implication and he began to ponder over an idea that had entered his mind. It was well over an hour, however, before he was able to find Mariyka alone. She accepted his suggestion that they walk in the garden with a promptness that strengthened his half-formed determination to put into words the idea that had come to him during dinner.

In the garden she allowed him to kiss her, but when he tried to go further, she repulsed him with an air of finality, that made him growl. To hide his discomfort he began to speak of his work. The girl listened eagerly, racking her brain to make an opening that would permit her to learn the name of the traitor.

"... And now, once I can catch the leaders, I will be going back to Kiev, and perhaps to Petrograd later. I should know their identity within a few hours."

He paused and caught her hand. If he had not been so besotted by her loveliness he

would have caught the sudden tenseness of her glamorous figure. His breathing began to quicken.

"Kiev . . . Could you not arrange to be there, my dear?" he half whispered. Then his self-control left him and he caught her fiercely to him. Her body went rigid and for an instant it seemed as though she would break his grip, then suddenly she relaxed and let him have his way. It was only when he began to paw at her breasts that she pushed him back.

He sat breathing heavily while she adjusted her dress and patted her ruffled hair.

"You are very rough, my dear," she said in a quiet voice, "a regular caveman." Emboldened by the term of endearment, he tried to take her in his arms again.

"Major — please, stop that," she said pleadingly. "That can come later."

In the moonlight the Major's face was that of an avoid satyr as he leaned toward her.

"You mean that you will come to Kiev?" he said in a voice that shook with thwarted passion.

She veiled her eyes so that he might not see the loathing in them. "Yes, I think I will

go to Kiev," she promised. Then, as though prompted by eagerness, "How long will it take you to complete your work here?"

All thought of caution was driven from the Major's mind. He thought only of the consummation of his passion.

"I am to see the man tonight who has been giving me information and give him some money. Tomorrow or perhaps the next day he will tell me where and when the rebel leaders are next to meet. There is one that is not a local man and if we arrested the others he would take alarm and we should lose him. I have to wait until they are all together." With shaking fingers he unbuttoned a pocket of his uniform and took out a flat package wrapped in yellow paper. "There's two thousand rubles in here. I am to give it to my informer tonight." He laughed discordantly. "I've paid him a lot of money these last few weeks, but learning the location of those rifles and machies-guns was worth it."

Mariyka's face was white in the moonlight. Her eyes were fixed on the package as though it were some poisonous reptile. She knew that unless she could learn the traitor's identity it

held the price of five lives, one of which was her own.

The officer caught sight of her stricken face and with an exclamation shoved the package in his pocket.

“You aren’t feeling well?” he said anxiously.

She got slowly to her feet and accepted the support of his arm. “Just feeling a little faint, Major. I told you that your methods were too rough.” Then as he broke into contrite self-reproaches, “I think we’d better go inside.”

Just before they reached the doorway she said in a regretful tone. “I suppose I’d better say goodnight now. You have to go and meet the informer, have you not?”

He shook his head. “No, he’s around here somewhere at this moment. It will only take me few minutes to meet him and hand him the money.” He glanced at his wristwatch. “My dear, it’s nearly time now. Let me take you into the library and fetch you a glass of wine. Then I can meet him and come right back to you.”

She answered him mechanically and allowed him to lead her to the library. As he

piloted her to the sofa her brain was in a whirl. The informer was in the vicinity of the house . . . Who could it be? . . . The Major brought her a glass of wine and then hurriedly excused himself. Barely had he disappeared through the library door when she rose to her feet and followed.

XII

Even though she hurried, she was nearly too late, for she caught but the barest glimpse of his uniform as he disappeared through the door that led from the corridor out to the stables.

At the doorway she paused and looked out into the moonlit yard. Concealed by the shadows, she was invisible to the Major who was advancing toward a man in evening clothes who came toward him at the same time. In the moonlight the men were clearly visible to Mariyka. When the man in the evening clothes raised his head she caught her breath and her hand went to her mouth to stifle a cry of surprise. She put out the other hand to steady herself.

She saw the Major hand the other man the package he had shown her a short time

before, then with a sob she turned and ran back to the library.

When the Major, accompanied by a man in evening clothes, entered the room a few moments later, he found Mariyka composed and inclined to chide him for the length of his absence. He made some excuse at which she smiled. Then she turned and extended her hand to the Major's companion.

XIII

"Why, hello, Bohdan. I thought that you had changed your mind and decided not to come after all tonight."

The writer bowed over her hand. "I only arrived about fifteen minutes ago, Mariyka. I had something to do before I could start hunting you up. I've been impatiently waiting for a dance all day, you know."

Mariyka's laugh sounded a little forced in her own ears, but apparently the two men did not notice it. The Major seemed trifle annoyed at the evident familiarity between Mariyka and Bohdan, for he remarked stiffly that he had a prior engagement with Mariyka for a stroll on the terrace. The writer accepted the situation with a good grace, and

strolling as far as the door with them, murmured something about having to speak to someone and left.

It took Mariyka fifteen minutes to rid herself of the Major. He wanted her to go down into the orchard with him and was becoming insistent, when two brother officers appeared and requested that he give them a lift to the barracks in his car. There was a fire in the Major's eye that boded ill for his two juniors once he had them alone. He bade Mariyka a formal goodnight and stalked off.

When the sound of his car had died away down the drive, Mariyka took her handkerchief and scrubbed. Then she threw the lit of silk over the rail with an exclamation of disgust. Two strong hands caught her elbows from behind. When she did not struggle, Bohdan Tymochko released his grip and came around in front of her.

"What's the matter, my dear? You haven't fallen for the enemy, have you?" he said laughingly.

She blazed at him with such fury that involuntarily he stepped back a pace.

"Damn you, don't say things like that to me . . ." she snapped. Then while he watched

her in puzzled wonder she began to pace back and forth. Suddenly she stopped before him.

"Can you have everyone at your quarters tomorrow morning?" she demanded.

He nodded. "Yes, I think so. Paliy is staying with me tonight. Why?"

"I have learned something that is a life-and-death matter to five of us." She paused and her lips writhed back from her teeth in grimace. "I should say all six of us. Get in touch with Chumak and Sirko first thing in the morning. Make sure that they accompany the messenger you send for them and do not let them communicate with anyone on the way."

He caught her arm in a grip that made her wince. "What have you learned?" he snapped.

She shook off his hand. "I'll tell you tomorrow. I'll tell you who that traitor is . . . then . . ." her voice was a mere whisper. ". . . I'll kill him . . ."

He caught at her again, babbling questions, but she eluded him and ran into the house. He stood for a moment staring at the doorway through which she disappeared, then with a curse turned on his heel and went away.

XIV

Her brother was already in the breakfast nook when Mariyka came down next morning dressed in her riding clothes. He greeted her cheerfully and filled her plate with bacon and liver.

"The horses will be around in a few minutes," he said.

She did not answer, but toyed with the food on her plate. Her face looked tired and the dark smudges under her eyes were more distinct. Her brother threw her a quick glance.

"You look quite tired this morning, Mariyka. Bad night?"

She nodded absently, but did not raise her eyes from her plate.

When they had walked their horses through the gateway at the end of the drive, she drew her mount even with his.

"Bohdan told me that he wanted us this morning," she said quietly.

Wolodymyr grunted. "What the devil for?" he asked. "I don't like this business of running to his place every day. Some of the Cossacks' spies may be watching us. It's dangerous . . ."

When Mariyka remained silent, however, and put her horse to a canter, he spurred his own mount and followed. He was still grumbling when they arrived at the URO leader's quarters.

All the others had arrived before them and were already seated around a long table when they entered.

Greetings exchanged, Wolodymyr seated himself beside Chumak while his sister remained standing just inside the door. "If you ask me, this habit of meeting every day is a dangerous one," he said, addressing the room at large. No one replied and with a grunt of disgust he fell silent.

Bohdan opened the drawer in the table and produced a heavy pistol. With a quick movement he threw it on the table top. A startled gasp came from Chumak at the sight of the weapon, but no one spoke. There was a palpable tenseness in the air.

From her position beside the door Mariyka broke the silence.

"Yesterday," she began, "Bohdan told me there was a traitor among us. One of us, who held gold above patriotism. Above the

oaths he had sworn. Above his honor . . .” Her voice had risen until it rang through the room. Only Sirko’s heavy breathing was audible as she paused; the others seemed to be holding their breath.

“Last night I found who that traitor is . . . I saw him accept money from a Russian officer. Blood money . . . Money in exchange for our lives.” She paused again.

The faces of the five men a study in conflicting emotions. Bohdan leaned forward in his chair, his eyes blazing. Paliy’s mouth was a mere slit in his sunburnt face. Chumak sat with his mouth slightly open and his eyes wide. Wolodymyr stared at his sister with a sort of stupification on his face. Sirko’s eyes never left the wall before him, though the muscles of his jaws writhed oddly.

Slowly the girl looked at each of them. Her deep bosom rose and fell with the intensity of the passion that shook her. Then, like a person wading through deep mud, she started slowly toward the table. Reaching it, her right hand closed around the butt of the heavy pistol. Then she stepped back until her shoulders touched the wall. The men turned

toward her as though their necks were swivels.

Mariyka raised the heavy pistol. Then her voice came, clear and almost expressionless.

“The man who accepted the money — the traitor who sold his country . . . is . . . my brother . . . Wolodymyr.”

Her full lips tightened across the teeth, one hand went to her throat. Then leaning forward, her face white and tense, she pulled the trigger and shot her brother between the eyes.

XV

The tenseness in the air was electric. Wolodymyr's body slumped slowly to the floor. Mariyka brushed a hand wearily across her eyes, as though sweeping away a dense fog that was engulfing her, and collapsed in a pitiful heap.

When the others had gone, taking a body of the dead man with them, Bohdan came over to her and, falling to his knees beside her prostrate body, took her hands into his own and slowly and reverently chafed them until she opened her wide blue eyes. Then he said, “You have done much for Ukraine today, sweetheart mine. You have done your

share for always. You must stay at home from now on and leave this bloody work for men."

Slowly she pushed his hand away and shook her head from side to side. "Until Ukraine is free I shall never sit at home, Bohdan Tymochko. There will be more work for me to do, much more work before the Russian Cossacks are driven out from Ukrainian land."

There was great admiration blended with longing in Bohdan's eyes as he bent over her hand.

"I need you, Mariyka, but I guess you're right. Ukraine needs you more."

THE END.

UKRAINE AND THE UKRAINIANS

In the great family of Slavic nations, the Ukrainians form one of the most numerous, numbering over fifty millions. The territory at the present time, where the Ukrainian race constitutes the predominate element of the population, in the South Eastern part of Europe, extends from the Carpathian Mountains on the West to the Caspian Sea on the East, and from the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains on the South, to the Pripet Marshes on the North. The territory is twice the size of England and one and a half times that of France. The Ukrainians, being a virile people, increase continually so that in the territory mentioned above, a population of fifty eight million is enclosed, of whom seventy five per cent are Ukrainians. Were the Ukrainians independent, as they most ardently desire to be, they would form a nation with a population six millions greater than that of France and three millions greater than that of the British Isles. Far from being independent,

however, they were not even united under one government. There were four governments under which the Ukrainians were subjected to. In Russia, under the iron Soviet rule, were five provinces. They were as follows: — Kiev, Wolhynia, Podolia, Poltava and Chernyhiw. In Poland: — Kholm and Eastern Galicia. In Rumania: — North Bukovina and North Besarabia. In Czechoslovakia: — The province of Carpatho-Ukraine (also known as Ruthenia). World War II had made radical changes. Soviet Russia had claimed most of the Ukrainian land, leaving only approximately 2,000,000 Ukrainians West of the so called Curson Line for the Poles. At present, the Polish government is forcefully ousting the Ukrainians from their native land to the puppet state of the Soviets, which they have ironically named the Ukrainian Soviet Socialistic Republic (in reality a vassal state of Russia).

The Ukraine is an exceedingly rich agricultural country, with a fertile black soil and a good climate. About two-thirds of this country is covered with the steppes (Prairie land).

The steppes have played a very important

part in the formation of the Ukrainian race, in the moulding of the national psychology and the shaping of the history of the Ukrainians. Only in the western part of the Ukraine, Galicia and Bukovina, the country loses its prairie characteristic formation and becomes an undulating wooded region.

The natural riches of the Ukraine are enormous. Before the establishment of the Soviets, the Ukraine was called "**the granary of the world**". The oil production is only second to that of Baku—the largest in the world. The production of coal in the Donets Basin is the largest in Europe.

Owing to these riches the Ukraine was always the prey of her greedy neighbors, Russians, Poles, etc. Those neighbors contented themselves not only in exploitation of the land of the Ukrainians, but tried to annihilate the Ukrainians by methods of the most ruthless denationalization. Up to 1915, it was prohibited in Russia to print any books in the Ukrainian language, even the Bible. Even the name — UKRAINE was banished by the occupants of the Ukraine.

Though (owing to their masters) they were

for the most part illiterate peasants, there is much to admire in the Ukrainians. They possess the natural brightness and vivacity. A vein of romance and poetry runs through them. They are intensely musical, as anyone will vouch whoever attended an Ukrainian Mass or listened to their singing. The Ukraine is the natural home of the folklore. They have songs for all occasions, sacred and profane, and their love songs are distinguished by great tenderness.

The history of the Ukrainians abounds in many heroic deeds and valiant struggles against the invaders of their land. In the eleventh century the Ukrainian princesses were married into many European reigning houses. Queen Anne of France, the wife of Henry the First, was the daughter of the Ukrainian Duke (Prince) Yaroslav of Kiev. Another daughter of the same Duke, Elizabeth, was the wife of Harold the Brave of Norway. Roman, the son of Daniel, King of Galicia, married Gertrude, the sister of Rudolf Babenberg, the Duke of Austria.

It would take too much space to enumerate the Ukrainian Dukes and Princes who

made the Ukrainian history a matter of glory and renown. This brief description, nevertheless, will give sufficient idea of the Ukraine and the Ukrainians.

Printed in Canada.