

A GEOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL SURVEY OF EASTERN EUROPE

The history of each nation is conditioned by its geography. Fortunate are those nations which chance to occupy favorable lands, clearly-defined ones whose characteristics and possibilities are easily understood even when the population is still on a rather primitive level. But it is a misfortune for a nation to live in a country where the geography gives it a complex task, one which can be coped with only by means of a highly evolved consciousness, acute understanding, and persistence. Such rather "difficult" countries fell to the lot of almost all the Slavs, especially those who occupy the great plain of Eastern Europe extending to the lower Elbe in the west, i.e. the Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, and Great Russians. The plain-like character of the country leads its inhabitants to extensive expansion. The rivers are the only unifying factors, but their tributaries are connected so that passage from one river basin to the next is easy. This is the reason why ethnic frontiers are not clear cut.

Looking at the map of the rivers, mountains, and swamps of this part of Europe, it is at once evident that it is naturally divided into regions, formed mainly by river basins: the Oder and the Vistula, the Niemen, the Western Dvina, the Dnieper with the Dniester, Lake Ladoga, and the Volga. Ten or eleven centuries ago there was a corresponding distribution of tribes here: the Poles on the Oder and the Vistula; the Lithuanians on the Niemen; the Krivichi (Byelorussians) on the upper Dnieper and the upper Dvina; the Polyany and their kinsmen (the ancestors of the Ukrainians) along the middle Dnieper and in its neighboring regions. The Ladoga basin and the upper Oka were settled by Slavic colonists who, moving south and east and becoming mixed with the various Finno-Altaiic and Turanian tribes, formed the numerous Great Russian people. The rivers also determined the routes of communication and the inter-tribal connections. These were: the Neva-Volga line from Novgorod to Bolgar (now the Petersburg-Astrakhan line); the Dvina-Dnieper and the Niemen-Dnieper lines (now Riga or Königsberg to Kiev); and the lines from the Oder and the Vistula to the Dnieper and the Dniester (now running from Stettin and Danzig through Warsaw, Krakow, and Lviv to Odessa, with a branch through Brest and Pinsk to Kiev and a continuation to Galatz). The finding of Persian, Arab, Greek, Frankish, and Anglo-Saxon coins in these regions has helped us trace the divisions and connections among these basins.

But in almost each of these river basins and along each of these communication lines, nature had placed some source of difficulty. For instance from the bend of the Niemen, near Grodno, to Torun on the Vistula and along the Netze River, there is a series of virtually impassable marshes and small lakes which separated the Poles on the Polish plain from their

Pomeranian kin. Therefore a political union between them was never durable. Both by land and sea the Pomeranians were in closer touch with the west than with their relations in the south. Later, they were invaded by the Germans from the west and converted into "German Pomeranians," thus cutting the Poles off from the Baltic Sea between the Oder and the Vistula. To the east of the Vistula there are similar marshes which completely blocked Polish colonization toward the sea and allowed the colonization of the country beyond the swamps by the Lithuanians who lived along the Niemen and by the Lithuanian tribe of Prussians whom the first Polish princes and kings tried in vain to conquer. The desire to crush the Lithuanians, reinforced by militant Catholicism, induced these Polish princes to seek the aid of the Teutonic knights, who planted in the Lithuanian soil of Prussia the seed of a State which was in time to crush Poland itself. Expanding further along the sea, the Germans also seized Riga at the mouth of the Dvina, a river which starts in Byelorussian territory, later crosses the line of swamps and small lakes, and flows into the territory of the Latvians (a people of the Lithuanian group). The rivalry between the Byelorussians of Polotsk and the Latvians, between the Latvians and the Estonians, and between the Poles and the Lithuanians facilitated the strengthening of the Germans who had occupied the entire southern coast of the Baltic Sea and seized the exit points of the great inter-basin communication lines: Danzig, Königsberg, and Riga. Relations on the Baltic coast were thus complicated to the clear disadvantage of the Poles, Lithuanians, and Byelorussians. A satisfactory solution was beyond their creative power.

A difficult situation also arose at the southern terminals of these lines, along the coast of the Black Sea. Nomads were attracted from the east over the steppes, and several times cut off Ukrainian colonization from the Black Sea. From time to time they almost succeeded in rendering the Dnieper insignificant as a great international route of communication, scarcely leaving open the secondary line from Danzig to Warsaw, Halych, Lviv, and Galatz. The Poles attempted to take the control of this route from the Ukrainians, who had been weakened by the influx of nomads.

Thus the geographic and historic conditions of the countries between the Baltic and the Black Seas were such that the peoples between them, being pushed back from the sea coasts, were shoved against one another. Under German pressure from the west the Poles pushed toward Ukrainian Galicia as early as the 10th and 11th centuries; the Ukrainian Volhynians, who had been driven from the steppes of the Black Sea in the 12th and 13th centuries, waged a war of annihilation against the Yatvyags (a Lithuanian tribe who lived along the Niemen) and the Lithuanians, who were also pressed by the Poles. This mutual pressure of the peoples in the Dnieper-Niemen-Vistula territory proved disastrous for all of them after the Poles,

in the middle of the 14th century, finally lost Pomerania and the Oder territory to the Germans and began to seek compensation in the east.

In the meantime, the tribes on the east European plain temporarily managed to establish relations among themselves which were fairly advantageous for them and for civilization in general. From the 13th century on, close federative ties were established between the Niemen Lithuanians and the Dvina-Dnieper Byelorussians; in the 14th century the Pripet-Dnieper and the Desna Ukrainians entered this union. This federation under the descendants of the Gedimin succeeded in driving the Tatars from the Bug-Dnieper province of Podolya and extended Slavic colonization to the Black Sea itself, to the land of the old Ukrainian tribes of the Tivertsy and Ulychi. Here, at the beginning of the 15th century, Khadzhibey (the present port of Odessa) was already sending grain to Byzantium. At that time the Italian colonies on the Black Sea were flourishing and the Hanseatic League cities, which were at the height of their power, had close relations with the Byelorussian cities via Riga.

The extensive territory under the Gedimin dynasty, which had a significant development of free city life and sufficiently natural borders (the basins of the Niemen, Dvina, and Dnieper), was a model of a civilized Byelorussian-Ukrainian State. It supported the freer and more cultured elements in the Great Russian cities of Ryazan, Tver, and Novgorod, who were threatened by Moscow, which even the Great Russian scholar Professor Buslayev calls a half-savage, half-Tatar military camp. If similar conditions had lasted for two or three centuries, the whole fate of eastern Europe would have been entirely different, and surely happier, than it was. But the equilibrium was destroyed by the Polish movement eastward and by the seizure of the Black Sea coast by the Turks. This latter had a significant influence on the final consummation of the Union of Lithuania and Poland in 1569. To this day nearly all Polish historians and politicians call this a fraternal union of three peoples, the Poles, Lithuanians, and Ruthenians. In reality the Lithuania of that time already contained three peoples, the Lithuanians properly speaking, the Byelorussians, who were incorrectly called Lithuanians, and the Ruthenians or Ukrainians. It is even more important to note that the Union of 1569 was really the dissolution of the federative Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had been founded by the Gedimin dynasty, and the subordination of the southern, Ukrainian part to Poland, while the Grand Duchy, although preserving autonomous rights, was left with only the Lithuanian and Byelorussian territories. Ukraine-Rus (the provinces of Volhynia, Kiev, and Chernihiv) was directly annexed to Poland without any national autonomy or separate representation. The fatal political Union of 1569 was followed by the equally ill-starred Church Union of 1596.

With these Unions the Polish politicians of the time took upon themselves a task which was completely beyond Poland's power. In the first

place, having annexed such a broad territory to the Polish Crown, and having put the Ukrainian provinces under its direct control, they had to be responsible for the political needs of the territory, beginning with its defense, chiefly against Turkey. In the second place, Poland was expanding into a territory whose social structure was completely unlike its own, which contained only two classes outside the cities, the nobles and the serfs. At first, the nobility of the Lithuanian State, especially the Ukrainian petty nobility, were satisfied with receiving the rights of the Polish nobles, which gave them the same legal status as the Polish lords. But in the Ukraine there was a growing new military class, the Cossacks, who wanted their rights to be equal to those of the nobility. And after the Cossacks came the peasants, who, especially in the areas close to the steppes, were far from being as subjugated to the nobles as those in Poland. They considered themselves equally worthy of freedom. The Polish government was forced either to extend the legal rights of the nobles to the entire population of the Ukraine, or else to attempt the immediate subordination of the great mass of the people to a small minority. King Stefan Bathory attempted to settle the problem by ennobling 6000 families from the mass of the Cossacks, and turning the rest into peasants who should be the serfs of the nobles. But only confusion came out of this project, which for a long time both Polish and Russian writers have called a beneficent gift of rights to the Cossacks. The old nobility did not recognize the equal rights of their new comrades; those Cossacks who had not been registered among the 6000 did not want to be turned into commoners, and the peasants still wanted to be Cossacks, that is, free and self-governing people. This is the source of the series of Cossack-Polish wars from the end of the 16th to the middle of the 17th century.

As a crowning blow, the religious Union was an attempt not only to Catholicize but also to Polonize the millions of Orthodox Byelorussians and Ukrainians. This project was undertaken at a time when regular school education was being established in the cities of Lviv, Vilna, Lutsk, Ostroh, Kiev, etc. The spirit of this education was influenced by the Renaissance and Reformation in Western Europe and it awakened, especially among the Orthodox burghers, a national consciousness and memories of national independence. A significant portion of the population in Lithuania and Byelorussia had become Protestant. It is evident that the political Union of Byelorussia and the Ukraine with Poland could have endured only if it had been truly federal, insofar as federation was possible between aristocratic Poland, the still checkeredly feudal Lithuania with Byelorussia, and the comparatively democratic Ukraine. But the Polish politicians wanted not federation but assimilation, and thus they prepared the later downfall of both the Union and Poland itself. This policy increased Poland's false orientation toward the east and inattention to its more natural ties with Silesia, Bohemia, and Hungary,

where at this time a German element, which was to renew the attack on Poland, was taking root.

As an inevitable reaction against Poland's impractical program of centralization in Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, there appeared a centrifugal tendency. Dynastic and Orthodox traditions, and the need for an ally caused the centrifugal elements to turn their eyes toward Muscovy. When Poland first began to put pressure on Lithuania, the Severians wavered and then turned to Moscow. The Catholic character of Jagellonian policy, although weak at the outset, gave Ivan III of Moscow a pretext to call his war against Novgorod a crusade, since this city-republic had elected a Lithuanian prince. In the 14th century Pskov and Novgorod had already elected Lithuanian princes several times, without, of course, arousing any fear for the integrity of the Orthodox faith. After the Church Union of Brest, Moscow appeared the natural haven for the Orthodox intelligensia, for the Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants, and for the Byelorussian burghers. Negotiations with Moscow for the liberation of the entire Ruthenian people from the "Polish bondage" and their acceptance under the suzerainty of the tsar began long before the time of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the Articles of Pereyaslav in 1654. The first practical step in the process of unifying the Ukraine and Muscovy was taken when Ukrainian settlers moved into the uninhabited territory nominally belonging to Muscovy which lay to the east of the Polish frontier. The new *Slobidska* Ukraine* thus formed made the Ukraine and Muscovy next-door neighbors. Then finally in Pereyaslav the Cossack Ukraine accepted the "alliance and protection of the eastern tsar." Poland's own clumsiness pushed this vast land into the hands of its future powerful competitor.

But now it was Moscow's turn for clumsiness, for it was also unable to change its traditional pattern of behavior when dealing with the new province. The Poles had tried to measure Byelorussia and the Ukraine with the yardstick of their aristocratic republic and of Catholic administrative intolerance; the Muscovites began to use the yardstick of their *boyar* monarchy and of Orthodox ritualistic intolerance.

People who go into raptures over the "Russian unity" established in 1773-95 by the Moscow-Petersburg tsardom on the ruins of Poland, though with the loss of Galicia, should ask themselves why this unity was not created in 1654-57 when all of the Ukraine was in revolt against Poland and was for Moscow, and when the Byelorussian cities, including Vilna, opened their gates to the Muscovite tsar. The reason was none other than that Moscow — was Moscow, and could not conceive of any other way of life than the Muscovite one. In the first place Muscovy, like the Russia of today, was always bloated rather than solidly built. The statements of the representatives of the southern provinces made in the *Zemsky Sobor* of

* The present province of Kharkiv [ed.]

1642 have always been applicable. "Our ruin comes less from the Turks and Crimean Infidels than from the long drawn out procedures in dishonest Muscovite courts and offices." Therefore, Moscow was financially incapable of solving the problems raised by unification. Moreover, the Muscovites could not bring themselves to befriend the peoples whom they had helped to liberate from the foreign rule of first Poland and then Turkey. The stupidity of the Muscovite politicians at the moment when the Ukraine was asking their protection was evident in the manifesto of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich to the Orthodox inhabitants of Poland and Lithuania on entering their boundaries in 1654: "And you, Orthodox Christians, having been freed from the evil ones, should now spend your lives in peace and happiness; and since the Lord God has put you on the right way, demonstrate outwardly that your religion is different from that of the Poles—before our imperial arrival shave the forelocks from your heads."¹

Guided by this stupid ritualism, which we see again now among the Muscovite pseudo-Slavophiles, how could the Muscovites cooperate with other peoples in everyday life, let alone understand the political and cultural interests of those who were uniting with them? And indeed, hardly had the Muscovite army joined forces with the Ukrainian Cossacks, than we hear of complaints that the Muscovites were cutting off their "forelocks" and mocking them in many ways. In addition to this unadaptability we see a servile monarchical cast of mind exhibited — for instance the Moscow envoy, Kunakov, was distressed in principle, even though Russian interests were not involved, that Bohdan Khmelnytsky dared to answer the Polish king simply: "Thou speakest well, oh king!" and then "showed neither homage nor courtesy in his words nor in any other thing."² This servile devotion to the monarchy was deeply wounded when the Ukrainians, who had given their allegiance to the tsar, dared to claim that they were "free subjects" and not "eternal subjects" of the tsar.³ The natural corollary of this slavish mentality was the affrontery of those privileged slaves closest to the tsar. For instance *Voyevoda* (Governor) Khitrovo said the following to the Cossacks about their elected officer: "Your colonel is an (unprintable words). I have been sent here by the tsar; I am higher than all others, and you (unprintable words) are all subdevils."⁴

The inevitable relationship of the agents of despotic governments to the countries given them to govern must also be remembered. As *Voyevoda* Prince Baryatinsky said: "I shall soon go back to Moscow, and after I leave,

¹ Solovyov, *History of Russia*, X, p. 318.

Moscow did not consider the possibility of attracting the Protestants in Lithuania and Byelorussia to their side, although as far back as the 16th century these had made alliances with the Orthodox against Catholic policy.

² *Acts Relating to the History of Western and Southern Russia*, III, p. 397.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 47.

no grass will grow in Kiev.”⁵ If we keep all this in mind, we have no difficulty in understanding why “Russian unity” could not be achieved in the time of Khmelnytsky and why, only four or five years after the entrance of the Ukraine “into the alliance and protection of the eastern tsar,” the Serb Križanić found enrooted among the Ukrainians the “political heresy, that to live under the exalted Moscow tsar is bitterer than Turkish slavery or the Egyptian bondage.”⁶ This is why, even before the controversy between Moscow and Poland for the possession of the Dnieper had been settled, parties appeared there who preferred the evils of Poland which they had already experienced, or those of Moslem Turkey, to Orthodox Moscow.

Ukrainian historians do not spare their ancestors, and they criticize aristocratic ideas among the Cossack liberals and federalists from Vyhovsky to Mazepa, but, thanks to the censor, they are unable to balance the picture of the shortcomings of the anti-Moscow parties with one of the “beauties” of Moscow policy, particularly its treachery toward the Zaporozhe and the common people, who supported Moscow out of hatred for their rulers, even when these were liberal. Russian historians are delighted when Ukrainian democrats “debunk” those whom Muscovites consider as traitors. They do not think it necessary to apply any kind of logical criteria in these cases, however; for them everything that opposes the tsar and centralization is bad, and everything produced by them is good. In their opinion, therefore, only the Ukrainians, especially the unstable Cossacks, were guilty of all the blood that was shed from the time of the death of Khmelnytsky until the fall of Mazepa.

Yet another fact is not taken into consideration, although the data are given by the eulogist of Moscow, S. M. Solovyov. The Byelorussian burghers were not professional soldiers or rebels by nature, but a hard-working people—call them capitalists if you like—and not uneducated. At first, the Byelorussian cities willingly went over to Moscow. Individually they concluded agreements similar to those made by the Cossacks in the name of the whole Ukraine. For example in 1652 the inhabitants of the city of Mogilev obtained guarantees of the following privileges: freedom to govern themselves according to the Magdeburg law as before; to wear their customary clothes; not to do military service; not to be resettled elsewhere; to be exempt from the quartering of soldiers; to elect officials to supervise the receipts and expenditures of the city; to maintain schools according to the Kievan model, etc. (Solovyov, *History of Russia*, Vol. X, p. 321). Similar stipulations were also made by other Byelorussian cities. And what happened? After only a year the Byelorussians said that “instead of something better, they had fallen into greater bondage.” The cities began to “commit treason” one after another, and the people of Mogilev staged a Sicilian Vespers, destroying the

⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 111.

⁶ Solovyov, *op. cit.*, XI, pp. 70-71.

Muscovite garrison of seven thousand men in 1661. In 1708 Peter the Great, who had himself first said to the Mogilev mayor that "then Moscow had been bad" took revenge on the city for this by ordering his soldiers, Tatars and Kalmuks, to burn it from its four corners.⁷

At first the Byelorussian peasants also willingly rose up against Poland. Their Polish contemporaries complained that: "The peasants are very hostile; everywhere they are surrendering to the tsar, and causing more harm than Moscow itself; we must be prepared for something like a Cossack war." And indeed, very soon whole districts in the Mogilev province became Cossackized. But the Moscow government, which hoped to secure permanent possession of the territory, preferred dealing with unorganized serfs, who had no rights, to dealing with Cossacks. Therefore it halted the spread of the Cossack movement in Byelorussia, using old Polish laws and treaties which excluded Cossacks from this land.

So we see that the "violent and head-strong" Ukrainian Cossacks were not the only ones who could not live in harmony with Moscow, and that it was not the "instability" of the Ukrainians, but the despotism and obtuseness of Moscow which rendered the partition of Poland impossible in the 17th century. Since at that time "partition" would have meant only the amputation of the non-Polish lands, which Poland seemed unable to govern, perhaps it would have been the salvation of the independent existence of the truly Polish territory. However, since the Muscovite politicians were unable to retain the sympathies of the populations of Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, they had to enter into negotiations with the Poles about how to share the disputed territories, thus jointly subduing the Cossacks, who were unwilling to surrender to either Warsaw or Moscow.

Finally, in 1667, the two governments concluded a treaty whereby Moscow renounced its claims to Byelorussia and the Right Bank Ukraine in return for a free hand in the Left Bank Ukraine. The first consequence of this treaty was the yielding of the Right Bank Ukraine to the suzerainty of Turkey. This was supplemented by Russia's ingeniously absurd treaties with Turkey and Poland, according to which half of the Right Bank Ukraine (almost all of the present-day province of Kiev and part of Podolya) was to be turned into an uninhabited buffer zone between the three powers, so that each of them could get along undisturbed with the rest of its possessions, and not be disturbed by the recalcitrant Cossacks. This partition of the Ukraine was a mortal blow to its independent development, which Poland, Moscow, and Turkey each crushed in its own way. The Ukrainians subject to each power tried to pull away and of necessity turned their eyes toward one of the neighboring States. For example, the hero of the Right Bank Ukraine, Paliy, was oriented toward Moscow, while his contemporary Mazepa, Hetman of the Left Bank, was oriented toward Poland.

⁷ Bezkornilovich, *History of Noteworthy Places in Byelorussia*, pp. 160, 166-170.

War and political centralization ruined the schools and condemned the nation to ignorance.⁸ As a result both of this and of the denationalization of the upper classes, the ranks of the intelligentsia were diminished, and more and more the integrity of the national-political ideal was lost. At the same time the peasant masses were falling under the Polish and Muscovite systems of serfdom. Up to the 19th century, Ukrainian national consciousness lay dormant. Then it was rediscovered by a handful of poets and scholars, who gained wider support only after the liberation of the peasants in Galicia and Bukovina in 1848, and in the larger, Russian Ukraine in 1861.

In Byelorussia the Muscovite-Polish-Swedish wars had completely laid waste the cities and wiped out the Protestants, the most cultured element, for the persecutions of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich completed the work begun during Tsar Ivan IV's occupation. Thus it was easy for the Polish government, to whom this territory had been returned, to colonize these cities with Jews, and to replace the bourgeois Protestant schools and institutions with aristocratic Jesuit ones, reducing the Byelorussians to a peasant people dispersed among the forests of the countryside.

Poland, although deprived of the Left Bank Ukraine and Kiev, could still rejoice in the fact that it had gotten away cheaply from the crisis brought about by the Cossack wars. It regained the greater portion of the disputed lands, which, moreover, had been purged of the opposition by Poland's competitor. For yet another century Poland was to rule Byelorussia and the Right Bank Ukraine without much hindrance, if one does not count the peasant and *haydamak* (*Jacquerie*) uprisings in the southeast. But, as a matter of fact, the recovery of these lands proved disastrous for Poland. The Cossack revolution had induced many Poles to regard their government's policies critically, and perhaps would have shown them the necessity for far-reaching internal reforms. Now, however, they no longer seemed urgent, and Polish society became somnolent and allowed the oligarchy, the Jesuits, and the Jews to run the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Samogitia (ethnic Lithuania), and, of course, Poland itself. The Poles were incapable of firmly repressing the Ukraine or even Byelorussia, which was still more ruined. They were finally unable to prevent the seizure of these by Moscow, which chose its moment to make use of the Ukrainians' and Byelorussians' burning hatred of the Polish State.

Poland's lack of an integrated national and political program in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, and the mistakes in its policy, profited the Muscovite State, which became more and more aggressive. It was natural that after the annexation of the Ukraine the scholars of Kiev should open the prospect of seizing all the heritage of Saint Vladimir. Later, as another result of the annexation of the Ukraine, the voices of the Balkan Christians began to

⁸ The Ukrainian Cossacks did not cease to be concerned for the schools, as is seen in the Treaties made by Hetmans Vyhovsky (1658), Doroshenko (1679), and Orlyk (1710).

reach Moscow more often, both through the Ukrainians and directly, inviting Moscow to take up the role of the destroyer of Turkey. But here also Moscow lacked a broad political and social program capable of attracting and consolidating such large and heterogeneous countries, even though they were dissatisfied with the previous order. Moscow preferred to swallow them bite by bite, and believed that hatred of the Turks was sufficient bait without providing a constructive political and social program. Instead of developing a statesmanlike and progressive policy, Moscow cherished a narrow one of military and diplomatic aggrandizement. Having somehow reinforced the Russian element on the Baltic coast, which had been weakened previously by the "wise" destruction of Novgorod by those two terrible centralizers, Ivan III and Ivan IV, and having thus reasserted itself on the bank of the Neva, Moscow turned toward Turkey and Poland. In the wars with Turkey, Moscow moved slowly. The devastation of the Ukraine, resulting from the treaties of the end of the 17th century and from the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich in 1709, long rendered Moscow unable to base its expansion on the movement of Ukrainian colonization. However, in general, the progress in this direction was satisfactory to the Ukrainian people who, after an interruption of three hundred years, were again able to reach the Black Sea.

Poland fell an easy prize; Russia's only problem there was the retention of as much of it as possible when forced to cede some to western competitors. But that is what diplomacy is for. As might have been expected, Moscow did not obtain the entire booty; the partition gave Poland's former vassal, Prussia, a good slice of Slavic lands, and the queen of Hungary, whose grandson became emperor of Austria, received part of the heritage of Saint Vladimir, Galicia. But not a few provinces were "returned" from Poland to Moscow, although (a new triumph of logic!) in these it was decided to bribe the Polish nobility by the confirmation or even augmentation of the serfdom of the "reunited Orthodox population"! In any case, with these annexations an empire was created in Eastern Europe which "surpassed in size the Roman Empire at its height." This empire was founded on the ruins of the Lithuanian-Polish federation, and was possible solely because of the failure of this federation.

It is clear that such a huge empire, founded on brutal military and diplomatic aggrandizement, could be neither free nor well-managed. When in the 16th century, by fair means or foul, the dukes of Moscow brought under their sceptre all the Great Russian populations, they at least felt the necessity for some sort of good administration of their old and new patrimonies, and they were obliged to convene the *Zemsky Sobors* (National Assemblies). It was these assemblies which preserved the national independence of Great Russia during the Time of Troubles. Of course in time the Moscow tsars, like the other European sovereigns, decided to try to do without these advisers, who were always inconvenient for a regime with autocratic aspirations, since

they naturally strove to control the monarchs. And in fact at the end of the 17th century the *Zemsky Sobors* met less and less frequently, just as parallel assemblies were losing their importance in all the other great European States except England, where Parliament had established its power through two revolutions. But nowhere in Western Europe did the monarchs succeed in completely annihilating all trace of representative institutions. Nor would they have done so in Muscovy if the State had remained homogeneous and had not become so aggressively imperialistic. We see abortive efforts to resist in the aristocratic *Boyar* liberalism, which attempted to limit the power of Empress Anna Ivanovna, and in the idea of popular consultation current in merchant and *Raskolnik* (dissenter) circles at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries.

However, the *Zemsky Sobors* were eliminated, and popular consultation by the government became more difficult because of three new factors: the increasing number of non-Great Russian provinces which, moreover, were on a higher cultural level than the "home" provinces; the placing of Ukrainians and Byelorussians in the bishoprics, thus decapitating the Moscovite Old Believer opposition movement; and the increasingly composite national character of the ennobled bureaucracy. The rapid expansion of the Moscovite tsardom into the Petersburg empire naturally made the State suffer more and more from a hypertrophy of the departments of war and foreign affairs, which have always been the ones most reluctant to submit to public control. Bureaucratic administration and political dictatorship became inevitable in this vast empire. At first the administration was still somewhat decentralized, adapting to the disparate situations in the newly annexed countries, or rather to the diseased conditions in each which could be exploited in the interests of political centralization. For example, Peter the Great's administration gave preference to the aristocratic German element in the Baltic provinces over the native Estonians and Latvians, who had begun to revive under the Swedish rule. At the same time the Petersburg government exploited the animosity of the Little Russian populace against the Cossack elders, but it did this not by increasing the rights of the common people, but by imposing Great Russian officials upon them. Likewise Catherine II considered it necessary to protect the Polish aristocracy in newly annexed Byelorussia in order to combat the influence of the democratic patriotism which Kosciuszko inspired there, and to remove this tempting Byelorussian example of relative freedom from the neighboring Great Russian peasants. As a slight concession to liberal currents, a parliamentary constitution was given to Finland and Congress Poland for a time, in order to deepen the gulf between Finland and Sweden and that between Russian Poland and the Polish lands in Prussia and Austria. But this was done only to hinder the further development of autonomous institutions in Finland and to abolish them completely in the Polish kingdom shortly afterwards. Little by little, as political centralization triumphed and autonomistic currents lost their centrifugal force, the bureaucracy was able

to push through a program that was resolutely centralizing, levelling, and Russifying. The German Catherine II was a conscious advocate of this policy. She instructed the procurator-general, Prince Vyazemsky: "Little Russia, Livonia, and Finland are provinces governed according to privileges which have been granted them; to revoke these all at once would hardly be proper. However, to call them foreign countries and treat them as such would be more than just an error, it would be sheer stupidity. These provinces, as well as the province of Smolensk, are to be Russified by the easiest means possible, and they must cease yearning for the forest like wolves in captivity."⁹ In our time we see that these words are still the slogan of the Katkovs, Samarins, and Aksakovs, and the basis of a whole series of State measures of a centralizing and Russifying character.

Among these measures there were several which had a democratic tinge. Indeed, many think that a bureaucratic-centralized dictatorship is better able to promote the interests of the common people than is autonomistic liberalism, which favors the interests of aristocracy. To disprove this we have no need to refer to examples from pre-reform Russia of help given by the dictatorship to the aristocracy in the Baltic and Lithuanian provinces, in the Ukraine, Crimea, the Caucasus, and in the Asiatic Southeast of Russia. The examples of Greece and Rome, of France, and of present day Russia are enough to show clearly that Caesarism, wearing a demagogic mask, combats the aristocrats only until they surrender their political independence and become the servants of the absolute power. As soon as this happens, the autocrat is ready to betray the people to the now tamed aristocracy, or to create a new imperial aristocracy of its own. We have seen how short-lived was imperial Russian "populism" in the Polish Kingdom and in the western provinces after the uprising of 1863. Moreover, it is questionable whether even these concessions would have been made without the liberal democratic movement which appeared in both Russia and Poland before 1863.

All history demonstrates that only freedom and self-government can permanently guarantee the consistent progress of democratic policy. The 19th century produced Poles, as well as Great Russians, who wanted to apply the principles of freedom and democracy to the policies of their countries. The trouble was that they were unable to adapt either principle to the real conditions in those border lands of pre-partition Poland and present-day Russia.

To be able to apply freedom and democracy it is necessary to liberate oneself from the traditional political ideas and prejudices of both the Poles and the Great Russians and to make study the basis of policy instead of instincts, traditions, and prejudices. In this particular case it is above all the study of the peculiarities of those countries we have discussed here which is essential.

⁹ Solovyov, XXVI, p. 39.