

КІНЦЕВА ЧАСТИНА

## BEREZHANS'KA ZEMLIA — BEREZHANY LAND

(A Note to the English Language Reader)

by  
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### I

One of the less publicized consequences of World War II was the mass dislocation of peoples in eastern and east central Europe. People in these countries were displaced in great numbers both during and shortly after the war. The reasons for these displacements were military, political, and economic. During the war many people from occupied countries were brought to Germany where they were exploited as slave labor. Entire areas were often evacuated in the vicinity of the front lines by both advancing and retreating German and Soviet armies. Such evacuations, undertaken as temporary measures for protective or security reasons, quite often became permanent for large groups of people. Shortly after the war a rather massive exchange of minorities took place in various east European countries. Finally, it should be mentioned that both during and after the war many people left their homes in this part of the world and fled to the West before the advancing Soviet armies. Political prisoners of German concentration camps and prisoners of war, captured by German armies, should also be added to this score of displaced peoples already mentioned above. At the end of World War II millions of people from eastern Europe thus found themselves in Germany and in various western European countries which were, at one time or another, under German occupation. Most of them remained; they refused to return to their home countries for they feared persecution by Communist regimes. Such fear was well founded if we consider that this was the era of Stalin's iron rule over the whole of eastern Europe.

One such numerous national group of displaced persons in western Europe after the war was the Ukrainian. Among them many were political refugees from the Soviet Union who survived long imprisonments and the concentration camps of both Soviet and Nazi totalitarian regimes. Some of them were also underground resistance fighters and members of Ukrainian national military units. These Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons were not inclined to return and suffer again under Soviet domination. They, therefore, vigorously resisted the attempts of the representatives of the Soviet government to repatriate them forcibly--attempts which were often carried out with the help of unwitting allied western civilian officials, army officers, and soldiers. Their resistance eventually confirmed the suspicion of the western allies that there must be some reason for the refusal of these people to return home, and forced repatriation was eventually stopped. Special camps, the so-called

DP camps, were organized by the allied governments for these people, who then had to wait there for a decision on their future. Life in the DP camps was not without discomfort and inconveniences, but there was at least peace and no danger of persecution. The basic daily needs of the DPs were satisfied, and personal freedom assured. Soon these Ukrainian DPs set about organizing their own cultural, social, and even economic life. Ukrainian churches and schools were established in the camps, and even books and newspapers began to appear. Despite the temporary nature of such arrangements, and despite the oppressive uncertainty of their future fate, the Ukrainian DPs showed an astounding ability to organize their own way of life during these few years of camp life, as well as great adaptability to new circumstances.

Uncertainty about the future ended for the displaced persons when, in the late 'forties, the governments of Canada, the USA, and Australia, and of some of the South American countries, began to admit these people to their respective countries. Most of the Ukrainians emigrated to the USA and Canada; some smaller contingents settled also in Great Britain, Belgium, Australia, and in South America. Their preference for the USA and Canada was due to the fact that in these countries there were already well established Ukrainian communities. In the major American cities on the East Coast, and even to a greater extent in Canada, Ukrainian communities already existed before World War I. The Ukrainian immigrants in these countries have built their own churches, established schools, national homes, and have organized social and cultural societies which made it possible for them to preserve their national identity and often also the use of their native tongue into the third generation.

The new Ukrainian immigrants of the post-World War II period were able to adjust to the new way of life in these countries relatively easily, despite the trying experiences that many of them have had: the horrors of war, persecutions, and various acts of oppression, including imprisonment—especially in concentration camps—exile, etc. They soon also demonstrated remarkable ability and fortitude in reestablishing and shaping their lives in their adopted countries both as individuals, and as a group. In order to guarantee self-help to satisfy their social, religious, and cultural needs, the new immigrants soon proceeded to organize respective societies, clubs and organizations in the USA and other countries. The aim of such organized activities was to help themselves, as well as to extend all possible help to their brethren in the home country, in Ukraine, which seemed to be suffering much greater oppression from the Russian Communist government in Moscow since World War II than it had at any time before.

It should be noted here that the Ukrainian immigrants of the post-World War II period have retained a very strong attachment to their homeland, which many of them were forced to leave under the most adverse circumstances. Contact with relatives at home, and with the homeland in general was, however, almost completely non-existent during

Stalin's lifetime, and since his death has been maintained only sporadically and with great difficulties by some of them. It is therefore understandable that such a frustrating situation intensifies the attachment of the immigrant to his homeland on one hand, and widens the gap between him and his country of origin on the other hand. The Ukrainian immigrants in the western world are aware that in the meantime essential changes have occurred at home, and the news that eventually reaches them here is often quite disturbing, if not also distressing. There is enough evidence that political oppression of the Ukrainian nation by the Russian Communist regime increases as time goes by. Old national institutions and organizations which in the past embodied the surviving spirit of the Ukrainian nation, especially in the Western Ukraine, have been liquidated by the present regime, including, among others, the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the eastern rite. At the present time even the Ukrainian language is fighting an uneven battle for survival. It seems that the present leadership of the Soviet Union has made systematic russification of minorities its main tenet of nationality policy. The Russian language is favored over Ukrainian and Russian culture enjoys a privileged position in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The economic exploitation of Ukraine is also viewed with great apprehension by the Ukrainian immigrants. In fact, there is sufficient reason for these immigrants to believe that their old country, as they remember it, is passing away, that their countrymen at home are experiencing much trial and tribulation, and that the Ukrainian national identity is endangered.

At the present time, Ukrainian immigrants in this country, as well as in other countries are worried and disturbed about the future of their homeland and its people. It is understandable, therefore, that they try to prevent the worst from happening. The reaction on the part of the immigrants against developments in Ukraine has been quite pronounced. It is pursued on two levels—political and cultural. On the political level this reaction has manifested itself in numerous political meetings, protests, and demonstrations during which the policy of russification and oppression in Ukraine has been denounced. On the cultural level this reaction has resulted in prolific writing and publishing activity on the part of Ukrainian emigres. In addition to political publicistic writings, serious historical, ethnographic, and archeological works as well as memoirs have been published. Individual people and societies have been active in this endeavor. *Landsmannschaft*-like societies have been formed by immigrants from the same regions of their old country with the aim of recreating and preserving in recorded form the past and the heritage of their region, at least as they have remembered it. It is concern about the future of the homeland that compels such regional societies in western countries to try to preserve for posterity the regional past, local history, traditions, customs, and for that matter, anything that in their estimation is worth preserving about the region of their

origin. Several volumes of such regional studies, or collections of writings about various parts of Ukraine, have been published during the last ten years by individual writers and regional societies of Ukrainian immigrants in the USA and Canada.

## II

The present volume "Berezhans'ka Zemlia" — "The Land of Berezhany", edited by the Berezhany Society in the USA, also falls into the category of such regional collective memoirs.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part archeology, general history, and specific aspects of the history of the city and the district of Berezhany are dealt with by the authors. Especially valuable is the article by a noted Ukrainian archeologist, Ya. Pasternak, "Prehistorical and Early Historical Monuments of Berezhany Land", describing those archeological findings which were discovered in the fields of the region. Except for this article by Ya. Pasternak, the material in the first part of the book was prepared by the late Volodymyr Bemko who put several years of research into the project just before his death (1965), and who also should be credited here with having conceived the idea of publishing this volume on Berezhany Land. Since Mr. Bemko was also a noted civic leader in Berezhany in the period between the two world wars, his personal memoirs, characterized by a deep knowledge of the history of the district, its administration, institutions, social economic, and political circumstances, as well as life in general there from the turn of the century till the present, are a significant contribution to the most recent history of the district. The attention of the reader should be drawn especially to his chapters dealing with the history of Berezhany during the period of the old Polish Regime (before 1772) ("Berezhany at the time of the Siniawskis), to the beginnings of economic and political thought there ("Beginning of the Enlightenment, Political, and Economic Thought"), to the Berezhany Secondary School ("Gymnasium"), to the political activities of various groups in the region ("Secret Society of Secondary School and University Students"), as well as to the chapters which deal with a score of Ukrainian social, political, economic, and religious organizations, societies, and institutions which existed in the city and villages of the district and were quite active at various periods during the last hundred years. In most cases the author traces the history of these groups, their achievements, and difficulties. He provides vital data on their leaders, their membership, and activities. The participation of the leaders and members of these groups in the life of the city community and the life of outlying villages is described often in minute detail. A series of concise chapters is dedicated to the short period of Ukrainian independence of 1918-1920. Of great interest are also chapters which deal with the period of World War II, e. g.,

"Soviet Occupation", "Soviet Local Administration", "The German-Soviet War of 1941", "The Jewish Minority in Berezhany", and "Hitler's Policy in Galicia, 1941-1944". It is with 1944, i. e. with the occupation of the region by the Soviet army, that the discussion of the past of the district usually ends in these chapters.

The second part of the book contains material of a rather miscellaneous character. This material could be divided into three different categories. The first and the largest category includes articles about individual villages of the district. Most of the authors are natives of particular villages and describe social, cultural, and economic conditions in the villages as they were during the last half century. Not infrequently, interesting ethnographic and ethnological descriptions are included, as well as important local historical data. Such descriptions and data, no doubt, could be of great interest to respective specialists. It should be noted that the stress in most articles is put on the progress made by Ukrainian villages in the political enlightenment of the village dwellers, which brought the villagers to accept the idea of self-determination and independence for the Ukrainian nation.

The second category of material contained in this part of the volume is of a literary, artistic nature. Writings about Berezhany Land or city by noted Ukrainian writers are reproduced *in toto* or in excerpts, e. g. B. Lepkyj, "Berezhany A.D. 1887" (a poem), "From the Collection of Poetry", "On Christmas Eve" (a poem), and "A Visit to the Village of Zhukiv"; A. Chaykovs'kyj, "Excerpts from the Works".

The third category of articles reproduced in the book comprises personal memoirs, usually by people who are natives of the region, articles on political and social figures, noted educators, writers, ecclesiastic dignitaries, as well as simple activists who were natives of Berezhany Land. Worth mentioning are articles on such personalities as for example: T. Starukh, a member of the Austrian imperial parliament, (by F. Kokovskyj), I. Babij, a noted educator (by Yu. Dobrovol'skyj), Prof. B. Lepkyj, a writer and professor of Ukrainian literature at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (by P. Shahaj), D. Myron-Orlyk, a revolutionary leader (anonymous), etc.

There is something of interest in the book, even for the most varied tastes, something close to everyone's heart or interests, including specialists, like archeologists, historians, ethnographers, ethnologists, sociologists, or just fans of Berezhany Land.

### III

A few words about the city and the region of Berezhany, the object of the present book, might be pertinent here.

The city of Berezhany is at present an administrative center of a district (*rayon* in Ukrainian), equivalent to a county seat in the USA.

Its population is slightly over 15 thousand people. The district comprises about 60 villages and a few townships. In the past its boundaries varied and at times it comprised much larger areas of the surrounding countryside. It is a part of the larger administrative unit, i. e. of Ternopil' Province (*Oblast'*)—one of the 25 into which the present Soviet Ukrainian Socialist Republic is divided. The Berezhany District extends from the border of the fertile Ukrainian plains known in history and geography as Podolia (Podillia) in the east, about 30 miles from Ternopil, and borders on the District of Rohatyn in the west. The city of Berezhany is about 60 miles southeast of Lviv, and about 100 miles north of the Carpathian Mountains. The countryside of the District is known for its lovely scenery—rolling hills, some covered with forests, valleys of green meadows, especially on both banks of the Zolota Lypa (Golden Linden) River—and for its rich black soil. The climate is relatively mild and the vegetation rich. Agriculture has been the main occupation of the population in this region for centuries, if not for millenia. Until the most recent times, there were few industrial enterprises. Several grain mills, timber mills, a brick factory, and a few other small industrial establishments served the region before World War II. In recent decades small food processing plants have been built. For centuries the city of Berezhany was an important trade center and market for the products of the surrounding country.

For the last hundred and fifty years the city of Berezhany was also an important cultural center for the Ukrainian population of the district. Its significance is traceable primarily to the existence of a secondary school there, a Gymnasium (since 1805) which attained fame because many persons who played important roles in the political and cultural life of the Western Ukraine attended the school or taught in it, e. g. Markian Shashkevych, Bohdan Lepkyj, Stefan Tomashivs'kyj, etc.

Archeological findings confirm that Galicia has been populated for quite a long time, i. e. since the neolithic period. Whereas such evidence from prehistoric times is not too abundant, relatively numerous archeological artifacts from the Roman period are to be found in Galicia. In the Berezhany region alone, in the fields of various villages, many Roman coins and weapons were found.

Except for the most recent times, the political history of the City and the Land of Berezhany can hardly be treated independently from the history of Galicia in general. Little is known about the life of the people in this region during the Middle Ages, and the city itself is of later foundation. In fact, it was only in 1530 that a royal charter was issued by King Sigismund of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, to the Polish aristocrat Nicholas Siniawski, granting Berezhany the status of a city. It seems that the city must have been located on the estates of the Siniawski family at the time. By that time the region was already for one and one-half centuries under Polish domination, following the dissolution

of the Galician-Volhynian kingdom as a result of the termination of the local dynasty of Romanovychi (a continuation of Rurikids in the Western Ukrainian territory) and of Polish occupation.

During the Tartar and Turkish invasion of the territory of Galicia, Polish magnates were determined to protect their estates. The Siniawski family, for instance, built a formidable castle in Berezhany in the 17th century and fortified the city in general. The ruins of smaller castles and fortifications have been preserved in the Berezhany district in various villages on the right bank of the Zolota Lypa River, e. g. Posukhiv, Kotiv, Mechyshchiv, Zavaliv. At the time of Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Kozak war against Poland, the outskirts of Berezhany were also raided by the Kozaks.

Social, political, and religious oppression, economic exploitation, and the constant danger of Tartar raids were responsible for the most pitiful living conditions of the Ukrainian peasant population in Galicia prior to the partition of Poland.

From cultural and economical decline Galicia in general, and Berezhany Land in particular, began to rise only when this ancient Ukrainian Kingdom was taken over by the Austrians in 1772 during the first partition of Poland. Although the Habsburg rulers did not immediately change the socio-economic structure of the country, they at least imposed some limitations on the arbitrary jurisdiction of the Polish gentry over their unfortunate Ukrainian peasant subjects and serfs.

A real breakthrough for the Ukrainian people in Galicia came in 1848 when serfdom was abolished, and national secular, social, and political institutions were founded, such as the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Supreme Council with branches in most of the cities of the country, and the Ruthenian National Guard, established to protect property and preserve order, as well as resist the threat of a Polish minority which intended to impose its domination during the revolutionary days. Beginnings, albeit modest, of an organized national life were thus made. They were to bear abundant fruit in the second half of the 19th century, when the Ukrainians of Galicia were able to found new central and local social, economic, and cultural organizations, organize political parties, and build their own institutions, including schools. Especially important in the general progress of education and economic growth was the work of the mass educational society "Prosvita" ("The Enlightenment"), founded in 1868 in Lviv, with branches in almost every city and village throughout the country. In 1873 another important institution came into being—The Shevchenko Scientific Society which, through its scholarly pursuits and well edited publications, contributed significantly toward the study and the preservation of Ukrainian national heritage and culture.