

*External Affairs*

This will not be the first occasion, Mr. Speaker, on which reference has been made to the Ukraine by various hon. members in this house, but it is perhaps the first time during this parliament that this subject has come up for formal discussion. I believe it would help to trace briefly something of its history for the benefit of those hon. members who may not be familiar with this nation. Few people realize, unless they have taken the trouble to make a study of it, that the Ukraine was a nation in its own right as far back as the middle of the ninth century. That, to a country as young as Canada, is a good many years ago. Perhaps few of us realize that as far back as the middle of the tenth century Christianity had already been accepted officially in that nation. It had come in much earlier than that, and there is evidence to show that both the Roman and Greek influence in that respect was felt in that country. However, it was officially adopted in the year 988 by Volodimir the Great who then ruled that nation. The exact origin of the Ukraine cannot, of course, be categorically stated any more than can perhaps the origin of any nation in the world, but it is known that there was a great deal of Scandinavian influence in the formation and organization of that country as a national entity.

It is known also that from its very beginnings the existence of the Ukrainian state was not a peaceful one due to the geographical location and due also to the fact that it was an area of Europe which was immensely rich in natural resources. It was a continual temptation to other nations perhaps less favoured in their resources and climate, and the Ukraine was the object of invasion on many occasions. History has spoken of the many attacks which the people of the Ukraine had to repel from the east, and the many small and large wars which they had to fight in order to maintain their national sovereignty.

It is also interesting to note that the spirit of democracy—and I speak of democracy here in very broad terms because the concept of democracy is continually undergoing change and interpretation—in the sense that the people wished to be self-governed is deeply rooted in the very existence of the Ukrainian people. History shows that as far back as the year 1068 the people of the Ukraine were already sufficiently organized in a democratic manner that when they had to expel a ruler and replace him with another they did so by the democratic method of calling a meeting of the populace, taking a vote on the matter and settling it in that way. Many of their decisions were arrived at, even as far back

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

as one thousand years ago, in much the same way as in the early days of England when these problems were settled by a town meeting sometimes called the "folk moot". The latter method was used as a rough and ready means of arriving at democratic decisions and nowhere perhaps is that more evident as regards the Ukraine than in the conduct of their military affairs.

Most hon. members have heard of the famous military organization known as the Cossacks who fought for many years on behalf of the freedom of the Ukraine. They were more than just a military organization for they helped to organize the social and economic life of the country. Perhaps it is little known that the military leaders who led the Cossacks were themselves elected by the members of that military organization. In other words, the spirit of self-government and of everyone having his say in the choosing of the ones who were to run the affairs of that country is deeply rooted as part of the tradition of the Ukraine.

Perhaps one of the most famous persons born in the Ukraine was their national poet, the man who popularized and perhaps dramatized the Cossacks and their work and method of doing things. The name of that poet is Taras Shevchenko. The 93rd anniversary of his death was commemorated a few days ago, not only all across Canada wherever Ukrainian organizations exist but also all over the world because Shevchenko, in spite of the fact that he died while still comparatively a young man, reached international fame. Here I would like to quote a few words about this great national poet from the pen of Professor Manning of Columbia University. Here is what Professor Manning has to say:

He is one of the great poets of the 19th century without regard to nationality or language and his fearless appeal to right and truth and justice speaks as eloquently in the new world as it did in the old, or in the little village where he was born, the city to which he was taken or the treeless steppes to which he was exiled.

It is perhaps not too surprising that in spite of the great many difficulties that the Ukraine had in its early days it produced perhaps an unusual share of the world's artists, poets, and musicians. Perhaps the reason is that it was one of the most picturesque and beautiful countries in the world. Here again I have to rely upon those who have seen it. In order to get a more objective viewpoint I will quote from a Polish author who, about the year 1590, wrote the following words about the Ukraine:

Ukraine is the richest land known. Its steppes are to be compared with Elysian fields. They are boundless, broken only from time to time by