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Author(s): DAVID R. MARPLES

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DAVID R. MARPLES

## Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia Under Soviet Occupation: The Development of Socialist Farming, 1939-1941

On 17 September 1939, in partial fulfillment of the conditions of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Red Army, under the command of General Timoshenko, invaded Eastern Poland, following the German invasion of Western Poland some two weeks earlier. The occupied territory, which contained large Ukrainian and Belorussian populations,<sup>1</sup> subsequently became known as Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. In the short period of twenty-one months up to the German invasion of June 1941, the Soviet authorities succeeded in bringing about a major transformation in rural landholding. Several articles have been devoted to the annexation of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia,<sup>2</sup> but they have concentrated mainly on political and military issues. Very little has been written in the West about the changes that occurred in rural life.<sup>3</sup>

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1. In 1931, Ukrainians constituted about 63 per cent of the total population of Western Ukraine and Poles about 25 per cent. See *IV Ukrain's'kyi statystychnyi richnyk 1936-1937* (Warsaw and L'viv, 1937), p. 15. In the same year, Belorussians reportedly made up 77.9 per cent of the population of Western Belorussia, Jews 10.2 per cent, and Poles 5.9 per cent. See I. S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule 1917-1957* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1972), p. 129.

2. For example, R. Szporluk, "West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication and Linguistic Assimilation," *Soviet Studies*, XXXI, no. 1 (January 1979), 76-98; J. T. Gross, "A Note on the Nature of Soviet Totalitarianism," *Soviet Studies*, XXXIV, no. 3 (July 1982), 367-76; and G. I. Antonov, "The March into Poland, September 1939," in B. H. Liddell Hart (Ed.), *The Red Army* (New York, 1956), pp. 73-78.

3. Unfortunately this essay cannot deal with Western Belorussia in the same depth as Western Ukraine. The former area has been seriously neglected, at least in

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This essay is dedicated to the memory of Ivan L. Rudnytsky (1919-1984), a gifted scholar who enhanced my interest in this topic.

Soviet claims that their soldiers were welcomed by the local population in 1939 may be exaggerated, but it does seem that the general attitude of both Western Ukrainians and Western Belorussians was one of passive acceptance. Polish rule had not been popular, particularly in Western Ukraine where the future of the Galician area had long been a bone of contention between Poles and Ukrainians. Less plausible is the Soviet assertion that the invasion was intended to rescue Ukrainian and Belorussian kin from the “yoke of Polish oppression.”<sup>4</sup> In the interwar period, the Soviet leaders had frequently denounced Polish rule in these areas and demanded their “reunion” with Russia.<sup>5</sup> The usual line was that the Polish government was planning to use its eastern borderlands as a springboard for the invasion of the USSR (one should recall that the Polish-Soviet war had ended in stalemate only in 1920, so that such suspicions had some foundation). Annexation of the area would thus prevent this and at the same provide a buffer zone between the USSR and expansionist Nazi Germany.

After the invasion of Western Ukraine, the Poles were treated cruelly. Officials of the former government, landowners, and anyone with the least authority were placed under arrest. Many were deported to Siberia. For a brief period the area experienced a spell of Ukrainization similar to that carried out in the Soviet Ukraine during the 1920s. Ukrainian newspapers

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terms of materials published, by Soviet scholars. Although there are no clear reasons for this, it seems plausible that the difficulties encountered in collectivizing Western Belorussia in the postwar years made the Soviet authorities reluctant to draw attention to the issue. After the war, while mass collectivization was taking place in Western Ukraine, Right-Bank Moldavia, and the Baltic republics, the number of households encompassed in collective farms increased dramatically; but in Western Belorussia it actually declined. So far there has been no explanation of this astonishing event. See *Sovetskaia derevnia v pervye poslevoennye gody* (Moscow, 1978), pp. 394-95; and E. P. Beliazo, “Sotsialisticheskoe pereustroistvo sel'skogo khoziaistva zapadnykh oblastei BSSR,” in *Tridtsat' let po sotsialisticheskomu puti* (Vilnius, 1979), Vol. 1, pp. 74, 76.

4. Cited in the preamble of the Declaration of the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine. See *Z istorii kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva zakhidnykh oblastei Ukrainy'koi RSR* (Kiev, 1976), p. 17.

5. See Y. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine After World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1964), p. 85.

began to appear in the major towns, Ukrainian schools were opened, and a Ukrainian university was established at Lviv.<sup>6</sup>

At first, the Soviet authorities relied on Temporary Administrations to govern the towns and on Peasant Committees for the villages. Many of the latter had reportedly been set up before the arrival of the Red Army.<sup>7</sup> In October the new rulers held elections in L'viv which were carefully stage-managed by the Red Army (soldiers of which were allowed to vote) and a committee, run by two prominent Soviet citizens, General F. M. Eremenko and S. M. Horbatenko. Moreover, two special representatives of the Soviet government, O. E. Korniiuchuk and M. S. Hrechukha, the president of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Soviet, arrived in L'viv to act in a supervisory capacity.<sup>8</sup> Delegates were nominated from a "bloc of party and non-party" people, and all attempts to put forward rival candidates were defeated. Practically all the delegates were Ukrainians (many may even have been members of the Red Army), further confirming the dispossession of the Polish population. Thus in Stanyslaviv district, where Poles made up about 22 per cent of the population before the invasion,<sup>9</sup> only four of the 313 candidates were Polish.

Once elected, the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine acted quickly. On 27 October 1939 it "carried out the unanimous will of the liberated people" and proclaimed the establishment of Soviet power on all territories of Western Ukraine. On 29 October it issued another proclamation asking the All-Union Supreme Soviet to receive Western Ukraine into the Ukrainian SSR, thereby "completing the reunion of Western Ukrainians in a single state." The Supreme Soviet duly ratified the proclamation on 1 November 1939. On 4 December, a Soviet *ukaz* abolished the former Polish voivodships and created the Soviet oblasts of Volyn', Rivne, L'viv, Drohobych, Stanyslaviv, and Ternopil within the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>10</sup>

Soviet rule in Western Ukraine began with a land reform (discussed below), the nationalization of industry and trade (banks were nationalized several months later), and the implementation of the eight-hour day. Un-

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6. D. Doroshenko, *A Survey of Ukrainian History* (Winnipeg, 1975), pp. 741-44.

7. *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR* (Kiev, 1977), Vol. 6, p. 499.

8. R. Umiastowski, *Russia and the Polish Republic 1918-1941* (London, 1945), p. 224.

9. *Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland* (Warsaw, 1938), pp. 22-23.

10. Cited in *Z istorii*, p. 22.

employment, which had been a major problem in Polish towns, was alleviated not only by the deportation of Poles, but also by moving 20,000 Western Ukrainians to the eastern oblasts of Ukraine, mainly to enterprises and the oil industry of the Donbass.<sup>11</sup> The zloty, which had been equivalent to about twelve rubles before the Soviet invasion, was devalued to one ruble, which gave the Red Army soldiers considerable purchasing power. By the end of December, however, the zloty was taken out of circulation and all bank deposits in the currency were requisitioned. The Ukrainian share of the urban population increased gradually, and between 1939 and 1941 rose from 18.6 to 29.2 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

In Western Belorussia, the process of integration was similar. Soldiers of the Red Army and members of the Communist Party of Belorussia played the dominant role in the Temporary Administrations and organized elections for the People's Assembly, which duly proclaimed the reunion of Western Belorussia with the Belorussian SSR. A law of the Supreme Soviet dated 2 November 1939 created five new oblasts within the Belorussian republic, namely Brest, Bialystok, Baranovichi, Pinsk, and Vilnius (excluding Vilnius city, which was eventually ceded to Lithuania).<sup>13</sup> Evidence suggests that in the Belorussian areas the Poles were treated somewhat more leniently. Many of those arrested in the early days were subsequently released by the Soviet police.<sup>14</sup>

#### *The Land Reform: Western Ukraine*

During the period of Polish rule in Western Ukraine, the land question had been a subject of much contention. The rural regions were overpopulated, and landholding was dominated by the great landowners, who owned over 47 per cent of the land,<sup>15</sup> while over 80 per cent of them were Polish.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, some 16 per cent of peasant households were land-

11. *Narys istorii L'vivs'koi oblasnoi partiinoi orhanizatsii* (L'viv, 1969), p. 72.

12. *Rozkvit ekonomiky zakhidnykh oblastei URSR (1939-1964rr.)* (L'viv, 1964), p. 28.

13. *Istoriia Belorusskoi SSR* (Minsk, 1961), Vol. 2, pp. 384-88.

14. N. P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 157.

15. M. K. Ivasiuta, *Narys istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva v zakhidnykh oblastiakh Ukrains'koi RSR* (Kiev, 1962), p. 14.

16. V. L. Varets'kyi, *Sotsialistychni peretvorennia u zakhidnykh oblastiakh URSR* (Kiev, 1960), p. 44.

less, and 76 per cent of households had under 2 hectares of land.<sup>17</sup> The Polish government exacerbated the situation with three laws; in 1920 it declared that the less densely populated regions in the east were to be distributed among demobilized soldiers; the Land Reform Act of 1925 saw a further allotment of Ukrainian lands among Polish settlers and military colonists; and finally in 1936 it was declared that a strip of land 30 kilometres from the Soviet border was directly subject to state authority and could, if necessary, be confiscated by the state.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the prices of land in the Ukrainian regions of Poland were artificially kept much higher than in Western Poland and were probably quite uneconomic. The reason was that the Polish government considered Eastern Galicia an integral part of Poland, and was thus unwilling to allow large-scale Ukrainian landholding in the area. Although some Ukrainians may have found paid jobs, rural overpopulation ensured that the majority did not. Many Ukrainians emigrated to the West during the 1930s to alleviate their plight.<sup>19</sup>

The West Ukrainian farmer in the interwar period was thus treated as a second-class citizen by the state. He was short of land and so had little need of draught animals: 70.7 per cent of households were either horseless or owned a single horse.<sup>20</sup> Those who had small farms used a variety of primitive tools to cultivate the land, most notably the plough, scythe, sickle, and wooden harrow. The L'viv region had one harvester for every 2,200 hectares sown.<sup>21</sup> It is only fair to note that, despite this, the harvests on West Ukrainian farms were still considerably higher (in terms of the grain yields per hectare) than those on the collectivized East Ukrainian farms, and no matter how harsh the Polish regime may have been there were no famines in Western Ukraine such as that of 1932-33 in the eastern regions.<sup>22</sup> This comparison, however, is a reflection more on the nature of

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17. *Sotsialistychna perebudova i rozvytok sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrain's'koi RSR* (Kiev, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 78.

18. *Pravdu ne zdolaty* (L'viv, 1974), p. 12; S. Horak, *Poland and her National Minorities, 1919-1939* (New York, 1961), p. 153.

19. Ivasiuta, *Narys istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 21.

20. Varets'kyi, *Sotsialistychni peretvorennia*, p. 49.

21. Report note of the L'viv oblast committee CPU at the first oblast party conference, 23 April 1940, "Pro stan sil's'koho hospodarstva oblasti," cited in *Z istorii*, p. 116.

22. J. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine 1918-1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 280-301.

the Soviet regime and agricultural policy in Eastern Ukraine than on any efficiency or relative prosperity in Western Ukraine.

Immediately after the election, the West Ukrainian People's Assembly formally announced the confiscation of the lands of the great landowners, the monasteries, and the state officials. This land was expropriated and transferred to the control of the Peasant Committees,<sup>23</sup> which had the sole right to distribute it, until the area was officially incorporated into the Soviet Union. By the end of 1939 a total of 2,753,000 hectares of land in the former Polish Ukraine had reportedly been confiscated from the landlords, "kulaks,"<sup>24</sup> and monasteries; this was 29.9 per cent of the total land of these oblasts. The majority of "kulaks," however, were apparently left alone for the first few months of Soviet rule. By the end of the year land tenure had been changed substantially. In eight districts of L'viv oblast 59.5 per cent of all farms now possessed between 2 and 7 hectares of land.<sup>25</sup> By April 1940 little had changed; 62.7 per cent of all farms possessed between 2 and 10 hectares of land, whereas 3 per cent of all farms had more than 10 hectares of land.<sup>26</sup>

The Soviet government also donated to the *bidniak* (poor) stratum of peasants about 90,000 horses, 2,000 head of oxen, 86,000 head of cattle, 19,000 pigs, and 32,000 sheep, which had been expropriated from land-owner estates.<sup>27</sup>

The distribution of land went according to the following pattern: first, lands were transferred to the landless and "land-hungry" farms, and second, to those peasant households that had less than the maximum norm established by the Soviet state, i.e., 5 hectares in those raions close to industrial centres (or, in the case of Western Ukraine, where there was little industry in 1939, potential industrial centres, such as L'viv), and 7 hectares in other regions.<sup>28</sup> Altogether, 474,000 peasant households received more than 1,136,000 hectares of landlord lands, over 84,000

23. Declaration of the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine, 28 October 1939, "Pro konfiskatsiiu pomishchyts'kykh zemel'," cited in *Z istorii*, pp. 20-21.

24. The question of what constituted a kulak is still open to dispute. See, for example, D. R. Marples, "The Kulak in Post-War USSR: the West Ukrainian Example," *Soviet Studies*, XXXVI, no. 4 (October 1984), 560-70.

25. *Pravda*, 9 January 1940.

26. Report of L'viv conference, 23 April 1940, cited in *Z istorii*, p. 115.

27. *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 2, p. 88.

28. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhosponoho budivnytstva*, p. 46.

horses, 1,600 oxen, 76,000 head of cattle, 14,000 pigs, and 27,000 head of sheep.<sup>29</sup> The figures sound impressive, but more than half the land remained undistributed and was used mainly to create 180 state farms (*sovkhozy*) and a variety of auxiliary agricultural enterprises, in which many “formerly unemployed” agricultural workers were employed.<sup>30</sup> Thus the problem of land shortage endured for some time after the Soviet takeover (in Drohobych oblast, for example, 99,050 households received a total of 90,000 hectares of land)<sup>31</sup> even though one of the justifications given for it at the time was to alleviate landlessness among West Ukrainian peasants.<sup>32</sup>

It is possible, however, that the Soviet state deliberately kept the peasants short of land for two reasons. First, this would render them “natural allies” of the Soviet authorities in the forthcoming “struggle” against the kulaks, in the class war in the villages. Second, it would make them more amenable to the idea of joining the collective farms, once the latter were established.

Although the Polish landowners had been removed or had fled, the churches, military settlers, and the majority of kulaks were essentially left alone until the end of the year.<sup>33</sup> Ivasiuta maintains that the peasant households were freed from various taxes and debts, but another Soviet source indicates that only 35 per cent of the poorer stratum was freed from taxation,<sup>34</sup> which would suggest that the authorities were already beginning to differentiate between the peasants.

After the initial redistribution of land in late 1939 West Ukrainian agricultural administration was organized along Soviet lines. On 15 January 1940 the Ukrainian Council of People’s Commissars divided the oblast land administrations into eight departments: an agricultural institute, which included a mechanization sector and an organization department; a planning and finance department; an institute of land regulation and improvement; a sector for selecting and preparing cadres; a veterinary

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29. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 46.

30. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

31. Varet’s’kyi, *Sotsialistychni peretvorennia*, p. 223.

32. See, for example, *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 2, p. 76.

33. M. K. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolektyvizatsii na Ternopil’shchyni* (Kiev, 1958), p. 37.

34. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 46. The other source is *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 2, p. 89.



institute; a livestock-raising institute; and a department of accounting and business institute.<sup>35</sup>

The Soviets assigned 1.2 million rubles from the state budget for the development of the economy of Western Ukraine in 1940. In addition, 30 million rubles were set aside for agricultural needs in the local areas and 40 million rubles for the organization of Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS) and the mechanization of agriculture.

The official land reform in Western Ukraine, however, was not issued until 24 March 1941. This stipulated that in the Galician oblasts the norm for peasant households was to be 7 hectares of land, and 10 hectares in certain areas (usually the mountain regions). In Volyn' and Rivne, the norm was 10 hectares, and 15 hectares in certain raions that possessed a smaller percentage of arable land.<sup>36</sup> The most notable point about the reform, however, apart from its relative tardiness, was that the bulk of the peasants clearly possessed less land than the norm permitted. Again, this suggests that Soviet policy was to keep landholding to the minimum, so that the poorer stratum would be attracted to collective farming. Nevertheless, the issue of the land reform suggests that a more concentrated attack on kulak farms was in the offing. A register of peasant property had been compiled in 1940, the purpose of which seems to have been to evaluate kulak landholding.<sup>37</sup>

After six months of Soviet rule, then, the West Ukrainian areas were dominated by small subsistence farms. They did not have an urban population to support and, now that the non-Ukrainian landowners had been removed, were enjoying a brief period of relative prosperity.

#### *The Land Reform: Western Belorussia*

In Western Belorussia before the Soviet invasion of 1939 there were reportedly 37,000 farms belonging to Polish civil colonists, and more than 35,000 in the possession of Polish military colonists. For the most part Belorussian peasants subsisted on small plots and were obliged to work for

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35. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 47.

36. Decree of the CC CPU and the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, 24 March 1941, "Pro vstanovlennia hranychnykh norm zemle korystuvannia na odyn selians'kyi dvir po Volyns'kii, Drohobys'kii, L'vivs'kii, Rovens'kii, Stanislavs'kii i Ternopil's'kii oblastiakh URSR," cited in *Z istorii*, pp. 43-44.

37. M. Rudnyts'ka (Ed.), *Zakhidnia Ukraina pid bolshevy'kamy*, IX. 39-VI. 41 (New York, 1958), p. 317.

Polish landlords or offer their services as seasonal workers in neighbouring countries in order to provide for their families.<sup>38</sup> According to a Soviet source, more than 43 per cent of all households possessed an arable land area of under 5 hectares.<sup>39</sup> It is ironic, therefore, in view of Soviet complaints about the numerous minute peasant holdings as evidence of the Polish “yoke,” that one of the results of Soviet land policy in Western Belorussia was to increase the *bidniak* stratum. Why was this?

The reasons are to be found in Soviet agrarian policy and peasant reaction to it. We have noted that in Western Ukraine Soviet land reform brought about an increase in the size of the middle peasant (*seredniak*) stratum. We can surmise that the authorities pursued similar aims in the Belorussian territories. Thus land was given out (on a limited scale as will be shown below) to households already in existence—the Soviets did not create new landholdings—in order to strengthen this middle class of peasants. This class would then provide a “natural ally” for the state in its future struggle with the kulak class, the concomitant feature of every Soviet collectivization campaign. Many peasants, however, saw the situation differently, it is safe to suggest. Rather than perceive themselves as “allies” of the state, they saw themselves as potential kulaks, since once the designated kulaks had been removed, they themselves would become the “rich” peasants. Thus they may well have divided up their lands among their families in order to avoid being so categorized in the future. After all, the recent experiences of collectivization in the eastern oblasts would not be unknown to them.

The land reform in Western Belorussia, like that in Western Ukraine, was carried out in two stages, but was less drastic in its expropriations. Land was socialized, but initially only those large landowners (presumably mainly Polish) and “large” kulak households possessing more than 50 hectares of land were subject to confiscation.<sup>40</sup> So, the authorities did not merely divide the peasants into the three main categories of kulak, *seredniak*, and *bidniak*, but made distinctions within the kulak category. Thus in addition to bolstering a middle class of farms noted above, the authorities

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38. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule*, pp. 132-33.

39. *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v Belorusskoi SSR za gody Sovetskoi vlasti* (Minsk, 1970), p. 209.

40. V. N. Mykhniuk, “Istoriografiia pervykh sotsialisticheskikh preobrazovaniia v sel'skom khoziaistve zapadnykh oblastei Belorussii,” in *Tridtsat' let po sotsialisticheskomu puti*, Vol. 2, p. 188.

also permitted a relatively strong class of kulaks to survive. This may have been a ploy to foster class discontent—the obvious motive—or it may have been “forced” on the authorities by circumstances, i.e., since collectivization had only just been completed in Eastern Belorussia, it would have been premature to engage in a large-scale transfer of personnel and resources to the western oblasts at this stage.

During the first stage of the land reform, which lasted approximately from October to December 1939, it is said that the poorest stratum of peasants (approximately 100,000 households) received altogether between 424,000 and 600,000 hectares of land.<sup>41</sup> If one defines a “poor peasant household” as one possessing under 5 hectares of arable land (i.e., the figure used by the Soviet source above), however, then about 275,000 households would have been eligible to receive confiscated land.<sup>42</sup> This supports the theory of creating class divisions in the village, although some of this land was being held in readiness for the creation of state and collective farms.<sup>43</sup>

The second stage of the reform took place in the first months of 1940. It was signalled by an assault on the farms of kulaks and military settlers.<sup>44</sup> This policy change was not immediately successful, however. As late as January 1941, according to a Soviet source, over 15 per cent of households still possessed more than 10 hectares of land, hence a very sizable kulak stratum remained in the West Belorussian village. By June 1941 a further 400,000 hectares of land had been distributed among 40,000 peasant households.<sup>45</sup> One assumes that this was kulak land.

One reason for the continuing prevalence of kulaks in Western Belorussia may have been the peasants’ adherence to, or Soviet reluctance to disturb, the *khutor* farms. At the time of the Soviet invasion about 50 per cent of West Belorussian peasants lived in *khutors*.<sup>46</sup> The *khutors*, a product of the Stolypin reform, were farms that were fully enclosed, as opposed to the open lands of the communes, or the *otrubs*, in which only

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41. The smaller figure is calculated from Vakar, *Belorussia*, p. 166; the larger is cited in V. A. Poluiian, *Revoliutsionno-demokraticeskoe dvizhenie v Zapadnoi Belorussii* (Minsk, 1978), p. 349.

42. *Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoe preobrazovaniia*, p. 209.

43. Poluiian, *Revoliutsionno-demokraticeskoe dvizhenie*, p. 349.

44. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

45. *Sovetskaia derevnia*, p. 353.

46. Beliazo in *Tritdsat’ let po sotsialisticheskomu puti*, Vol. 1, p. 71.

the arable land was enclosed. The *khutor* farms developed complex patterns of crop rotation and were apparently quite successful in livestock raising. In the USSR during the first collectivization campaign of 1929-33, perhaps because of their relative value to Soviet agricultural production, the *khutor* farms were left out of the land confiscations. The order for their liquidation was given only on 27 May 1939, with the date for completion being 1 September 1940.<sup>47</sup>

Since the elimination of *khutors* within the pre-1939 borders of the USSR was still under way at the time of the annexation of Western Belorussia, and since it was a complicated affair involving the integration of land subjected to careful crop rotation with general arable land, one can posit that the authorities were not anxious to become embroiled in a similar campaign at this stage in another area. Soviet writers acknowledge that it was because of the *khutors* that it took so long to begin the collectivization campaign in the Baltic republics.<sup>48</sup> The passive resistance of Belorussians to the liquidation of the *khutors* probably added to Soviet problems.

#### *Attempts to Strengthen Rural Party Organizations*

In July 1938, some fourteen months before the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland, the Comintern on Stalin's orders had dissolved the Communist Party of Poland and its subordinate bodies, the Communist Parties of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia.<sup>49</sup> The consequence of this action was that party life in the annexed areas had been devastated. It was necessary for the Soviet authorities to rebuild the party from scratch, by bringing in party workers from the eastern oblasts of Ukraine and Belorussia, and other areas of the USSR, in addition to trying to attract local support.

Thus before the start of the 1940-41 collectivization campaign, there were few Communists in Western Ukraine and the vast majority of them

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47. N. Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR: Plans and Performance* (Stanford, Calif., 1949), p. 342.

48. I. M. Volkov, M. A. Vyl'tsan, and V. V. Kabanov, "Problemy kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva zapadnykh raionov SSSR v sovetskoi istoriografii," in *Tritsats' let po sotsialisticheskomu puti*, Vol. 1, p. 9.

49. On the dissolutions, see, for example, V. M. Terlets'kyi, *Rady deputativ trudiashchykh Ukrain's'koi RSR v period zaversheniia budivnytstva sotsializmu (1938-1958rr.)* (Kiev, 1966), p. 83.

were located in the towns rather than the countryside. Of 1,434 Communists operating in L'viv oblast in October and November 1939, 631 were operating in industry and transport, and 272 in management work.<sup>50</sup> Thus there was need for a dual campaign: first, to raise the total numbers; second, to raise the proportion of members working in the countryside. Communist representation increased gradually. In Ternopil oblast there were fewer than thirty Communists at the time of the annexation, but this number had increased to a thousand by mid-December.<sup>51</sup> By April 1940 there were more than 16,000 Communists working in Western Ukraine, and this figure had increased to almost 37,000 by June 1941.<sup>52</sup> But the vast majority of them were still working in the cities.

In the villages of Western Ukraine at the end of 1940, there were 1,176 primary party organizations and 189 raion organizations in operation. Most of the former were very small. Of the 319 primary party organizations operating in Drohobych oblast on 1 January 1941, 70 had fewer than 5 Communists, 109 had between 6 and 10, and 60 had 10 to 15 Communists.<sup>53</sup> A similar situation existed in the other western oblasts. Although certain events, such as the election campaigns for the Ukrainian and All-Union Supreme Soviets in the spring of 1940, saw an influx of agitators into the villages, collectivization in the prewar period was retarded by the lack of party workers, particularly from the local population.

In spring 1940 the Ukrainian and Belorussian Councils of People's Commissars began to set up their own Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS). The first MTS in the USSR had been established during the mid-1920s at the Shevchenko state farm in Odessa to help plough lands belonging to individual peasant farms.<sup>54</sup> They came under state control in 1932,<sup>55</sup> and thereafter became an important instrument of control over the kolkhozy because the latter were not permitted to own tractors and agricultural machines and so were dependent on the MTS, particularly at sowing and

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50. M. P. Teslenko, "Do istorii partiinoho budivnytstva v zakhidnykh oblastiakh Ukrainy," *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 1969, No. 10, pp. 44-48.

51. Ivasiuta, *Narys istorii kolektyvizatsii*, p. 39.

52. Ivasiuta, *Narys istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 64.

53. M. P. Teslenko, "Orhanizatsiino-partiina robota v zakhidnykh oblastiakh Ukrainy (1939-1941rr.)," *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 1975, No. 9, pp. 68-72.

54. R. F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 32, 37.

55. See *ibid.*, pp. 36-48.

harvesting periods. Unlike the collective farms (in practice if not in theory), the MTS received orders not from the raion, but directly from the republican or oblast authorities, and this gave them an independent position in the villages.<sup>56</sup> In Western Ukraine in 1940, the task of the MTS was twofold. First, those established in areas where there were no kolkhozy (and none planned for the immediate future) were to help the poorer stratum of peasants, particularly those short of draught animals. Those created in areas which had kolkhozy, however, were to see to the latter's needs first and only afterwards to those of individual peasants.

On 25 March 1940, 100 MTS were established in Western Ukraine, of which 18 were in Volyn', 10 in Drohobych, 16 in Rivne, 20 in L'viv, 14 in Stanyslaviv, and 22 in Ternopil oblasts.<sup>57</sup> A second decree of 4 June 1940 led to the organization of a further 74 MTS, with 12 in Volyn', 7 in Drohobych, 14 in Rivne, 14 in L'viv, 11 in Stanyslaviv, and 16 in Ternopil.<sup>58</sup> By the end of the year, each station possessed an average of 14 tractors.<sup>59</sup> In Western Belorussia, 101 MTS were organized early in 1940 with an average at first of about 10 tractors per station.<sup>60</sup> In both the Ukrainian and Belorussian cases, the number of MTS corresponded to the total number of raions.

Soviet scholars stress the work carried out by these organizations. It is clear, however, that in their first months of operation the MTS in Western Ukraine were beset with problems. Thus in December 1940 the head of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars, L. P. Korniiets, pointed out that the plan for tractor work had been fulfilled by only 77 per cent overall, in Rivne by 66.4 per cent, and in Stanyslaviv by only 63.6 per cent.<sup>61</sup> Korniiets also noted that the proposed six workshops for major repairs

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56. L. Volin, *A Century of Russian Agriculture: From Alexander II to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 446-47.

57. Decree of the Ukrainian Council and the CC CPU, 25 March 1940, "Pro orhanizatsiiu MTS v zakhidnykh oblastiakh URSR," cited in *Z istorii*, pp. 26-27.

58. Decree of the Ukrainian Council and the CC CPU, 4 June 1940, "Pro orhanizatsiiu 74 derzhavnykh mashyno-traktornykh stantsii v zakhidnykh oblastiakh URSR," cited in *Z istorii*, pp. 30-31.

59. *Narodne hospodarstvo Ukrain's'koi RSR* (Kiev, 1957), p. 318.

60. *Istoriia Belorusskoi SSR* (Minsk, 1977), p. 363.

61. Decree of the Ukrainian Council, 24 December 1940, "Pro vykonannia postanovy Radnarkomu Soiuzu RSR i TsK VKP(b) vid 16 bereznia 1940r., 'Pro orhanizatsiiu derzhavnykh mashyno-traktornykh stantsii v zakhidnykh oblastiakh URSR i BRSR,'" cited in *Z istorii*, p. 39.

had not been set up in time and that only 98 of the 174 MTS had constructed workshops for minor repairs. The plan for training tractor drivers in 1940 was underfulfilled, as was recruitment for the instruction schools. One can conclude therefore that the MTS were giving some aid to the peasantry economically, but that their chief function was as centres of political control.

### *Socialist Farms*

The Soviet authorities were eager to demonstrate the “superiority” of large-scale farming and began to set up state farms in the spring of 1940 on the former landlord estates. These farms were considerably larger than the kolkhozy and were operated directly by the state. Nonetheless, in the western regions, they were readily supplied with machinery and seed. It is clear, however, that they were established at a much slower rate than the authorities desired. For example, on 9 April 1940, *Pravda* announced that 49 state farms were being created in Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia, but a report by Korniiets in the autumn noted that only 6 state farms had as yet been established in Western Ukraine.<sup>62</sup> They appear to have been established with more success in Western Belorussia, however, since there were reportedly 28 state farms in existence by the summer of 1940.<sup>63</sup>

The first collective farms in Western Ukraine were formed in January 1940, in the villages of Ukhovetsk (in Kovel raion, Volyn’ oblast) and Smordva (in Mlynivtsi raion, Rivne oblast),<sup>64</sup> and by the spring there were about 100 kolkhozy. During the summer that figure was raised slowly; thus in Drohobych oblast 40 kolkhozy had been set up by 15 May,<sup>65</sup> but by 23 August the figure had risen only to 45.<sup>66</sup> This should not surprise us, however, since few kolkhozy were constructed as a rule between sowing and harvesting. By the end of 1940 there were reportedly 556 collective farms in Western Ukraine, including 186 in Volyn’, 85 in Ternopil, and 84 in Rivne.<sup>67</sup>

By 1 June 1941 there were altogether 2,866 collective farms in Western

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62. *Kolhospyk Ukrainy*, 17 September 1940.

63. Mykhniuk in *Tridtsat’ let po sotsialisticheskomu puti*, Vol. 2, p. 190.

64. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 50.

65. *Pravda*, 15 May 1940.

66. *Kolhospyk Ukrainy*, 23 August 1940.

67. Varets’kyi, *Sotsialistychni peretvorennia*, p. 253.

Ukraine, embracing 205,137 peasant households, or 12.8 per cent of the total number. These households had in their possession 796,827 hectares of land, or 14.9 per cent of the total land area. The highest figures for collectivization were attained in the oblasts of Volyn', with 21.5 per cent, and Ternopil, with 14.8 per cent, while the most "backward" regions were L'viv, with 8.1 per cent, and Drohobych, with 7.8 per cent.<sup>68</sup> In terms of size, the kolkhozy were small affairs. Whereas the collective farms of Eastern Ukraine, in 1939, averaged about 145 households and a sown area of 779 hectares,<sup>69</sup> in Western Ukraine the average size, in 1941, was fewer than 76 households and under 300 hectares of land.<sup>70</sup> Even these low figures are actually inflated since they include Izmail oblast, where each kolkhoz averaged 130 households and 888 hectares of land.

Part of the Bessarabian territory, which was reclaimed from Romania in June 1940, Izmail oblast, originally known as Akkerman oblast, was neither historically nor ethnically linked with Western Ukraine. The population there at the time of incorporation consisted of Moldavians (28.3 per cent), Ukrainians (25.4 per cent), Russians (27.4 per cent), and other nationalities (18.9 per cent).<sup>71</sup> Isolated from the other newly-annexed Ukrainian territories and located in a geographical enclave, Izmail oblast evidently presented few political problems for the Soviet authorities. In 1954 it was incorporated into Odessa oblast.

In Galicia, the kolkhozy in Drohobych possessed on average a mere 46 households and in L'viv 55, with 113 and 165 hectares of land respectively. In Volhynia the farms were slightly larger, but still very small by Soviet standards.<sup>72</sup> Plainly these kolkhozy had not been properly "consolidated" (to use the Soviet term) by the time the war with Germany broke out. Within a relatively short time, however, the Soviet authorities had made considerable progress in collectivizing Western Ukraine, particularly in the northern oblast of Volyn'.<sup>73</sup>

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68. *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 2, p. 93.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

71. A. Grekul', *Rastsvet moldavskoi sotsialisticheskoi natsii* (Kishinev, 1974), p. 27.

72. *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 2, p. 93.

73. For the purposes of simplification, this essay will not discuss collectivization in the areas annexed by the USSR from Romania in June 1940. Here, the authorities began to organize rapid collectivization in the southern Izmail oblast, in which the percentage of households within the kolkhozy surpassed the total in Volyn' in June 1941. See *ibid.*



In Western Belorussia, progress was slower. We have already noted the problem of the *khutor* farms. Another reason was that, at the time of annexation, collectivization of the eastern oblasts of Belorussia had still not been completed. Whereas the East Ukrainian oblasts had made substantial progress in moving peasant households into the kolkhozy in the early 1930s, and had completed the process by 1937,<sup>74</sup> the collectivization of Eastern Belorussia was completed only in early 1941.<sup>75</sup> Because the Ukrainian republic had completed the process earlier, experienced specialists, agricultural and party workers could be moved from the eastern to the western oblasts. One should add that in support of their claim to be aiding their “blood brothers,” the Russians wanted as far as possible to use Eastern Ukrainians in the West Ukrainian campaign and Eastern Belorussians in the West Belorussian campaign. Thus the Belorussians began at a clear disadvantage.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, the authorities began to collectivize Western Belorussia shortly after the establishment of the MTS there. By May 1940 430 collective farms had been created, made up of 23,200 households, or 3.7 per cent of all households in Western Belorussia.<sup>77</sup> Thus these kolkhozy were minute affairs, averaging about 54 households. By June 1941 the percentage of households collectivized had reportedly reached 6.7 per cent, but the 1,115 collective farms established comprised only 49,000 households, under 44 per farm.<sup>78</sup> It seems that the authorities were more anxious to establish kolkhozy than to ensure that they were large and stable concerns. It is well known that Stalin’s preference was for large farms, which were considered economically and politically more viable. Thus the progress made was largely ritualistic and the tiny kolkhozy would in any case have been short of technical equipment given that the MTS were not well provided with machinery at this time.

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74. See *Sotsialistychna perebudova*, Vol. 1, pp. 485-86.

75. *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia*, p. 209.

76. One should note *en passant* the astonishing statement by the noted western scholar on Belorussia, Lubachko, that by the spring of 1941 individual farming in Western Belorussia had been “almost completely eliminated.” Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule*, p. 44. This is a clear error, and, as will be shown below, about 93 per cent of households in this area were farming individually at the time of the German invasion in June 1941.

77. *Istoriia Belorusskoi SSR* (1977), p. 363.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

How strong were the kolkhozy in former Eastern Poland? Let us look at the better documented West Ukrainian regions.

In Volyn' oblast it is clear that the movement to the collectives, though it went further than in other areas, met with some opposition. One report speaks of the acute class struggle and alleges that "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists" were spreading anti-Soviet rumours and intimidating the peasants.<sup>79</sup> The nationalists, however, by their own account, did not offer serious resistance to collectivization until after the war, and thus one must doubt these charges. It is conceivable that the resistance may have been instigated by the kulaks, and indeed the Polish census of 1931 suggests that there may have been a larger kulak stratum in Volyn' than in the Galician oblasts. But we gain a different insight when we read in the same Soviet report that certain party organizations had been violating the "Leninist doctrine of voluntariness" and forcing reluctant peasants to join the kolkhozy.<sup>80</sup> Thus it appears that the authorities themselves, through their coercive methods against the *non-kulaks*, may have caused an upheaval in the villages. The resulting backlash would then have been labelled "kulak" and "nationalist" in an attempted cover-up, as such opposition to collectivization had been in the past.<sup>81</sup> In reality there was probably no peasant-inspired class war in the villages. The decree of the CC CPU of 28 September 1940, "Concerning mistakes permitted by the local party organizations of Rivne and Volyn' oblasts," said as much when it noted the inadequate supervision over collectivization by the two oblast committees and the violations of the Model Charter.<sup>82</sup>

On 28 June 1940 the bureau of the L'viv oblast party committee noted that on the kolkhozy "I Travnia" and "S. M. Kirov" of Zhovkva raion, and "T. H. Shevchenko" of Sokaly raion, no production and financial plans had been drawn up, no account of the work of collective farmers had been compiled, and the kolkhoz leaders had failed to strengthen "toiling discipline."<sup>83</sup> In neighbouring Drohobych, the first oblast party conference, held in April 1940, lauded the successes in collectivization, but then referred

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79. *Narys istorii Volyn's'koi oblasnoi partiinoi orhanizatsii* (Kiev, 1968), p. 61.

80. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

81. See M. Lewin, "Who Was the Soviet Kulak?" *Soviet Studies*, XVIII, no. 2 (October 1966), 189-212.

82. Cited in *Narys istorii Volyn's'koi oblasnoi partiinoi orhanizatsii* (L'viv, 1981), p. 54.

83. *Narys istorii L'vivs'koi*, p. 106.

to sabotage and counter-revolutionary agitation undertaken by the “enemy” against the new farms; for example, in the village Kalnykiv of Mostyska raion, 26 households that had applied to join the kolkhoz had later withdrawn, and similar developments had occurred in Zhuravnyky and Medynychi raions.<sup>84</sup> The likelihood is that these were “paper kolkhozy” that had been declared established by the raion authorities but did not yet exist in fact. The reluctant peasants may have added their names to the kolkhoz register under compulsion, but remained on their private farms. The presence of such kolkhozy casts doubt on the collectivization figures as cited in Soviet sources, since there may have been a large number of paper kolkhozy in the western oblasts. This had been a feature of Soviet collectivization in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>85</sup>

Despite this instability, Soviet authorities have claimed that in 1940 the kolkhozy of Western Ukraine attained an average grain yield of 11 centners per hectare (including a wheat yield of 11.8),<sup>86</sup> and so demonstrate the superiority of collective farms. But even if we accept these figures they do not necessarily indicate superiority. In the first place, they were only slightly better than the average of 10.4 centners per hectare for individual farms over the ten years 1928-37, while in the Volhynian area (Volyn’ and Rivne oblasts) it had been even higher.<sup>87</sup> In the autumn of 1940, less than 2 per cent of peasants were involved in West Ukrainian kolkhozy and a disproportionately large amount of resources (which could not have been sustained if all peasant households had been collectivized) were directed towards them. The benefits for those few kolkhozy in 1940 were numerous: taxation on households within them was 25 per cent less than on individual farms, their obligatory deliveries of grain, meat, and potatoes to the state were lower than those assigned for individual farms, they were able to acquire “with state aid” more draught animals than the individual farms, etc.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, since many of the kolkhozy were established on the estates confiscated from Polish landowners, it is likely that the quality of kolkhoz soil was better than that on individual farms, where the farmers

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84. From the report of Drohobych oblast committee CPU at the first oblast party conference, 27 April 1940, “Pro stan sil’s’koho hospodarstva oblasti,” cited in *Z istorii*, p. 128.

85. See, for example, Davies *The Socialist Offensive*, p. 269.

86. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 60.

87. *Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland* (Warsaw, 1938), p. 73.

88. Ivasiuta, *Narysy istorii kolhospnoho budivnytstva*, p. 59.

had only the most primitive resources during the period of Polish rule. In addition, a host of factors, such as the amount of fertilizer used, the quality of the seed, and the use of machinery in cultivating, harvesting, and threshing crops, preclude any significant comparisons between them.

Among the kolkhozy of Western Ukraine the best results were achieved in Ternopil oblast, where 28 out of 37 kolkhozy received a total harvest return for all crops of 12 centners per hectare.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, in Drohobych oblast, 14 out of 28 kolkhozy cultivated a harvest of under 10 centners per hectare.<sup>90</sup> This was a reflection less of the way the kolkhozy were working than of the comparative agricultural conditions in these two oblasts. In the period of Polish rule, too, results in Ternopil had generally been better than in the Drohobych and L'viv regions.<sup>91</sup>

In terms of labour-day (*trudoden'*) payments, the collective farms of L'viv oblast, which had fulfilled its obligations to the state in good time, received 3.8 kilograms of grain, 2.7 kilograms of potatoes, and about 2 rubles cash per labour day.<sup>92</sup> Payments in Rivne were substantially higher, at 5 kilograms of grain, 5.2 kilograms of potatoes, and 6.51 rubles.<sup>93</sup> These handouts were not particularly high, although the fact that the authorities could keep input at a relatively high level while collectivization was low meant that they were substantially higher than those of the postwar years (when material resources had also been depleted as a result of the war and German occupation).

On the eve of the German-Soviet war in June 1941, the Soviet rulers had made a slow start towards collectivization. The kolkhozy were short of livestock, unstable, and apparently encountering some passive (or even active) resistance. This early experiment in collective farming bears little resemblance to the relentless attack on the villages of Eastern Ukraine in the early 1930s. In Western Ukraine in 1939-41, the Soviet regime was pre-occupied with the defence of its western borderlands. In these circumstances, the transformation of the region cannot be compared with that of other regions in peacetime. The collectivization movement in Western

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89. Varets'kyi, *Sotsialistychni peretvorennia*, p. 254.

90. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

91. *Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland*, p. 73.

92. *Narys istorii L'vivs'koi*, p. 109.

93. Decree of the bureau of Rivne oblast committee CPU, 18 November 1940, "Pro naslidky hospodariuvannia kolhospiv oblasti za pershyi rik ikh isnuvannia," cited in *Z istorii*, p. 139.

Ukraine and Western Belorussia may have reached the level it did as a result of local officials' demonstrating their zeal to follow this route. But undoubtedly as far as Stalin was concerned, the collectivization movement in the annexed areas of Eastern Poland was to be at this stage a limited affair. It was more useful to the authorities of course to develop a system that ensured a greater degree of control over potentially recalcitrant villages. But there was no centrally-inspired movement to raise agricultural production in "liberated" areas through the imposition of collective farming.

From the Soviet perspective, the eighteen months before the German invasion confirmed that Western Ukrainians (and, it seems, Western Belorussians) were opposed to collective farming. It had proved easier and more convenient—and this pattern was to be followed in the postwar period—to collectivize lands in Ukraine before those in Belorussia. But the benefit of this early period of collectivization to the Soviet authorities was that it provided a convenient precedent for the postwar years. It could be claimed that the process of collectivization had been interrupted by the German invasion and occupation of 1941-44. Thus the postwar years could be represented as a return to "normality," and in Western Ukraine, at least, the first collective farms in the postwar years were restorations of those that had existed in 1940-41.

As for the local inhabitants, the first six months of Soviet rule had seen some changes for the better. The Polish settlers, who had not been popular, had been removed and the landless and land-hungry households had received some land. Many rural residents, however, could not have been so certain or optimistic about the future. The authoritarian power of Poland had been replaced by the totalitarian power of the USSR, although the latter had not acted as ruthlessly as might have been expected. In short, they were generally pleased to see the removal of the Poles, but Soviet rule soon became equally unpopular. Most residents probably contented themselves with the thought that Soviet rule was likely to be short-lived. Their attitude to more permanent Soviet rule was clearly manifested after the war, in the shape of guerrilla resistance (Western Ukraine) and passive resistance that delayed the campaign for full collectivization (Western Belorussia).