

Ukraine-Facts and Figures



TERRITORY: A vast territory of 232,000 sq. miles (about the size of France), Ukraine is bordered by Belarus on the north, the Russian Federation on the northeast and east, the Black Sea and Sea of Azov on the south, Romania and Moldova on the southwest and Hungary, Slovakia and Poland on the west.

The topography of Ukraine consists primarily of steppes (vast plains) and plateaus which seldom reach an elevation of 1000 feet above sea level. The Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains (highest point at 6764 feet) extend to the westernmost part of the country and the Crimean Mountains (highest point at 5071 feet) are on the southernmost end. Ukraine's climate is temperate throughout most of the country and subtropical in the extreme south.

The most important river in Ukraine is the Dnipro, the third longest river in Europe. It serves as a major source of hydroelectric power. Other major rivers include the Danube, Western Buh, the Tisza, the Pripyat, and the Desna.

POPULATION: As of January 1992, the population of Ukraine was 52.1 million people. Of this population ethnic Ukrainians comprise 72.7%. Ethnic Russians comprise 22.1% and various minorities including Poles and Hungarians comprise 5.2%. An additional 4 million Ukrainians live in the United States, Canada, Australia, Western and Central Europe and South America.

CITIES: The capital of Ukraine is Kyiv with a population of 2.6 million people. Located on the Dnipro River, Kyiv is one of the oldest cities in Eastern Europe, founded c.600 A.D. by Prince Kyi. Other major cities include Kharkiv (1.6 million), the industrial capital of northeastern Ukraine; Dnipropetrovsk (1.2 million), an industrial and electric power center on the lower Dnipro; Donetsk (1.1 million), an industrial and coal center in southeastern Ukraine; Odessa (1.1 million), the major port on the Black Sea; and Lviv (800,000) the most important urban center in Western Ukraine.

LANGUAGE: The language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, an independent language in the Eastern Slavic Branch of Indo-European languages. While all Slavic languages possess certain common features, they are just as distinct from each other as German is from Swedish or Dutch, and each contain unique grammatical and vocabulary differences. The Ukrainian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet.

RELIGION: Ukraine was christened by St. Volodymyr in 988. While most believers are Orthodox Christian (77%), there is a large Eastern-rite Catholic population (13.5%) in Western Ukraine. Protestant, Judaic and Moslem religions are also practiced. While all Ukrainian Churches were severely persecuted in the former U.S.S.R., the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic churches were forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox church by Soviet authorities and outlawed. The churches were re-established in 1990.

NATIONAL HOLIDAY: August 24th, Independence Day, commemorating the 1991 proclamation of Ukrainian independence from the U.S.S.R.

NATIONAL SYMBOLS: The trident, derived from the three-pronged spear of the sea god Poseidon, is the national symbol of Ukraine. The flag of Ukraine is made up of two horizontal stripes of equal width, the upper one light blue in color (symbolizing the blue sky), the lower one yellow in color (symbolizing the vast wheat fields of Ukraine). The national anthem of Ukraine is *Shche Ne Vmerla Ukrayena* (Ukraine Has Not Perished).

HISTORY: Ukrainians trace their history to the Kyiv-Rus' State (9th - 14th centuries) which constituted the first major and long-lasting political entity among the Eastern Slavs. In 988, Kyivan-Rus' accepted Christianity, and Kyiv became the major economic, cultural, religious and political center of Eastern Europe. With the decline of Kyivan-Rus', the Galician-Volhynian State developed in the western areas of Ukraine as the continuation of the Kyivan-Rus' State. The era from the middle of the 15th to the end of the 18th centuries brought the Kozak period with fierce, brave warriors on

horseback.

The modern, or third period of Ukrainian statehood began with the fall of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires when an independent Ukrainian National Republic was overpowered by the Bolsheviks, which lasted until 1991 in the form of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The first elected president of Ukraine was Leonid Kravchuk. Its second elected president was Leonid Kuchma. Ukraine, presently under its third elected President Viktor Yushchenko is now embarking upon a bold course of action as an independent, democratic country with a free market economy. The United States extended official recognition to Ukraine on December 25, 1991. Ukraine, a founding member of the United Nations has finally achieved full political independence into the international community of nations.

ECONOMY: While Ukraine, often called the "breadbasket of Europe", is known for its agricultural (especially wheat) production, it is also rich in other natural resources such as iron, natural gas, manganese and magnesium. 13.6% of the world's iron reserves, 25-30% of the world's manganese ore and 8% of the world's mercury is found in Ukraine. Ukraine produced over 30% of the coal production in the former U.S.S.R. Ukraine's products are exported to 107 countries of the world. Raw materials and consumer goods are its main exports.

TRANSPORTATION: Ukraine has 14,295 miles of railroads, the main transportation system for the country. Some of the main seaports are Odessa, Illichivsk, Kherson and Reni. The Dnipro river is the main inland waterway, but the Danube, Western Buh, Tisza and others are also used for export-import operations. The largest airports are Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odessa, Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv. Import transcontinental pipelines carrying oil and gas run across Ukraine into Europe.

EDUCATION: There are currently an estimated 21,900 general-educational schools with 7.1 million students. While most of the schools teach in Ukrainian, many conduct classes in other languages depending on the ethnic composition of the school district. These schools provide study of the Ukrainian language as a subject. There are approximately 156 institutions of higher learning with over 880,000 students. Recently, new types of educational institutions, such as private universities are developing in Ukraine. Literacy in Ukraine is 99.9% with 15% of the adult population having completed higher education.

CULTURE: There are currently 25,300 public libraries operating in Ukraine with an overall stock of approximately 420,000,000 books and periodicals. It is estimated that 24.3 million people utilize these libraries annually. There are 130 theaters and 225 museums in Ukraine. Attendance frequencies per year on the average for 100 inhabitants were respectively 29 and 40 times per year. In 1991 Ukraine's publishing houses printed 5,857 book titles.

HEALTH: In 1991, per 10,000 population there were 44.2 physicians of all specialties, 118.6 middle medical personnel and 135.7 hospital beds. The average life expectancy is 71 years (66 years for males and 75 for females). The birth rate in 1991 was 12.1 persons per 1,000 population with a child mortality, during the first year of life, of 13.6 per 1,000 newborn.

ENVIRONMENT: The communist legacy left Ukraine with monumental ecological problems. While the contamination resulting from Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster is well-known, there is widespread land, water and air pollution resulting from toxic wastes and lack of ecological controls on mines and industrial plants. Since 1991, Ukraine's Government has enacted environmental protection laws in compliance with international standards in efforts to halt further pollution. At the same time however, Ukraine lacks the resources to repair much of the damage of 75 years of communist neglect. In the area of clean-up of the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine has appealed for assistance to the international community.(bwl 3/04)

