

PEASANT TALES FROM UKRAINE \_ Some Clean, Some Obscene.

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(i)

SOME EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

I... "...A holdover from medieval times where the dipossessed were cunningly at war with the possessors..." ...Robertson Davies in the  
LYRE OF ORPHEUS.

"..it's an underdog's revenge..." Robertson Davies in the  
LYRE OF ORPHEUS.

These tales epitomize and illustrate just that. The possessors, in the feudal-medieval times and even the recent ones until 1939, in Poland, were the pawns(squires), the scribes, the clergy, the merchants, the gendarmes, the judges, the money lenders, and even the richer peasants. All these made the life of the illiterate, landless peasant-serf-labourer hard and difficult. Nothing was ever, hardly ever, done to alleviate the desperate conditions in which the peasant lived...he had to pay, for every service rendered him, by way of labour at the rate decided unilaterally by the ones in power. To maintain some measure of self-respect the peasant invented these tales exactly in the way and with the motives as is voiced by Davies.

Because these are peasant tales - MALE GENDER - the language is very similar to the language that you may hear today in a soldiers' canteen, a truck drivers' stop, or a male gathering at a working man's tavern.

II... Although the village "Jew" in Ukraine was considered "one of us" (Nahshee l'oodn) there was also anti-semitism to a great degree - mostly against those who were guilty of exploitation and dishonesty.

According to a prominent Jewish writer in USA - Chaim Potok in THE CHOSEN - this was due to the fact that way back in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Polish landlords were almost illiterate and hired the educated Jew to administer their estates. To get the ultimate profit for their master these overseers ruthlessly exploited the serfs, thus earning the hatred that should have belonged to the landlord. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth century this hatred was fostered by the Russian Czar and the Austro-Hungarian Emperor to divert the peasant's attention from the misery of the times by blaming the "Christ-killers" who "suck the peasant's blood."

Also, the educated Jew in the later times was the one who had the small stores, the inns with the taverns, and who was the money-lender. It was inevitable that some of these were the exploiters and the usurers, and it was these that were the butt of the jokes.

In all fairness to the Ukrainian peasant anti-semitism existed in the Western World. I refer to to the Dreyfus case in France, and to the writings of the naive and sophisticated



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SOME EXPLANATORY REMARKS. (contd)

D.H. Lawrence. See his VIRGIN AND THE GYPSY. Neither of the two cases just cited had the excuse that the peasant of Ukraine did.

It is sincerely hoped that aspersions are now only stories of the past and do not reflect today's attitudes. Most definitely anti-semitism is completely dead among the second and third generation Canadians of Ukrainian descent. While visiting Ukraine in 1971 I saw no evidence of any discrimination there either.

III. Why did I go to the trouble of collecting these tales? It is because I believe that well over 90% of the first wave (1896-1914) of Ukrainian immigrants were the sons (grandsons at best) of serfs; therefore I feel that that these tales should be recorded and kept for posterity as a tribute, and memento, to the reality of these hard working earthy settlers who peopled and <sup>helped</sup> ~~help~~ build Western Canada. These are the "bajki" (stories) that helped men pass time, confirm their identity, and bolster their ego, and thus <sup>helped</sup> ~~helped~~ them to survive.

These tales were collected at the coffee shops (1977-1983) where the "old-timers" retired, peasant-farmers congregated to pass their leisure. Some of these were remembered from the time (1935-1940) when I taught school in rural "Ukrainian" Manitoba when the ratepayers came to visit me at the teacher<sup>e</sup>age to play cards, to gossip, and to regale one another with story telling.

Yakubovsky and Kozak contributed theirs from Ukraine (1972-1984) in response to my solicitation by correspondence.

IV. In order to keep the peasant idiom and to try to make these authentic I translated as verbatim as possible.



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From GEORGE & ANNA:

- I The Babbler's Hemp.
- II The Rabbi.....
- III White Bread.
- IV A Dooper.
- V You'll MOlest Me.
- VI What and Oak.
- VII A Test for Heat.
- VIII You Know How To Cook.
- IX The Neighbor's Cow.
- X I Took Care of George.
- XI Sacred Flesh.
- XII Conjugal Lesson.

Collections from other sources:

- XIII Taking the Goat to Pasture.
- XIV Poor Man and the Outlaws (Similar to "Seven Men  
With One BLOW")
- XV Shoemaker and the Dead.
- XVI How Ivahn Guided the Jews to Palestine.
- XVII How a Princess Chose a Mate.
- XVIII How The Czar's Son Ran Away from Home.
- XIX How Ivahn Tended the Pahn's HOGs.
- XX A Dirty Finger.
- XXI Ivahn and the Eggs.
- XXII The Holy Ghost.
- XXIII Time For New Elections.
- XXIV Ivahn as a Lawyer.
- XXV A Newlywed and a Deformed Gosling.
- XXVI God as a Partner.
- XXVII To The Wedding.
- XXVIII Lame Beggar.
- XXIX Let's Go To Bed.
- XXX I Wash My Husband's Hair.



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XXXI Ivahn to War.

XXXII Uncle Timofy's Fault.

XXXIII Sexual Urge.

XXXIV Sore Finger.

XXXV Ivahn and the Czar.

XXXVI Old Man and Death (Averse translated by Norman)

XXXVII The Good Lord Gave Me.

XXXVIII Who Is Boss.

XXXIX Acres vs Hectares.

XL Don't Trust a Prick.

XLI Penance.

XLII Why Only Two Children.

XLIII Like a Fire Beneath You.

XLIV The Good And The Bad.

XLV I Never Give Her Any.

XLVI Ivahn and the Jew Fight.

XLVII Pyrohy. (by Nettie)

XLVIII Koom Ukr vs Koom Mazur.

XLIX Eat My Friends and Vi Hnate.

L Boy and Horseshoe.

LI George and Two Black Eyes. (Nettie)

LII What You Like YOu Kiss.

LIII Nothing to Eat (Axe)

LIV A Present Misplaced. (kerchief)

LV God's Wisdom. (GRainst<sup>a</sup>ek)

LVI Gyps<sup>y</sup>'s Child.

LVII Man and the Gate.

LVIII Ice Bather. (~~Peretz~~)

LIX Rooster at Singing School.

LX Travel Experiences. (Pahn & Ivahn)



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- LXI Correct Time.
- LXII How Ivahn Visited the Dead.
- LXIII Except the Chandelier.
- LXIV Honeymoon.
- LXV One in 250 Million...(Ukr Cop)
- LXVI A Woman Farts.
- LXVII The Two Priests.
- LXVIII The Magic Shovel.
- IXIX Vagina to Heaven.
- LXX Holy Virgin Made Manifest.
- LXXI With The Priest.
- LXXII Little Ivahn Outwits the Czar.
- LXXIII A Kind Hearted Woman.
- LXXIV Jew Girl vs Gentile Boy.
- LXXV Cab Driver..
- LXXVI Pre-Ordained Fate.
- LXXVII St. George & the Peasant.
- LXXVIII Shingle Bob, or A Haircut.
- LXXIX She Was Ready.
- LXXX The Saints are to Blame.
- LXXXI I Dreamt of the Devil.
- LXXXII How Ivahn Sold the Wood.
- LXXXIII Ivahn and The Ganderhead.
- LXXXIV Ivahn and the Tsaritsia.
- LXXXV The Shotgun.
- LXXXVI The Two Islands.
- LXXXVII Even God Cried.
- LXXXVIII Ivahn & his Calf.
- LXXXIX Catechism.



XC	THE TWO BROTHERS	
XCI	I STILL CAN - I STILL CAN	
XCII	NOTHING BUT PSHYK	
XCIII	THE LAST TRY	
XCIV	A WILLING VICTIM	
XCV	EXORCISM	
XCVI	IT'S LIKE THAT	
XCVII	IVAHN, THE MENDACIOUS	
XCVIII	NOT THAT FAR	
XCIX	TOO BAD	
C	WONDERFUL SERMON.	
CI	IT'S SO SIMPLE	
CII	THEY JUST WOULDN'T LEARN	
CIII	VERY THIRSTY	
CIV	Everybody is busy.	
CV	Granny's warning.	
CVI	A Real Professional.	
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CXI	Fruits of Penance.	
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CXIII	Don't Interrupt.	
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CXVII	An Evil Moneylender	
CXVIII	Too Late.	
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CXX	Easter Bread.	
CXXI	WHY THE BEAR HAS SHORT EARS AND A LONG TAIL	
CXXII	HOUSE BLESSING	
CXXIII	THE DEAD MARE	
CXXIV	THE GYPSY AND THE UNBORN FOAL	
CXXV	THE STOLEN PASKHAH	
CXXVI	AND WHO DO YOU THINK I'VE GOT	
CXXVII	A WIFE WHO NEVER ATE	
CXXVIII	GOLDEN TEARS	
CXXIX	IT SHALL RETURN TENFOLD	
CXXX	ASH WEDNESDAY	
CXXXI	POOR DAD	



