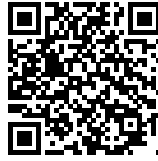




UKRAINE? WHICH UKRAINE?

Posted on August 1, 2022 by C.B. Forde



I'm a bit confused. I thought Putin had turned Ukraine into a hell-on-earth, top to bottom, left to right, where nothing but misery and desolation prevail. And so we have to send tons of money and weapons over there, so grandmothers and school kids can get armed-up and fight back the Russians, led by Putin who is Hitler's clone. It's total war, folks! And that's why Gord, my neighbor down the road (about fifteen minutes away by car), now flies a Ukrainian flag from his porch. I'd never seen one before, and at first I thought it was one of those gay flags, until he set me straight. But it's easy for him to get such international things because, as everyone knows, he's a well-traveled man—he's been out to Blyth twice (population not quite a thousand).

Anyway, him and me, we got to talking the other day, and sure enough Ukraine came up, as it always does in any polite conversation. And in his helpful way, Gord informed me that Ukraine is "just acrossst from England, there." This then got him to talking about the "Red Army," which is now trying to take over Ukraine. Being of a scholarly bent, Gord knew all about the Red Army since another friend, who runs a feedmill two towns over, had a granduncle or other who was a cook in the Canadian army during World War Two and who was the ultimate and reliable source of everything Gord now knows about what's actually going on in Ukraine. "In Russia, there, they call their army, the 'Red Army.' That's their name for it, just like we call our army the Canadian army." I understood the linguistic analogy immediately... I think. Anyway, bottom line—don't trust Russians. They just aren't like us; never can be.

Here, I had to ask Gord about our mutual friend Serge and his wife and their three kids; everyone knows they're Russians. Could we trust them? Gord had to think this one through a bit because he always thought Serge was out from Quebec-way, since his name sure is French (here Gord got to telling me about his childhood hockey hero, Serge Savard of the Montreal Canadiens). I guess that's why we always pronounce Serge's name as "Surge," and not "Sir-gay" (which by the looks of thing just doesn't sit right. Would you want to be called that any day of the week?)

Finally, Gord concluded that since Serge was over here and not a member of the Red Army which is now fighting "acrosst in Ukraine," Serge is fine. This made sense, and our conversation moved on to more important things, like the oiler that wasn't working too good on his chainsaw. I was over helping Gord cut down a few trees for firewood; winter now being a few months away.

But let me get to the part about my confusion, otherwise we'll be here all day with Gord, who as everyone knows is a real talker, and I could regale you with all kinds of stories about him, seeing as he's

so well informed. But that's not why I'm writing this. No, sir. You see, one of Gord's favorite pastimes is watching a few Youtube videos after dinner with Eileen, his wife. It's not like he's wasting time and watching silly things like cats. Not at all. You see, Gord's also a great woodsman, and he's discovered these niche Youtube channels. His favorites are videos showing people cooking on an open fire, which is like a gateway to all of kinds of other similar channels. You'd think he'd watch something other than what Eileen usually does in summer, since they tend to cook outdoors when the weather is warm (keeps the house from heating up).

Once the wood-splitting was done for the day, he asked me to stay for dinner, which I did and afterwards we all sat down in front of his computer (he's got it hooked up to bigger screen) and watched some of these videos.

It's riveting stuff, and countries you've never heard of are in on the act (thanks to Youtube monetization, why wouldn't they be?); countries like Dagestan and places like Ferghana and Tashkent. Never mind the geography, it's that primitive fascination with meat meeting fire. Oh, and there's travel involved, too, because you get to see places you'll never go to. Iran has innovated the genre, bringing in pretty girls, in native costumes...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVzlEXbWgiY>

And why should Ukraine be left behind in contributing to this genre and making some decent Youtube money? Who cares if there's a war devastating the entire country. The show must go on. Here are some of Gord's favorites from Ukraine...

First, there's a channel called, "Pavlo from Ukraine," where this guy gets his pretty girlfriend to show us the sights of real Ukrainian farm life...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti4aT11NOIk>

And, then, she gets on her bike and shows us her village...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36rDMd4gzuU>

The best way to experience an active war-zone, I say, is by watching a pretty girl riding on a bike, in short dress billowing in the wind...

Of course, even during war, there's always time to look after the environment. Here's Pavlo with his girlfriend cleaning the nearby river. Pollution is such a terrible thing; much worse than war even, in so many ways...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWcd5ZpmvZw>

Then, one day, both of them headed off to Kyiv (how the heck are you supposed to say that??), and the war-zone they showed was just mind-boggling. Poor Ukraine...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBcl1cgDzaQ>

And you thought life during a war was horrible. Well... it is! Just look at the place. Renting a scooter is no joke.

And here's what a Ukrainian grocery store looks like in wartime. The important point Pavlo wants to make, to keep you from sitting there in agonizing suspense, is that prices have gone up...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OdOkOmmX3A>

You sure got that right, Pavlo. Prices have gone way up here, too—and that's without the Red Army banging at the door. Just a bit of sacrifice for democracy. But at least they still get to have plastic bags in Ukraine. Over here you have to find our own to get groceries home from the store. That fact alone is enough to keep sending our money over there.

OK, enough of the mystery. Pavlo's girlfriend has a name, and she's called Luba, and you guessed it—she has her own Youtube channel, imaginatively called, "Luba from Ukraine." As you know, the word "Ukraine" is the cat's meow right now, so why not milk it for all its worth.

Luba is a real cook, and she can show you how to make all kinds of stuff...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsnKdw1jBK4>

And here Luba is out gone fishing...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgoeBjQjNU>

The real suspense of me watching Pavlo and Luba was anticipating when the Red Army was going to show up and cut short the filming. I asked Gord if there's a video of Pavlo and Luba meeting the Red Army and having them over for a cook-out, like the corn roast that's going to be coming up at the park where we are next month. But Gord told me he hadn't found one yet on their two channels. But he was sure they were going to do one.

And there's more from where that comes from. There's another channel in which different people in Ukraine show life on the farm. And you'd think Gord, having been a farmer all his life, would want to see something else... like city-life in Paris or maybe Chinese opera.

Anyway, this channel is called, "Food Around the World." At first, I thought Gord said, "Fool around the world" and was expecting to see hijinks and prank videos. But instead, the channel is all about showing life in rural Ukraine, with lots of shots of mountains, ponds, grain fields and fruit trees. Not different at all from what we've got around here, actually. They've even got wood-fire ovens for bread, like some of us have built in this world. Bread just isn't the same without real fire.

You can watch these rural Ukrainians cook stuff you'd never think of eating like boiled bits of dough stuffed with ground up tripe, or you can kind-of learn how to butcher a pig, or grow potatoes...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSq74xpXBo8>

It's all very instructive, too, especially if you belong to the great unwashed that we call "city-folk." Want to try your hand at cutting down some wheat, flailing out the kernels, grinding them out and making bread? The Ukrainians have you covered...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdtCd3DAebc>

And then, there's a whole two-hours of the best bits from all this channel's videos. Gord had already

seen it, so we skipped over that one (Gord is nothing if not kind).

Now, you might have heard that the Red Army was busy slaughtering anything that moved in a place called Bucha. And sure enough, Food Around the World is on location. You see some wrecked buildings in the beginning and a bunch of people sitting around waiting for bread to be baked, and then it's on to a bakery run by two guys who get busy baking bread...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4uW0kLgCTU>

After all the devastation by the Red Army, the gas still flows to fire up the bread ovens, and I guess there's never any shortage of things like flour and yeast. It sure is good to see that the money we're sending over is doing what it's supposed to be doing.

Then, there's a video that really pulls at the heartstrings (and Eileen's favorite, I might add. Poor Gord gets a lump in his throat watching this one). It shows a bunch of kids making some cookies. We're told they're refugee kids who have been put to work making cookies for other refugee kids. This video has gotten the most views, something like a million and a half. And why not? This is the Ukraine the world really wants to watch...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQXTqbGJiuQ>

The owner of this channel says in the description that he can't make videos anymore because of the war. But I guess that was just temporary, because he's still making videos.

And, getting back to Kyiv, there's also a channel called Food and Life, which shows some fancy restaurants in that city; not from long ago—but right now. Let's see, there's a place where you can get burgers and fries...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMUCR-1y6Bw>

You can try some local fare at an artsy restaurant...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOTRmwTQ-Qs>

And even pick up flowers, just before your hot date...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJWNyDEfynE>

After spending a good two hours watching this stuff. I had to head back home and took my leave. Time sure flies when you're having fun.

But Gord sure opened my eyes to what's really going in Ukraine. There's a war on, but everything looks normal. The Ukrainian people are suffering miserably, but most seem to be going about their business like all of us here.

Sure, I can dig up all kinds of videos of suffering and death in Ukraine on Youtube—but how come there are also these other videos? So, which Ukraine is really suffering? Where in Ukraine is the “war” actually happening? Are there two Ukraines, one bucolic and one war-torn? No one seems to be able to tell me. From what we're told over here, all of Ukraine is devastated by the war, except for the Ukraine in these videos. So, they must have two Ukraines. That must be it. One Ukraine for fighting the Red Army, and other other Ukraine for pretty girls to ride around, and all those happy peasants. Yeah, that would make sense. But just to make sure, I'll ask Gord. He'll know what's what. Besides there's still quite a bit of wood waiting to be chopped.

C.B. Forde lives and farms near a small town in Ontario, Canada.

Featured: Apple blossom in Little Russia," by Nikolay Sergeev; painted in 1895.

