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THE BATTLE OF KRUTY: HISTORY, MYTH, AND NATIONAL MEMORY

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The Battle of Kruty, fought on 29 January 1918, occupies a distinctive place in Ukrainian historical consciousness. Despite its limited military scale, it has acquired deep symbolic significance, becoming one of the most powerful narratives of sacrifice, youth, and the struggle for statehood. Over time, Kruty has evolved from a concrete historical episode into a multilayered cultural construct in which history, memory, and myth intersect.

From a scholarly perspective, the Battle of Kruty requires not only factual reconstruction but also critical analysis of the mechanisms through which it was remembered and reinterpreted. Political discourse, literature, and public commemorations have repeatedly reshaped its meaning, with each generation projecting its own anxieties and aspirations onto the event. Kruty thus stands at the intersection of military history and cultural memory, revealing how nations construct meaning out of loss.

The events of January 1918 unfolded during one of the most turbulent periods in Ukrainian history. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire and the revolutions of 1917, Ukraine faced profound political instability. The Ukrainian

Central Rada proclaimed the Ukrainian People's Republic but lacked a stable army, effective state institutions, and reliable international guarantees.

At the same time, Bolshevik forces launched an offensive against Ukraine, advancing toward Kyiv from the northeast. These units, composed of Red Guards, revolutionary soldiers, and sailors, possessed numerical superiority, combat experience, artillery, and armored trains. In this context, the railway station of Kruty, located approximately 130 kilometers northeast of Kyiv, became a defensive point where Ukrainian forces sought to delay the enemy's advance.

The Ukrainian detachment stationed at Kruty numbered approximately 500–600 men. It consisted primarily of cadets from the Bohdan Khmelnytsky Military School, a student volunteer company formed from Kyiv universities, and smaller volunteer units, including Haidamaka formations. Contrary to later mythologized representations of untrained schoolboys, many participants had basic military preparation and understood principles of discipline and defensive warfare.

Nevertheless, the imbalance of forces was decisive. The Ukrainian mission was not to defeat the Bolsheviks but to hold them back as long as possible. This strategic delay, though costly, carried significant political implications.

The battle began in the morning and lasted roughly six hours. Ukrainian forces entrenched themselves along the railway embankment, using the terrain to compensate for their disadvantage. Initial resistance proved effective, and several Bolshevik assaults were repelled. As ammunition supplies dwindled and communication between units deteriorated, however, the situation grew increasingly chaotic.

A critical moment occurred during the Ukrainian withdrawal, when part of the force became isolated. Several dozen soldiers, including students, were captured. Estimates of Ukrainian casualties range from seventy to one hundred killed. The execution of captured students by Bolshevik forces transformed the battle into a deeply traumatic episode and became central to its subsequent memorialization.

From a strictly military perspective, the Battle of Kruty could not prevent the fall of Kyiv, which was soon occupied by Bolshevik troops. Yet its broader strategic impact should not be underestimated. The resistance at Kruty delayed the enemy advance by several days, granting the Ukrainian government vital time to complete diplomatic negotiations.

This delay contributed directly to the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, through which the Ukrainian People's Republic achieved international recognition and secured temporary military assistance. In this sense, the sacrifice at Kruty was not futile but played a tangible role in the short-term political survival of the Ukrainian state.

The emphasis on youth, idealism, and moral purity shaped a narrative that cast Kruty as a Ukrainian equivalent of Thermopylae. This tragic discourse served an important educational function, offering future generations a model of civic virtue grounded in loyalty, sacrifice, and devotion to national independence.

In recent decades, historians have increasingly sought to disentangle myth from historical reality. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that the participants at Kruty were not passive victims but conscious actors operating under extreme constraints. Their actions were shaped by political urgency, limited resources, and the absence of viable alternatives.

This revisionist approach does not diminish the defenders' heroism. Rather, it situates their sacrifice within a more nuanced understanding of state-building under conditions of vulnerability. Kruty thus emerges not only as a symbol of self-sacrifice but also as a lesson in the structural weaknesses of an emerging state.

During the Soviet period, official commemoration of the Battle of Kruty was suppressed, and its memory survived primarily in exile communities and informal cultural transmission. Following Ukraine's restoration of independence, Kruty re-entered public discourse through education, memorial practices, and artistic representation.

Each annual commemoration reopens questions about the meaning of sacrifice, the role of youth in history, and the relationship between myth and historical truth. As a result, Kruty remains a living symbol – one that continues to evolve rather than solidify into a single, fixed interpretation.

The Battle of Kruty transcends the boundaries of conventional military history. It is a narrative through which Ukraine reflects on its past, interrogates its myths, and articulates its values. Its enduring power lies not in the scale of the battle but in its capacity to generate meaning across generations.

For the future of Ukrainian historical memory, Kruty serves as both a warning and a source of inspiration. Approached critically yet respectfully, it remains a point of dialogue between past and future – a reminder that national identity is forged not only through victory, but also through the conscious remembrance of loss.

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HOSPITALITY IN AZERBAIJAN

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Azerbaijan is a nation located at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It has an ancient history, rich culture that has been shaped by numerous civilizations, etc. Probably one of the most significant traditions embedded in the culture of the Azerbaijani people is hospitality. It is worth mentioning that hospitality is not only a tradition in Azerbaijani culture, but it is also part of a