

The vast plain which forms European Russia is bounded on the East by the Ural Mountains and on the West by the Baltic and farther south by the Carpathians. Its northern boundary is the Arctic Ocean, and on the South, the Black and Caspian seas, and the Cau-ca-sus Mountains. This vast body of land does not have an elevation higher than nine hundred feet, at its highest point, at the Valdai Hills, which is the source of many rivers; until the small range which bisects the Crimea in the Black Sea, the southern part of which, is the Florida of Russia.

The Caspian Sea lies below sea level, and is bordered on the north by a considerable desert. From the east to west, across the nation, there is a wedge of heavy black earth, called the Steppes, which produces a rank growth of grass, and which forms the greater part of the tillable land of the country. To the north the soil is poorer, but it has produced great forests. In the earlier period of the country, the rivers were the roads and the inhabitants lived largely in the forests for greater protection.

The Mongol invasions of Europe came over the black earth portion where horses and flocks could find provender, and thus provide sustenance for Huns, Tartars, and many other invaders. Forced to live half hidden in the forests, where the fertility of the soil soon failed, the Russians lived in huts, which could be abandoned and replaced in more promising spots.

Who were these people and from whence did they come? They were Slavs, and seem to have been indigenous. Sir Bernard Pares, professor of Russian History first at the University of Liverpool. and now Honorary Lecturer of the School of Slavonic and East