

IVAN MAZEPA, HETMAN OF UKRAINE

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IN comparison with other Ukrainian historical figures, Ivan Mazepa (1632-1709) is quite well known in other countries. The British Byron, the Russian Pushkin and the Pole Slowacki are among those who wrote about him. The Russian composer Tschaikovsky based an opera on his life. Yet outside of this appearance in literature little is known about him by the general public, even though historical studies and research are far more advanced than they were during the first half of the 18th century, when he was better known. Writers and composers have made of him a romantic figure, with the consequence that it is not generally realized that he was the father of the modern Ukrainian independence movement, the leader of a revolt of Ukraine against Moscow, and the ally of the heroic Charles XII of Sweden.

Authoritative works on the Swedish monarch by such historians as Voltaire or Adlerfeld, have been translated into English, and these represent Mazepa in a true light, but for some reason these books are not widely read and Mazepa is generally remembered only as a hero of romantic episodes.

Mazepa was a typical statesman of the the Baroque Period. He was descended from an old noble Kozak family, Mazepa-Kolodynsky. The ancestral seat was Mazepintsi near Bila Tserkva in Ukraine. The Mazepa family had always been closely attached to the knightly Kozak Host, even during those times when the Ukrainian nobility was allowing itself to become Polonized and was accepting Roman Catholicism in great numbers.

Members of the family took part in many of the bold sea forays by the Kozaks on the Crimean Tartar or Turkish seaports. At various times they joined the revolts against Poland. The father of Ivan, Stephen Mazepa, participated in the great uprising of Bohdan Khmelnytsky against Poland. Yet this did not prevent his son from seeking a royal career at the court of the Polish king, and then, subsequently, entering the Kozak order and rising to the post of Adjutant to Hetman Ivan Samiylovich, whom he eventually succeeded.

The mother of Ivan Mazepa was descended from the Ukrainian

noble-Kozak family of Mokievsky. When she became a widow, she entered a monastery in Kiev. In time she became Mother Superior but that did not prevent her from taking an active interest in the political affairs of her native land or from counselling her son, who was an unusually skilled diplomat. When during the critical periods of his hetmanship, Mazepa needed any moral support and spiritual consolation, he never hesitated to hurry to his mother at the monastery.

Mazepa received his education at the Jesuit college, where he excelled in Latin and acquired the mannerisms of the Baroque style of Jesuit upbringing. This cleared for him the road to the king's court and aided him in his future life. After passing through the diplomatic routine of the Polish court, Mazepa joined the Kozaks and became a supporter of Hetman Peter Doroshenko, who was aspiring to rid Ukraine of both the Muscovian and Polish protectorate and to ally himself with Turkey as the ruler of an independent state.

Under Doroshenko's influence, Mazepa became fired with the same ideal and consequently he joined the opposition to Doroshenko's opponent, Hetman Ivan Samiylovich, who collaborated with Muscovy although he cultivated the interests of Ukraine.

While journeying in 1674 to the Crimea on a mission for Doroshenko, young Mazepa fell into the hands of the Zaporozhian Kozaks, who were then supporters of Samiylovich. The Zaporozhians thereupon sent Mazepa under guard as a gift to Samiylovich, and in this manner the young diplomat found himself in the latter's circle.

Yet despite his general policy Samiylovich, like other patriotic Ukrainians, was finding the Muscovite protectorate over Ukraine intolerable. So it was not long before the former prisoner became a boon companion of Samiylovich, especially since his former protector, Doroshenko, had voluntarily recognized the authority of Samiylovich and together with his followers entered his service.

The peace treaty of 1686 between Poland and Muscovy was a blow to Ukrainian aspirations for independence, as it legalized the partition by these two powers of Ukraine, which had been freed for awhile during Hetman Khmelnitsky's war with both of them. The Kozaks deeply resented this Muscovite perfidy, which in violation of the Pereyaslav Treaty of 1654 now gave to Poland half of Ukraine. Mazepa resented it also, and from this stemmed his eventual tragic end.

In the troubled waters in Ukraine at the time the Muscovite Prince Golytsin fished with good success for himself. He had recently concluded an ill-advised and ill-fated expedition against the Crimean

Tartars. To deflect the Kremlin's wrath he, upon learning of Samiylovich's open dissatisfaction with the treaty, had the hetman arrested, and exiled, where eventually the captive Kozak leader died, while his son was executed by the Muscovites.

The Kozak General Council thereupon elected as Samiylovich's successor his former adjutant Mazepa. Moscow agreed to the election but only with the understanding that Ukrainian rights would continue to be curtailed. Mazepa saw that the gradual absorption of all power in Ukraine by Moscow required him to show outward loyalty to Moscow and at the same time make secret preparations for a war of liberation.

Accordingly it was full two years before Mazepa journeyed to Moscow to make the formal declaration of loyalty to its ruler. The moment he picked, however, was extremely inopportune. It coincided with the time Peter forced his sister Sophia to step down from the throne, and leave him as monarch. Those who had been associated with the former regime, including Golitsin, who was friendly to Mazepa, now fell into disfavor, and new persons came to the helm.

It was a critical period for Mazepa. Nevertheless through his personal charm and magnetism Mazepa managed to win the favor of the new Tsar. As a result Peter brushed aside all charges that Mazepa was at heart an advocate of Ukrainian independence. In fact he even referred these charges to Mazepa himself, so that the latter had the opportunity to settle accounts with his accusers, who were traitors to their country and to strengthen the discipline and loyalty of his followers.

Remembering the unsuccessful efforts of his former commander Doroshenko, Mazepa decided on a different policy and planned to strengthen Ukraine internally, economically and culturally, before coming to grips with Muscovy. Mazepa's overt loyalty to Muscovy, however, awakened opposition to him among the masses in Ukraine, as very few grasped the import of his diplomacy.

In the economic-social sphere, Mazepa endeavored to improve the conditions of the lesser Kozaks so that they would be strong enough to defend themselves against exploitation by the rich Kozak officials of high rank. That his efforts along this line were appreciated can be gleaned from the fact that an attempted revolt by a young Kozak adventurer, Petryk, failed.

Taking advantage of a period of peace, Mazepa initiated valuable advances in the field of culture, art, education, and in the building of churches and institutions of various sorts. He became a patron of the

church not only in Ukraine but in the Near East as well. To him there came for aid and counsel Orthodox ecclesiastics from such Balkan countries as Serbia and Bulgaria and also from Palestine and Syria.

Upon his death, it was revealed that during the twenty-two years period of his hetmanship, Mazepa had expended for religious purposes the sum of 2,340,000 ducats, of which 106,000 went to the Christians of Syria and Palestine. His capital, Baturin, was the mecca for many distinguished visitors from foreign lands who sought his counsel and aid.

In the field of education, Mazepa gave the Ukraine its first university. In 1631 the Kievan metropolitan Peter Mohyla had founded in the capital of Ukraine a Collegium which became the country's educational center. Mazepa expanded it into a real academy, known as the Mohyla-Mazepa Academy. He began the academic buildings with his own funds, but they were not completed during his lifetime until 1740, on account of his revolution against Muscovy. He did manage, however, to enrich the academy library and build its Epiphany Church.

Among those Ukrainian writers and scholars of his time who regarded Mazepa as their patron were Antin Radivylovsky, Athanasiy Zarutsky, Dmytro Tuptalenko-Rostovsky, Stephen Yavorsky, and Theofan Prokopovich. The last three, unfortunately, went to Moscow to help build the Russian empire and spread educational work there.

Ukraine was already well along the road of economic, social and cultural progress, when a new storm broke over Eastern Europe in the form of the Northern War. It was set off by the young eagle of the north, Charles XII of Sweden. Mazepa decided to seize the moment to strike out for Ukrainian national freedom.

The war raged between Russia and Sweden along the shores of the Baltic Sea. To the aid of Russia came Denmark, Saxony, and Poland. With lightning speed Charles attacked Denmark and Saxony and forced them to sue for a separate peace. At Narva he defeated the Russian forces. Then turning his attention toward Poland he also defeated it, forced its king August II to abdicate, and ordered the Polish nobles to elect a new king in his place. Stanislaus Leszczynski was thus elected. This divided Poland into two camps, one favoring the Swedish side, and other the Russian side. The Polish internal conflict left its impact on Ukraine too, for here pro-Swedish elements began to suggest to Mazepa that it was a golden opportunity to free Ukraine of Russian domination.

The Zaporozhian Kozaks, a stronghold of Ukrainian democracy declared war on Russia, for they realized that the defeat of the Russians

would be in line with their interests now. The anti-Russian coalition was joined also by the Kozaks of Polish occupied Ukraine, whose leader, Semen Paliy, called upon Mazepa to unite their section of Ukraine with his.

All these urgings Mazepa accepted with seeming indifference, although he had already decided to join with the Swedes but he feared to disclose his plans prematurely lest they be betrayed. Despite all his precautions, this did take place, through the Advocate Judge General, V. Kotchubey, and Col. S. Iskra, both members of his staff. But the accusations they made against Mazepa were as usually ignored by Tsar Peter, for he still had great faith in the hetman, even at the time when Mazepa was already secretly negotiating with the Swedish king for an alliance and for a clarification of the post-war status of Ukraine as an independent state.

The heads of the Ukrainian traitors rolled to the ground at the very time when Mazepa was openly going over to the Swedish side. One can imagine the feelings of Peter when he finally realized the actual situation.

Undeclared in the North, Charles now made two cardinal blunders, probably from overconfidence. First he delayed too long in entering Ukraine. Secondly he left the main body of his forces under General Loewenhaupt in Byelorussia. Peter seized advantage of this situation immediately. By forced marches into Ukraine he captured the important city of Poltava, created confusion and dissension among the Ukrainians, and neutralized part of the Kozak forces.

The ensuing savage Russian destruction of Baturin, a veritable Lidice of that time, swept the country with fear. Its defense was under the command of Colonel Chechil, a Scotchman in Ukrainian service. The fate of Charles was sealed when his second army, the one he had left under Loewenhaupt, met Peter's forces and was soundly defeated.

In the spring of 1709 the Ukrainians and the Swedes attempted to recapture Poltava. To relieve the beleaguered Russian garrison, Peter rushed down with an army twice the size of the combined Ukrainian-Swedish forces. The good fortune which had attended Charles in Northern and Central Europe now completely deserted him. Peter won the battle of Poltava and the defeated forces had to flee for protection to Moldavia, then under Turkish rule. All Russian efforts to have these Kozaks repatriated were met with a flat refusal by Turkey. In this manner a Ukrainian army found itself outside the borders of Ukraine, and thus became the first group of Ukrainian political emigres.

The aging Mazepa found himself in exile also. His end was near. The elements themselves seemed to sorrow with the old Hetman, for as he lay dying a storm broke out. He stared at a chest containing state documents of his reign in Ukraine, and his last words were: "Guard well this chest." Thus he died in a foreign land although he had hoped to die in a liberated free Ukraine.

Mazepa was placed in a temporary resting place near Bender, a village of Vartnytsia; subsequently his body was transported to St. George's Cathedral in Galatz. Thus the world lost an unusual man, who has left his mark in the history not only of Eastern Europe but of world culture as well. This was the real Mazepa, whose true worth and character is so hard to discern in literature or operas.

Hetman Mazepa was a typical representative of the Baroque epoch. He was a man of unusual erudition, with a strong leaning toward literature and arts. With his command of Latin, his engaging ways, and his keen mind he continued to impress people, like his Swedish allies, up to the very eve of his death.

George Andrew Nordberg, a confidant of Charles, Gustav Adlerfeld, Charles' court historian, and M. Zederhelm, secretary of Charles' field headquarters, are among those who praise Mazepa in their writings as a man of a cosmopolitan outlook and a superior authority on Eastern European affairs.

Mazepa was an unusually gifted and skilled diplomat. The fact that he was able to hide his real aims from Peter until the last possible moment, is some criterion of this. The rage that Peter felt toward Mazepa, when the denouncement finally came, was no doubt due to the deeply injured pride of the Tsar when he realized that he who was sure that he was the greatest living monarch had been so completely deceived.

With the defeat of Mazepa, a wave of terrible persecution was inaugurated by the Russians against his followers. The Tsar's wrath fell on the Mazepa family too. By Tsarist decree the very memory of Mazepa was anathematized in all churches in the Russian Empire, even in the very churches of Ukraine which Mazepa had helped to build.

At a General Assembly the Kozaks elected as a successor to Mazepa, his former trusted chancellor, Philip Orlyk. In exile, Orlyk now became the leader of the party of Ukrainian independence, the so-called Maze-pinists. The first step of the young Hetman was to draft and proclaim the First Ukrainian Constitution (in 1711), written in freedom-loving spirit of the earlier *Magna Charta*.

The primary aim of the vengeful Russians was forcibly to repatriate the Mazepinists, but to no avail. Despite all their diplomatic representations through their embassy in Istanbul, the Russians were unable to prevail upon the Sultan to rescind the right of political asylum he had given to these champions of the Ukrainian cause.

Once a flash of hope appeared before the Mazepinists. Charles XII managed to persuade the Sultan to declare war upon Russia. Victory rode with the Swedish-Turkish alliance, for the Russian Tsar found himself and his army surrounded in an ambush near the Prut river. Only a last minute bribery of the Grand Vizier saved the Russians from the ignominy of defeat and the Tsar from being captured.

The Mazepinists now became the first Ukrainian political emigres. They gradually scattered throughout Turkey and all of Europe, everywhere propagating the justice of the Ukrainian cause.

At every step of the way they were hounded by Tsarist Russian agents, and those who were caught eventually found a lingering death in the Siberian wastes. Those who returned to the Russian enslaved Ukraine soon wished they had not done so, for they were punished for the "betrayal" of Mazepa.

The personality of Mazepa was indeed unusual and dynamic. It is no wonder that he became the subject of works of literature and music. In writing about this particular period in Ukrainian history, Voltaire characterized the people of Ukraine as men who have always striven for national freedom and Mazepa was the finest representative of Ukraine's aspirations and ideals.

The term "Mazepinist" was intended by the Russians, in their application of it to Ukrainian patriots, as one of derogation. The Ukrainians, however, never have considered it thus but have made it one of honor, just as once "beggar" was the symbol of the Dutch patriots revolting against the tyranny of Spain.

This, then, is a true picture of Mazepa as he really was over two hundred years ago. He was a character of compelling power, not because of any romantic incidents, but because of his resolute will to win for his people liberation and freedom.