



---

Şahin Girey, the Reformer Khan, and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea

Author(s): Alan W. Fisher

Source: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Bd. 15, H. 3 (SEPTEMBER 1967), pp. 341-364

Published by: [Franz Steiner Verlag](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41043307>

Accessed: 11-01-2016 09:18 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Franz Steiner Verlag* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## **Şahin Girey, the Reformer Khan, and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea**

### **I. The Establishment of the Independent Crimea**

The transformation of the Russian state into a far-flung multinational empire has scarcely received the attention that it warrants. In recent years Soviet scholars have become more interested in this problem and have been working hard to distinguish Russian imperialism under the Tsars from that of the western European states. Western scholars interested in the Russian Empire, on the other hand, have generally fallen into two camps: one which accepts the Soviet interpretations of either "the lesser evil" formula or the theory of positive benefits to the subjected nationalities; or one which severely criticizes Russian expansion into non-Slavic areas which were not historical parts of early Russian states. Little emphasis from either the Soviets or the West has been placed upon the actual methods utilized or the contemporary causes and justifications given for Russian expansion.

The Russian annexation of the Crimea in 1783 is a case in point. Both supporters and critics of Russian imperialism make such generalizations as the statement that the incorporation of the Crimea into Russia was an integral part of a larger "Greek Project" formulated as early as 1779<sup>1</sup>, or the claim that Catherine accomplished "the recovery of fertile lands lost to Asiatic invaders since the days of the Kievan State"<sup>2</sup>. BORIS NOLDE included the topic of Crimean annexation within the broader framework of the building of the whole Russian Empire<sup>3</sup>. But Nolde was content to follow the works of the nineteenth century Russian scholar SMIRNOV and the German scholar ZINKEISEN and provided little more than a sketch of events rather than an analysis of reasons for and methods of the annexation.

Recent publications by two German scholars concern the problem of colonization by Russians in the southern steppe region during this period, and the remarkable rise in importance of the city of Cherson on the frontiers of the Crimean state during its period of independence. And finally the Soviet scholar E. I. DRUŽININA has devoted two monographs to the study of the northern Black Sea coast in the late eighteenth century. She was able to touch only partially on the Crimean Tatars themselves since this people has become a "non-people" after World War II. No use of Ottoman Turkish sources has yet been made on the question of the Crimean annexation, although Turkish and French scholars are now beginning to use these sources for other aspects of Russian-Turkish relations<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> MICHAEL T. FLORINSKY *Russia: A History and Interpretation*. New York 1947, vol. 1, pp. 527—528. The author wishes to thank the U.S. Office of Education for making possible his stay in Istanbul during the summer of 1965 through their grant of a Fulbright-Hays fellowship. He wishes to express his appreciation to the government of the Republic of Turkey for granting him permission to work in the Başbakanlık Arşivi in Istanbul, to Dr. Midhat Sertoğlu, its director, and to Mr. Turgut İşıksal, a member of his staff, for their valuable help in locating documents and for aid in deciphering difficult handwritings.

<sup>2</sup> NICHOLAS V. RIASANOVSKY *A History of Russia*. New York 1963, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> BORIS NOLDE *La Formation de l'Empire russe. Études, notes et documents*. Vol. 1—2. Paris 1952—1953; here vol. 2, pp. 115—195.

<sup>4</sup> V. D. SMIRNOV *Krymskoe chanstvo pod verhovenstvom Ottomanskoj Porty v XVIII*

The question of why Russia annexed the Crimea in 1783 awaits a satisfactory answer. Those who believe that Catherine had planned the annexation already in 1779 are hard pressed to explain the rather "soft" policy of Russia prior to 1782. The evidence suggests that Catherine tried desperately to create and sustain the Crimea as an independent state following the Russo-Turkish war of 1774 and that it was only after every possible means (in Russian eyes) of establishing Şahin Girey as an autocratic and independent sovereign had been exhausted that Catherine carried out "the final solution" to the Tatar problem.

Until the mid-eighteenth century the Russians had looked upon the Crimean Tatars as a rather strong and unified vassal state of the Ottoman Porte. Russian and western commentators had always been impressed by the large number of troops which the Khan had at his disposal and considered that all of the Tatar raids and military actions were instigated solely by the Khan or his superior, the Ottoman Sultan. They did not take into consideration the real disunity within the Khanate, the vast difference between the settled Crimean Tatars and the nomadic Nogais, the conflicts between the authority of the Khan and the power of the large noble families. Although there had always been deep problems arising between these various forces within the Khanate, the Russians had never sought to take advantage of them — this in the face of the great success they had had in their policies of subversion within the Kazañ Khanate two hundred years before.

It was General Peter Panin, in 1768 and 1769, who for the first time conceived of the idea of choosing one of these internal Crimean elements and using it to establish a state independent of the Porte and friendly to Russia. He chose the large Nogai hordes

---

stoletii. Odessa 1889; JOHANN WILHELM ZINKEISEN *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches in Europa*. Vol. 1—7. Hamburg 1840—1863; here vol. 5 and vol. 6; E. I. DRUŽININA *Kjučuk-Kajnardžijskij mir 1774 goda*. Moscow 1955, and *Severnoe Pričernomofe v 1775—1800 gg*. Moscow 1959; The Turkish scholar, AKDES NİMET KURAT has written an important two volume history of the Pruth campaign making use of Turkish as well as Russian sources, "Prut seferi ve barişi." Ankara 1951—1953. His conclusions appear in his article "Der Prutfeldzug und der Prutfrieden von 1711," in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*. N. F. Vol. 10 (1962) pp. 13—66. The German works on the subject are: HANS HALM *Gründung und erstes Jahrzehnt von Festung und Stadt Cherson*. Wiesbaden 1961, particularly pp. 66—94; and HANS AUERBACH *Die Besiedlung der Südukraine in den Jahren 1774—1787*. Wiesbaden 1965, particularly pp. 79—115. Two French scholars, Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemer cier-Quelquejay, have not only been using Ottoman sources in their studies of Russian-Ottoman relations, but have been publishing in translation some of the documents which they have discovered in the Istanbul archives: BENNIGSEN *Un mouvement populaire au Caucase au XVIIIe siècle*, in: *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* vol. 5, no. 2 (1964) pp. 159—197; LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY *La Russie, La France et la Turquie à la veille de la Campagne de Russie*, un document inédit des archives de l'Empire Ottoman, in: *Cahiers* vol. 6, no. 2 (1965) pp. 240—244; LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY *Document inédit sur la campagne de Pierre le Grand au Caucase*, in: *Cahiers* vol. 6, no. 1 (1965) pp. 139—142; LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY *Les Kalmuks de la Volga entre l'Empire Russe et l'Empire Ottoman sous le règne de Pierre le Grand (d'après les documents des Archives Ottomanes)*, in: *Cahiers* vol. 7, no. 1 (1966) pp. 63—72. Perhaps even more valuable to the scholar has been their work in preparing guides to the archives and libraries of Turkey in so far as they contain material for the study of Russia: LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY *Notice sur quelques manuscrits historiques turcs concernant la Russie se trouvant dans les bibliothèques publiques d'Istanbul*, in: *Cahiers* vol. 6, no. 2 (1965) pp. 264—278; LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY *Les bibliothèques et les archives de Turquie en tant que sources de documents sur l'histoire de Russie*, in: *Cahiers* vol. 5, no. 1 (1964) pp. 105—140

which roamed the steppe of the north-western shore of the Black Sea [the *Bucak*]<sup>5</sup>. But the war of 1768–1774 went very badly for the Tatars and Panin's scheme was not necessary at this time to apply pressure on the Bahçesaray government. The Crimeans surrendered to the Russians in 1771 and negotiations proceeded for a Russo-Tatar treaty.

With the Russian army occupying the whole Crimean peninsula it would have been an easy matter to annex the area then and there. But in 1770, the Russian State Council had issued a policy statement, at Catherine's request, which set forth the Russian aim of creating an independent state of the Tatars<sup>6</sup>. Catherine had felt that "the Tatars could never become useful subjects of Her Imperial Majesty, that they would form a poor defense on the frontier against their co-religionists, the Turks, and they were not in the habit of paying the *podat*"<sup>7</sup>.

Although by no means all of the Tatars were enthusiastic about severing ties with the Ottoman Porte, one individual recognized that Russian power was going to prevail in the Crimea, and began to cooperate with the inevitable victor. This person was Şahin Girey Sultan, a member of the royal family of the Crimea, and the *serasker* [Khan's representative] for the Nogai hordes. Şahin accepted the statements set forth in Dolgorukij's manifesto to the Crimeans in 1771 which said that "as *Cingiziye* [i. e. under Chingis Khan] you were independent; now you are under the rule of the Ottoman state; their Sultans appoint and depose Khans as they do their own *valis* [governors]. If you act in conjunction with us, we will provide you with your former independence"<sup>8</sup>.

A delegation of Tatars led by Şahin Girey proceeded to St. Petersburg in November, 1771, to arrange the formal treaty. Apparently Catherine was quite impressed by the young Tatar leader. Besides being very handsome, he had had a rich background, having gone to Venice as a boy to learn Italian where he acquired European tastes and habits<sup>9</sup>. In a letter to Voltaire, Catherine said of Şahin, "ce jeune prince tartare est d'un caractère doux; il a de l'esprit, il fait des vers arabes; il ne manque aucun spectacle; il s'y plait, il va à ma communauté les dimanches après dîner, lorsqu'il est permis d'y entrer pendant une heure pour voir danser les demoiselles"<sup>10</sup>. Taking into consideration the great hopes which the Empress was to place in Şahin during the next ten years, in spite of his many failures, one is forced to conclude that she had become infatuated with him at this, their first encounter. Catherine was to display many

<sup>5</sup> A. SKAL'KOVSKIY O Nogajskich tatarach živuščich v Tavričeskoj gubernii, in: *Žurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosvetščeniia* vol. 40, no. 11 (1843) pp. 117–120. The author's transliteration of Turkish terms (place names, personal names, administrative terms) has followed those used in *Imlâ Kilavuzu*. 5th ed., published by the Türk Tarih Kurumu in Ankara. Thus 'c' and 'ç' have been used to denote the sounds 'j' in jelly and 'ch' in church respectively; 'ş' for 'sh' in shout; and 'ğ' for the soft Turkish 'g'.

<sup>6</sup> *Archiv Gosudarstvennago Soveta* vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) pp. 43–46; hereafter AGS.

<sup>7</sup> *Vysočajšie reskripty Imperatricy Ekateriny II*, in: *Čtenija v Moskovskom obščestve istorii i drevnostej rossijskich pri Moskovskom universitetě* vol. 79 (1871) p. 1; hereafter *Čtenija*.

<sup>8</sup> M. NURİ PAŞA Netaic-ül-vukuat [The Results of Events], (Istanbul, Beyazit Library manuscript no. 594) vol. 1, p. 50. ZINKEISEN (*Geschichte* vol. 5, p. 953) mentions Şahin at this early date, but confuses him with the Şirin Bey, the leader of the Crimean noble faction.

<sup>9</sup> F. LAŠKOV Şagin-Girej, poslednij krymskij chan, in: *Kievskaja Starina* (September 1866) p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Sbornik imperatorskogo Russkogo istoričeskogo obščestva* vol. 13 (1874) p. 227, hereafter SIRIO.

examples of her political cleverness in dealing with the Tatars, but her great admiration for Şahin was to negate much of her accomplishment in the Crimea in the years to come.

Representing the Crimean Khan Sahip Girey, Şahin and the other Tatar deputies in St. Petersburg concluded the Treaty of Karasu Bazaar with the Russian government in November, 1772<sup>11</sup>. The treaty established an alliance and eternal friendship between the Russian Empire and the new Tatar state (called the "Tatar Oblast" in Russian sources) without compromising the latter's religion, laws, or independence. The Khan was to hold all administrative power and was to be freely elected by the whole Tatar population, a procedure in which neither Russia nor the Porte could interfere.

After signing the Treaty, Şahin returned to the Crimea with a charter from the Empress for the new Tatar state. Upon leaving Catherine presented him with a gold sword and a large amount of money to show her gratitude for his cooperation<sup>12</sup>. Şahin settled in Akmeçet, the traditional home of the second ranking Tatar official [the *Kalga*], where his palace became a second home for the Russians in the Crimea. He held frequent secret meetings with Russian officials and as early as mid-1773 was mentioned as a candidate for the Crimean throne<sup>13</sup>.

Both Catherine and the Khan Sahip Girey appeared completely satisfied with the new political arrangement, but for reasons misunderstood by the Russians it was not to last for long. Although the Ottoman Empire had been thoroughly defeated by 1772–1773, it was still able to exert great pressures on Crimean events through those elements which remained dissident in the Crimea. By 1772, a large Tatar exile community had congregated in Istanbul, made up of former Khans and their retinues and other officials who had fled during the war<sup>14</sup>. These exiles provided the Ottomans with a never ending supply of willing agents to be sent to the Crimea and the Kubań and applied pressure on the Ottoman government to hold a firm line in negotiations with the Russians for an end to the war<sup>15</sup>.

The Ottomans began as early as 1771 to send agents into the Kubań to incite the Tatars against Russia and against those Tatars who showed a willingness to cooperate with the aggressors. In early 1772 they assigned one of the exiles, Mehmet Girey Sultan, to the Kubań with instructions to prevent the signing of a treaty with the Russians. And in 1773 the Porte made its most threatening move by sending the former Khan Devlet Girey to Soğucuk, a Turkish fort on the Kubań frontier<sup>16</sup>.

These agents were successful in persuading one group of Nogais to disregard the Karasu Bazaar agreement and enticed them to "elect" a *serasker* who would not be under the Khan's authority. Nikita Panin expressed alarm at this new and unexpected develop-

<sup>11</sup> Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. First Series. Vol. 19 (1830) no. 13943; hereafter PSZ. The text of this treaty is well analyzed in: ZINKEISEN Geschichte vol. 5, pp. 59–61.

<sup>12</sup> Dva piśma grafa N. I. Panina k knjazju V. M. Dolgorukovu-krymskomu, in: Archiv knjazja Voroncova vol. 26 (1882) pp. 92–101.

<sup>13</sup> N. MURZAKEVIČ Materialy dlja istorii novorossijskago kraja, in: Zapiski imperatorskago Odesskago obščestva istorii i drevnostej vol. 8 (1872) p. 183; hereafter ZOÖID. AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) p. 251.

<sup>14</sup> AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye [Turkish Prime Ministry Archives. Cevdet classification. Foreign Affairs] nos. 4298, 5420, 5081.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem nos. 407, 3461, 5388.

ment, and ordered Russian officers in the Kubañ to incline the new *serasker* towards accepting the Khan's authority<sup>17</sup>. Troubles were brewing in Bahçesaray as well and suddenly the Khan Sahip Girey arrested Veselickij, Russian resident at the Tatar court, and seemed ready to tear up the Russo-Tatar treaty of 1772<sup>18</sup>. Catherine immediately ordered Şahin to flee the Crimea to Poltava where she could guarantee his personal safety<sup>19</sup>. It appeared that all was not going well with the new independent Crimean state.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed by Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1774 seemed to settle once and for all the question of the Crimea and its independence. But the Ottoman retention of Ūzi [Očakov] at the mouth of the Dnepr and the religious relations established between the Sultan and the new state were to complicate what Russia hoped would be the final solution to her southern boundary question.

It should not have been much of a surprise that the Ottomans held fast on the question of Ūzi. This fort had always been of great importance in their administration of the northern Ottoman provinces and after they had abandoned any hope of keeping Azak [Azov], Ūzi became doubly important<sup>20</sup>. Its strategic importance was great because it effectively prevented Russian access to the Black Sea from the Dnepr and Bug rivers even though Russia had received Kilburun [Kinburn] in the Crimea.

Religious sovereignty of the Sultan over the Crimea was even more important. Although the Treaty of Karasu Bazaar had given the Tatars independence so far as the Russians were concerned, this independence was now limited to the civil and political spheres. The Ottomans considered the investiture of a political leader as a religious matter and persuaded the Russian diplomats to include this in the new treaty<sup>21</sup>.

However the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca left several questions unanswered. No provision was made to define the methods for the election of Khans or for their retirement from office. No thought at all had been given to the means by which the Khan would exercise autocratic authority in a state made up of strong elements unwilling to abdicate their power and influence. The treaty provided only the barest skeleton of a governmental organization. Although great changes in administration would be required no guidelines were created. In addition to these problems, the Russian resident had been imprisoned in Bahçesaray and the Crimean government was suddenly at odds with the Russians. There was no reason for optimism from either Russian, Ottoman, or Crimean parties that this political arrangement was to be a lasting one.

Catherine decided to take no chances with the future of this independent government and even before the treaty defining Turkish and Russian relations with the new Tatar state was ratified, she began to plan the establishment of a Russian puppet government for the Crimea. Her choice for its leader was Şahin Girey who was safely hidden away in Poltava<sup>22</sup>. The new plan was really only a return to P. Panin's proposals of

<sup>17</sup> AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) pp. 207, 259, 262; SIRIO vol. 118 (1904) pp. 287, 387, 485, 489.

<sup>18</sup> Piśmo Semena Dement'eva k knjazju Vasiliju Michajloviču Dolgorukomu, in: Moskvitjanin vol. 13 (1854) pp. 33–35.

<sup>19</sup> AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) pp. 258–259; SIRIO vol. 118 (1904) p. 470.

<sup>20</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi. Hatt-i hümayun [Imperial Rescripts] no. 712; Cevdet Tasnifi. Askerî [Military Affairs] nos. 1584, 1635, 13587, 22470.

<sup>21</sup> Kjučuk-Kajnardžijskij mir, in: Russkij archiv no. 10 (1879) pp. 141–149.

<sup>22</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) pp. 47–50, 101–102.



1770, namely the creation of a Nogai Tatar state independent of Bahçesaray and dependent upon Russia for money and protection<sup>23</sup>. In late October, 1774, the Russian State Council announced its support for this new "independent Tatar state." It was to be under the authority of its own Khan and would possess the same powers given to the Bahçesaray government at Küçük Kaynarca. Şahin would be "elected" Khan by the Kubañ Tatars with the aid of 100 000 rubles which he would divide among the Nogai leaders. The Council agreed that Şahin "would forever be indebted to us for establishing him as Khan, and under him the Tatars will always be independent of the Porte" <sup>24</sup>.

The Nogai chief Can Mambet Bey had for several years been on good terms with the Russians and felt slighted that he had not been chosen as the Russian candidate<sup>25</sup>. But Catherine was pleasantly surprised to learn that in early 1775, Şahin and Can Mambet Bey had come to an agreement whereby the Nogais would submit to Şahin in return for most of the 100 000 rubles<sup>26</sup>.

The Porte had immediately sent its investiture [*teşrifat*] for Khan Sahip Girey in 1774, but Ottoman involvement with the Tatar exiles had developed further than they had anticipated<sup>27</sup>. Devlet's "uprising" in the Kubañ had not materially affected the outcome of the war. But this former Khan had gathered considerable support there and in late April, 1775, he invaded the Crimea. He had persuaded conservative Tatars that Sahip's administration had "capitulated to the infidels" in spite of the fact that Sahip had imprisoned Veselickij and had received the *teşrifat* from Istanbul<sup>28</sup>.

Although Russia did not welcome Devlet any more than did the Porte, Catherine decided to recognize him as Khan, at least for the present<sup>29</sup>. Şçerbinin, one of Catherine's advisers on Tatar affairs, had an audience with him in June, 1775, in which he addressed him as "Your Excellency Devlet Girey Khan"<sup>30</sup>. This formal recognition did not prevent Catherine from striving for his overthrow, for with good reason she did not trust Devlet as someone who would maintain a state friendly towards Russia.

In the Kubañ Şahin wasted no time in preparing to strengthen his "Khanate." He proposed an attack against the Ottoman fort on the Tamañ peninsula. The Crimean government had theoretically received Tamañ in 1774, but the Ottomans had not

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem pp. 52—53.

<sup>24</sup> AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) p. 293.

<sup>25</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) pp. 299—300.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem vol. 135, p. 337.

<sup>27</sup> MUSTAFA PAŞA Netaic-ül-vukuat [The Result of Events]. Istanbul 1909, vol. 4, pp. 8—9. "Since the Tatar peoples were independent, according to the requirements of the Kaynarca treaty, they could select whomever they wanted as Khan, and after the treaty was signed, the Crimean clergy and notables chose Sahip Girey for the office of Khan... The Sultan, the Caliph of Islam, sent to the above-mentioned Khan the investiture and various necessities for it."

<sup>28</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) pp. 71, 207—208. M. S. ANDERSON intimates that this invasion was a Turkish one, but in fact the Turks neither sponsored it nor were they happy to see it occur, in: *The Eastern Question* (London 1966) p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) p. 394. Contemporary Turkish chroniclers called Devlet a "malignant" influence in Tatar history. AHMET RESMÎ EFENDÎ Hülâsat-ül-ihitibar [Summaries of Opinions]. Istanbul 1890.

<sup>30</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) p. 394.

removed their garrison. Devlet had requested that the Turks remain until the Russians had completely evacuated their armies, and as Catherine was keeping troops with Şahin in the Kubañ his arguments were not without foundation. But the Turkish garrison was small and Şahin knew that if he could capture Tamañ he would have a clear road to the Crimea itself and could more easily communicate with dissident elements on the peninsula<sup>31</sup>.

While organizing Şahin's administration in the Kubañ, the Russians prepared strong military concentrations along their southern frontiers bordering on the Perekop line of defense in the Crimea. General Prozorovskij took command of this operation. Catherine commented that "Our affairs in the Crimean peninsula have fallen into such disorder that We find it necessary to take forceful measures this autumn to preserve the dignity and honor of Our Empire"<sup>32</sup>. Plans were thus made for another invasion of the Crimea "to restore order."

In late 1775, Devlet felt himself in a threatened position. In an attempt to strengthen his grip on the throne and to prevent a new Russian-sponsored "election," the Khan asked permission from the Porte to make his office an hereditary one. The Ottomans quite naturally refused to agree to a change which would nullify any small advantage which they had in the right of investiture. However, for this very reason the Russians felt it a good idea particularly because they planned that Şahin would be Khan before it could take effect<sup>33</sup>. The Ottomans had long exercised hereditary rights to their own throne but this practice had never taken hold in the Crimea. Although members of the Girey family had always occupied the throne, their family was very large. The various elements of Crimean society had never been willing to renounce their right to help determine who would ascend the throne. In fact, no Khan before Devlet had ever had the audacity to suggest such a radical change. His last ditch effort in no small way helped Şahin's pro-Russian party gain support among some of the native noble families.

Elements in St. Petersburg were applying much pressure for a more aggressive Crimean policy. Many had resented N. Panin's "soft" policy towards the Tatars and had never felt that the creation of an independent Tatar state had been in Russia's interest. Chief spokesman for the "hawks" was Prince Aleksandr Bezborodko. In mid-1776 he presented a treatise to Catherine in which he reminded her of all of Russia's claims against the Tatars. Perhaps he went a bit too far in arguing that Russia had been subjected to disgraces at the hands of the Tatars since the Polovcy attacks in 967. He praised Ivan IV who "knew well the customs of these treacherous and changeable tatars . . . He knew that the only means of ridding himself of the danger of the Kazañ Tatars had been to take their kingdom under his control"<sup>34</sup>. Bezborodko argued that Russia must follow Tsar Ivan's lead with the Crimean Tatars. But Catherine was not

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem pp. 299—300, 345—346, 350—351; AGS vol. 1, no. 1 (1869) p. 309.

<sup>32</sup> SIRIO vol. 135 (1911) p. 441.

<sup>33</sup> SIRIO vol. 6 (1871) pp. 353—354.

<sup>34</sup> N. GRIGOROVİČ Kancler knjaž Aleksandr Andreevič Bezborodko v svjazi s sobytijami ego vremeni, in: SIRIO vol. 26 (1879) Priloženie 5, pp. 339—370. ZINKERSEN (Geschichte vol. 6, p. 170) makes a good case for calling the two parties in Russia, the ministerial party led by Panin which wanted "peace" and the court party led by Potemkin which wanted forceful action.



persuaded yet to annex the area. She considered that a government in the Crimea friendly to Russia would be gain enough.

On November 21, 1776, Prozorovskij at the head of 14 500 troops took the Tatar stronghold of Or [Perekop] and met no resistance<sup>35</sup>. The road was now open to Bahçesaray from the north. Prozorovskij had been enjoying considerable success in creating a movement within the Crimea which favored for various reasons the expulsion of Devlet. Reports came out of the peninsula that "the whole of Crimean society is awaiting the arrival of Şahin from the Kubañ. Many want him as their Khan"<sup>36</sup>. Many of the nobles had resented Devlet's attempt to make his throne hereditary and now pledged their allegiance to Şahin. At the same time hundreds of nobles were fleeing to Istanbul<sup>37</sup>. It is probable that the nobles harbored no illusions as to Şahin's future independence from the Russians. But they had real grievances against Devlet and hoped that under a new Khan they would regain their influence in internal administration. Devlet had relied solely upon his partisans within the Girey family and upon the clergy [*ulema*] for his governmental positions, and had held no *divans* [councils] in which the nobles had always enjoyed considerable power. They felt that if Şahin gained the throne it would be due as much to their support as to that of the Russians on the border. Both Crimean nobles and the Russians believed that Şahin would act as their puppet, and both were to be sadly mistaken.

Devlet saw the handwriting on the wall and fled to Istanbul in April, 1777. The Porte assigned him a residence in the Ottoman capital where he remained until his death four years later<sup>38</sup>. Nothing remained now which could prevent Şahin's triumphant entry into the Crimea to ascend the throne of the Khans of *Cingiziye*. The Russians who had participated in this "election" congratulated each other on their success. Prozorovskij wrote to Rumjancev that "Şahin's mounting the throne gives glory to your name which brought union, peace, and quiet to this country." Panin congratulated Catherine on the success of this "lawful election in which the Ottomans would be able to find no Russian interference and which preserved Tatar independence under their autocratic Khan"<sup>39</sup>.

The Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamit I is reported to have said when he heard news of Şahin's victory that "Şahin is a tool of the Russians who have the intention of capturing the whole Crimea"<sup>40</sup>. The first period of Tatar independence had come to an inglorious end. Elements within the Crimea which refused to accept a government subservient to Russia were too strong to permit Sahip Girey a long tenure of office.

<sup>35</sup> N. F. DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie Kryma k Rossii. Reskripty, pişma, relacii, doneşenija*. St. Petersburg 1885—1889; here vol. 1, pp. 116—117, 151. ANDERSON feels that a Russo-Turkish war was imminent at this point and was staved off only through the efforts of the French ambassador in Istanbul (The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1783—1784, in: *The Slavonic and East European Review* vol. 37, no. 88 [1958—1959] p. 17).

<sup>36</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 1, pp. 80—81.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 1, pp. 64—68, 72; Başbakanlık Arşivi. Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye nos. 3979, 5654, 6007, 6093, 6295.

<sup>38</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 1, pp. 269—271, 376; Başbakanlık Arşivi. Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye nos. 5845, 5890, 6087.

<sup>39</sup> *Çtenija* vol. 96, part 1 (1876) p. 116; Pişma grafa N. I. Panina k imperatrice Ekaterine Velikoj, in: *Arhiv knjazja Voroncova* vol. 26 (1882) p. 153.

<sup>40</sup> I. H. UZUNÇARŞILI *Osmanli tarihi* [Ottoman History]. Ankara 1956, vol. 4, part 1, p. 446.

The Porte's candidate 'Devlet' proved to be an incompetent leader and had not been able to gain the necessary support from the Nogais or the nobles. The Russians played the game as professionals and successfully guided Şahin's every move.

## II. The Khanate of Şahin Girey

Şahin Girey assumed the reins of power in early April, 1777. After ruling for only six months he experienced a full-scale insurrection which spread from one end of his state to the other and to which every part of Tatar society gave full support. It was to be a completely internal revolt against Şahin's reforms and his projects for a radical change in the administrative system of the new Crimean state.

Şahin realized that in the past the Khan had not possessed sufficient authority to govern effectively. He had observed the power which belonged to the Russian Empress while he had been in St. Petersburg and understood politics well enough to know the basic weakness of the Khan's office. The Khan had been completely subjected to the whim of the great noble families when he had wanted to raise an army. His income to a great extent had been dependent upon the generosity of the Ottoman Sultans, and now that the Crimea was no longer an Ottoman vassal, the Khan did not have access to the large sums of money necessary for "gifts" which would influence those groups upon whom he depended. Most of the Crimean lands were in the hands of the nobles and the clergy. But in spite of Şahin's correct analysis of the need for reform he was unable to recognize the fact that there were limitations which would not permit him to carry out his projects. A weak executive always has a difficult time in introducing reforms, particularly when the desired result is an increase in executive power.

The most serious problem, and the first which Şahin tackled, was the method of succession to the throne. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca had established in the new Khanate the traditional way of choosing a successor to the Khan — election by the "people." This of course meant the aristocracy, both secular and clerical, and this was as it had always been. But now the Ottomans no longer had the opportunity of participating in the selection of the Khan and were limited to a perfunctory approval of the election once held. Thus the nobles and the clergy had received even more power than they had had before the war. The office of Khan was completely subjected to their whims and fancies. The solution found at Küçük Kaynarca thus established an unstable situation and an inherently weak Khan.

Even Devlet Girey, upon whose political wisdom one cannot place a high value, had recognized this basic flaw in the Khan's power and had tried to persuade the Porte to grant him a hereditary throne. But the stiff resistance of the nobles and the advent of the Russian candidate had ended his reign before he could implement this change. Now, immediately upon ascending the throne, Şahin announced the creation of a hereditary Khanate. The oath of allegiance taken by "all beys, mirzas, and agas" granted to the Khan a hereditary throne. "Since elections of Khans in the future will undoubtedly cause division and quarrels among us, we wish that the ruling Khan will choose from among his sons the one who will inherit the throne"<sup>41</sup>. One might be surprised that

<sup>41</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 1, pp. 498 — 499.

those who had opposed Devlet on this question should now support Şahin's request, but later events were to show that not all of the notables had signed this oath as reported by Prozorovskij. Rumjancev gave Russian approval to this change as Catherine wanted a strong Crimean central government with a strong sovereign so that there would be a more stable regime on her southern frontier<sup>42</sup>.

Under Devlet's regime, the *divan* had never met and he had kept council with only a few of his close associates. Şahin now expressed dissatisfaction with this organ's traditional composition. In the past the *divan* had included representatives of the central administration, nobles, and clergy. It had never been a creature of the Khan's own making and had been a center for opposition. The new Khan reinstated the *divan* as a regular part of his administration but appointed only members of the two most powerful noble families, the Şirins and the Mansurs, who had initially given support for his candidacy<sup>43</sup>.

Şahin also chose leaders for his religious administration from among those few *ulema* who had not opposed his rise to power. He convened a meeting of his new *mufti*, *kadiasker*, and *kadis* and posed three questions: 1. may one become Khan without being appointed by the Sultan? 2. may one fight against the Ottoman army? 3. may one request help from the Russian Empire against the Ottoman Sultan? They gave affirmative answers to all three questions and it was readily apparent that Catherine had no need to fear any Crimean-Turkish relations so long as Şahin was Khan<sup>44</sup>.

Şahin retained the provincial administration which he had inherited. Formerly there had been six *beyliks* [provinces] each under the authority of a semi-independent *bey*, and each had represented the lands of one of the four large noble families, the Khan's lands, and those belonging to the Ottoman Sultan. When the Porte lost its towns, Şahin received these as well. The new Khan changed the name, however, from *beylik* to *kaimakamlik*. In the Ottoman administration a *kaimakam* was a deputy of the sovereign while a *bey* was more independent. This change fit well into Şahin's concept of an autocratic ruler<sup>45</sup>.

A second major reform which Şahin projected was a complete renovation of the Crimean military establishment. In the former Khanates, the Khan had been totally dependent upon the good will of the nobles to provide troops for his army. His own personal guard had been made up of Ottoman janissaries whose commander was the Turkish *ordu ağasi* in Kefe. The Ottomans had used these janissaries more often to depose Khans or to keep them in line than to protect the Khan from native hostile elements.

While Şahin was in the Kubań he had tried to create a new elite guard made up of cavalry trained and armed in the European fashion. But this force which he called *beğlis* had not shown any great skill in the battle for Tamań when the Turkish com-

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem vol. 1, p. 596.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem vol. 1, pp. 597—599; LAŠKOV Şagin Girej p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> AZAŘJA ILLIA Sobytiya slučivšiesja v Krymu v carstvovanie Şagin Gireja Chana (perevod s sovremennoj Evrejskoj rukopisi), in: Vremennik imperatorskago Moskovskago obščestva istorii i drevnostej rossijskich vol. 24 (1854) p. 115.

<sup>45</sup> Baron IGEL'STROM Opisanie tavrčeskoj oblasti i Kryma, in: A. SKAL'KOVSKIJ Zanjatie Kryma v 1783 g. Materialy dlja istorii Novorossijskago kraja, published in: Žurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosvěščenija vol. 30, no. 2 (1841) pp. 9—11. Igel'strom prepared this report in 1783 for Potemkin on the basis of information which he had received from Şahin's officials.

mander had been able to rout them with only a handful of janissaries who were trained and armed in the old Ottoman fashion. However Şahin stuck to a decision once made and decided that if he was to be an autocrat, he needed a regular army not subject to the decisions of the nobles. He proposed to Prozorovskij the establishment of a 20 000 men regular army to include 1000 elite *beşlis* and 2000 *sekbans* [Crimean janissaries]. The Russian general thought the idea ridiculous. Şahin's treasury was not rich enough to support such a large number, the supply of Tatar professional officers was non-existent, and even an army of 20 000 could not defend the new state against any one of its neighbors should the need arise. Russia herself had promised full protection for Şahin and his government and Prozorovskij thought this to be sufficient<sup>46</sup>. But for good reasons, Şahin did not trust the nobles to give continued support for his regime and proceeded to "call up" a regular army. With the aid of the 800 *beşlis* already in his service he conscripted several thousand Tatar youths. They were required to wear western military dress (presumably furnished by the Russian army still in the Crimea) and began to drill in the way Şahin had observed Russian guard units training in St. Petersburg. The Khan attempted to organize the new soldiers in the Russian manner: in thousands and hundreds<sup>47</sup>.

For the Tatars the most startling aspect of the military reform was the Khan's order to place Christian Crimeans alongside of the Muslims in the new regular units<sup>48</sup>. This complaint, together with the fact that he was forcing Muslims to wear "infidel clothes" was to give the Tatar exiles in Istanbul foundation for their calls for Ottoman intervention. The Ottomans themselves, twenty years later under Sultan Selim III were to try to establish its own *nizam-i cedid* [new order] army on western models.

Another reform equally disturbing for the Tatars was Şahin's attempted reorganization of the Crimean land and tax system. His initial action involved the seizure of those lands [*vakf*] belonging to the religious institutions and under the control of the clergy and to hand them over to the peasants who worked them<sup>49</sup>. The areas belonging to the *ulema* were not inconsiderable as there were over 1400 mosques in the Crimea and each had its lands which paid for its upkeep<sup>50</sup>. Şahin appropriated for the state the former Ottoman lands on the southern shore and created from these the new *kaima-kamlık* of Kefe<sup>51</sup>.

Most importantly the new Khan instituted a graduated tax levied equally upon all Crimean citizens. The former Khans had received no income from that large portion of the Tatars who were vassals of the nobles. The new tax was to be assigned on the basis of one's income. The Karaim Rabbi Azar'ia Illia recounted the joy with which his flock accepted this new procedure for taxation. "Before Şahin there had been no

<sup>46</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 1, pp. 636—639.

<sup>47</sup> ILLIA *Sobytiya* pp. 103—104. ZINKEISEN (*Geschichte* vol. 6, pp. 164—165) intimates that Şahin intended to educate his Tatars through the army, and thus to change "the military character" of his people. According to Zinkeisen, it was the military reform which was to be the most crucial element of Şahin's "westernization."

<sup>48</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 1, p. 712.

<sup>49</sup> B. VOL'FSON *Prisoedinenie Kryma k Rossii v 1783 godu*, in: *Istoričeskij žurnal* vol. 3 (1941) p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> IGEL'STROM *Opisanie* p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> P. I. KEPPEIN, in: *Krymskij sbornik* (St. Petersburg 1837) pp. 74—78.

system or law in financial matters”<sup>52</sup>. The tax was to apply equally to Muslims and non-Muslims and supposedly the central government would now receive an income from all Crimeans including those who had supported the nobles and *ulema*. But as Şahin did not inherit a large civil bureaucracy he was forced to utilize a tax farming system as the means of collecting his income. He sold the whole taxable area of the Crimean peninsula itself to a Christian merchant named Mavroeni (very probably a Cossack) for the equivalent of 215 000 rubles for the year 1777<sup>53</sup>.

The Khan's good treatment of the non-Muslim minorities gave rise to rumors that he was himself a Christian. In his refusal to confiscate lands of the Orthodox monasteries as he had done with the mosques, minorities, Şahin appeared to conservative Muslims to be violating the tenets of Islam<sup>54</sup>. With the exception of the non-Muslim minorities Şahin was extremely unpopular. Not one of his reforms met with the approval of most Crimeans. His land reform had incensed the *ulema* to even greater opposition than before. His forcible conscription of Tatar youths into an “infidel army,” his extravagant attempts to bestow upon himself autocratic powers, his attempt to enforce the collection of taxes, even from the nobles, and his making all of these plans without the participation of the *divan*, all created a serious discontent among the populace of the Crimean state. Only a spark was needed to set off the flames of the most intense rebellion that the Crimea had yet experienced, and it was to be the Russians who unintentionally were to provide this spark.

In 1775, Aleksej Orlov returned from his Archipelago campaign and brought with him quite a few Balkan Christians who had joined his navy against the Ottomans. Catherine granted Orlov permission to settle these Christians (mainly Greeks) in the new Russian forts of Kerč and Yenikale in the Crimea. By 1776 over 1200 of these settlers had arrived and had received lands in the environs of the two Russian forts<sup>55</sup>. Şahin Girey was caught completely unawares by the immigration of these Greek military settlers. His relations with the Russians had grown cooler in 1777 and Prozorovskij had often complained of his frustration in not being able to influence Şahin to act more slowly in his reforms<sup>56</sup>. The revolt began with an armed conflict between the Albancy, as the Russians called these Greek settlers, and neighboring Tatars who resented this immigration of privileged Christians. The Albancy, who had lived under Ottoman domination were not eager to establish friendly relations with the Tatars either. The trouble near Kerč soon spread to other areas of the Crimea as dissatisfaction with Şahin's administration ran deep throughout the peninsula. His “elite guard” took their new Russian arms and formed the backbone of the rebellion. Şahin and the Rus-

<sup>52</sup> ILLIA Sobytiya p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 1, p. 569.

<sup>54</sup> A. L. BERT'E-DELAGARD K istorii christianstva v Krymu, in: ZOOID vol. 28 (1910) p. 66, where Archbishop Ignatij claims that his monastery near Aktiar owned 25 000 desjatins of land in late 1777. Şahin gave permission to Ignatij to build a new stone church if Russia would agree to supply the money for it. See also Čtenija vol. 96, part 1, pp. 126–127.

<sup>55</sup> N. F. DUBROVIN Bumagi knjazja Grigorija Aleksandroviča Potemkina-Tavričeskago, 1774–1788 gg., published in: Sbornik voenno-istoričeskich materialov vol. 6 (St. Petersburg 1893) pp. 209–210; SIRIO vol. 27 (1880) pp. 111, 124–125. The Russians called these settlers “Albancy” although it is improbable that many came from Muslim Albania.

<sup>56</sup> Čtenija vol. 96, part 1, pp. 121–123.



sian resident fled to Yenikale while the rebels attacked and burned the Khan's palace and began to slaughter Christian merchants in Bahçesaray<sup>57</sup>.

The Ottomans had become seriously concerned with the course of events in the Crimea. In their opinion Şahin had clearly nullified the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca by interfering in areas which the Porte considered within the religious sphere — confiscation of the *ulema* lands, violation of the *şeriat* [holy law of Islam] by equalizing Muslims with the non-Muslims. The exiles, led by former Khan Devlet, demanded that the Ottomans send an army to the Crimea and appoint a new Khan<sup>58</sup>. Clearly the Porte wanted to avoid a new war with the Russian Empire, but to appease the growing discontent in the capital, the Grand Vezir appointed Selim Girey, a former Khan and a leader of the exiles, to try his hand at uniting the rebels under his authority<sup>59</sup>.

Early in the revolt Rumjancev proposed that Russia sit out the struggle, move to the coasts, and permit Şahin and his "new army" to defeat the rebels<sup>60</sup>. It is possible that Rumjancev hoped that each side would suffer such great losses so as to make another rebellion impossible and at the same time temper Şahin's course of action. But there had been little struggle as Şahin's troops had deserted him. It soon became apparent that unless the Russian army intervened, and quickly, the Russian favorite would stand no chance of survival.

Prozorovskij united his forces with Şahin near Akmeget and bombarded and captured Eski Krim and Karasu Bazaar. Under General De Balmen the Albancy attacked and burned Kefe and slaughtered over six hundred Tatars with their wives and children. After the capture of Kefe Prozorovskij ordered the Albancy to the mountains "to pillage and destroy" all remnants of the opposition<sup>61</sup>.

In Istanbul, outraged by the news of the Kefe events, the government declared Şahin to be an unbeliever. They proved him to be a Christian by arguing that "he sleeps on a bed, sits in a chair, doesn't pray in the correct way, wears and shows a cross and has a baptized name of Ivan Pavlovič"<sup>62</sup>. But the Porte had given his opponents no effective help and their candidate had fled the Crimea while Şahin had successfully regained control.

Şahin had a rather naive opinion of the events which had occurred. He seemed to believe sincerely that a majority of Crimeans favored his rule and that it had been only a small part of his new army which had caused the Tatars to lose their senses<sup>63</sup>. But Prozorovskij reported to Catherine the true extent of the revolt. It had included all of the clergy, many of the nobles including the important Şirins and some of the Girey family itself. In fact, Şahin could count on the support of only the Christian minority, his close administrative associates, and the Russian army<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> ILLIA Sobytiya p. 105.

<sup>58</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye no. 4017; DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 1, pp. 614—615.

<sup>59</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Askerî nos 24842, 31341, 32218; DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 1, p. 848.

<sup>60</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 1, p. 791.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 4, 92, 147; S. SAFONOV Ostatki Grečeskich legionov v Rossii, ili nynešnee naselenie Balaklavy, in: ZOOID vol. 1 (1844) p. 218.

<sup>62</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 1, p. 783; vol. 2, pp. 22, 33, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 12—13, 155.



The Crimean Khan now sent deputies to the Porte to receive a new investiture according to the dictates of the treaty. Understandably they were not well received. The Grand Vezir ordered them seized and sent in custody to the island of Rhodes<sup>65</sup>. The Russian ambassador in Istanbul, Stachiev, presented a complaint but the *reis efendi* was not sympathetic. The latter asked "if the sojourn of a large number of Russian troops in the Crimea is in conformity with the Crimeans' independence. The Tatars had requested that Prozorovskij leave and the Russians replied with cannon and rifle"<sup>66</sup>.

The Russians were very realistic in assessing the revolt and its sudden end. While Prozorovskij had suspected intrigues of the Porte, Rumjancev realized that the Ottomans had played no part in instigating the uprising<sup>67</sup>. Şahin had just gone too far and too fast in his program of westernization (more correctly, Russianization). Interestingly enough, with the rebellion completely crushed, Selim having left for Istanbul, and Şahin with the Russian soldiers in complete control, Catherine indicated that it might be a good idea to bring the Khan over into the Kubañ where the Tatars had not so actively participated against him. She wanted "to preserve the existence of a free Tatar *oblast'* even if it cannot be done in the Crimea itself"<sup>68</sup>. Thus, as late as 1778 Catherine still had no intention of bringing the Crimea completely under her scepter.

There were rumblings of discontent among Russian officials in St. Petersburg and in the Crimean occupation army, as their patience with the Tatars was not as great as Catherine's. During the midst of the repression of the rebellion a rumor spread among the Russian forces that the Empress "intended to punish the rebels by taking the whole Crimea into the Russian Empire, and because of her love of humanity would send the rebels to Bessarabia or to the Kubañ," rather than kill them<sup>69</sup>. And in St. Petersburg, Bezborodko continued to press for annexation. "Already at the end of 1777, when the Empress brought me into political affairs, I proposed to Count Bakunin that the independence of the Crimean Tatars was a bad thing for us and that it was suitable to think about annexing this territory"<sup>70</sup>. But there is no reason to suspect that Catherine listened to these complaints nor that she was yet ready to consider the annexation of this troublesome peninsula. For some inexplicable reason she still wanted to have an independent state in the Crimea under the authority of Şahin Girey.

This second period of Tatar independence ended as it had begun with an invasion by the Russian army. In the first invasion Şahin had entered with the aid of considerable native support. But the Turkish chronicler Cevdet is correct in saying that Şahin enjoyed no support from the Crimeans in late 1777<sup>71</sup>. Prozorovskij reported that

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, p. 203; Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye nos. 2830, 5891.

<sup>66</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 2, pp. 239—241.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem vol. 1, pp. 791, 826.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, p. 224.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, p. 97.

<sup>70</sup> GRIGOROVİČ Kancler p. 93. ZINKEISEN (Geschichte vol. 6, p. 117) quotes the diplomat Solms at St. Petersburg who said that the "court" party led by Potemkin in December, 1777, believed that the Crimea while independent would always be a cause for discord between Russia and the Porte.

<sup>71</sup> AHMET CEVDET Cevdet tarihi [Cevdet's History]. Istanbul 1875, vol. 1, p. 150.

Şahin could not remain for a minute without the Russian army by his side<sup>72</sup>. How would Şahin react to his total dependence upon Russian strength? This was to be the story of the third and last period of Crimean independence.

### III. The failure of Şahin Girey

After crushing the Tatar rebels one would have expected Şahin and his Russian mentors to change the policies and aims of the Crimean government so as to avoid a repetition of the civil war. But the Khan had not lost his conviction that he was the savior of the Crimean people. After all, the most advanced element of society, the Christians, had eagerly welcomed his reforms. Şahin counted on the overwhelming support of Russia for a continuation of his westernization policies. But during the first months of his second reign he was to experience the loss of the one native prop which he had, the Christian minority.

The Karaim Rabbi Azar'ia Illia wrote that the Christians were fearful of Tatar reprisals since they had aided Şahin's re-entry into the Crimea. He said that the Bahçesaray Greeks had secretly reported intelligence information to Prozorovskij during the war and that the Kefe Greeks and Armenians had added their strength to that of De Balmen's Albancy during the slaughter of Tatars in December, 1777<sup>73</sup>. Thus the Christians had good reason to fear Tatar retribution should the Russian army leave. The first indication the sources give of a Russian plan to remove these minorities from the Crimea is in a letter from Prozorovskij to Potemkin in January, 1778, in which he disapproves of the idea because of the need for these people whenever Russia might annex the Crimea<sup>74</sup>. Prozorovskij had added his voice to the growing number in St. Petersburg who were pressing for a final solution to the Tatar problem.

Disregarding Prozorovskij's disapproval and without prior orders from Catherine, Rumjancev ordered Russian officials to persuade the Christians to leave the Crimea and to resettle in one of Russia's southern provinces. Catherine agreed at this point and asked Potemkin to prepare the way for the exodus<sup>75</sup>. Archbishop Ignatij, leader of the Crimean Orthodox community (whom the Russians began to call the metropolitan at this time) presented a formal petition to Rumjancev asking permission for his flock to settle in Russia<sup>76</sup>. The heads of the Crimean Armenian and Catholic churches, Peter Margos and Father Jakov, followed suit and all three received substantial monetary rewards from the Russians for their troubles<sup>77</sup>. There is good reason to suspect that this was not a spontaneous and enthusiastic request from the "whole of the Crimean Christians," but one written solely by Ignatij. The Karaim Rabbi suggested that many Christians (whom he calls "the Greek and Armenian poor") did not feel threatened by the Tatars and were not anxious to leave their homes for a strange place in the north. They had every reason to expect privileged treatment from Şahin and in fact had been his close advisers at the end of the civil war. The Rabbi charged that they

<sup>72</sup> Çtenija vol. 96, part 1, p. 125.

<sup>73</sup> ILLIA Sobytiya p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 2, p. 98.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 296, 317—318.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 556—557.

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 559—560.

had tried to set the Khan against his Karaim community with claims of Karaim aid to the rebels<sup>78</sup>.

When Şahin learned of Rumjancev's project he became outraged that Catherine should so suddenly desert him. He argued that the loss of the Christians would bring the Crimean government to a virtual collapse because of the loss of revenue. NOLDE seems to have swallowed this argument<sup>79</sup>. But in fact during the first period of Şahin's rule he had equalized taxes on Muslims and non-Muslims and the latter's small number would result in a small percentage of the tax income. The real reason for Şahin's anger was precisely that they were the only group which had supported him during the civil war and the only ones upon whom he could count as loyal subjects. In addition Şahin felt that their talents would be necessary for the success of westernization in the Crimea.

Of course the Khan could not use this argument to justify his claims, for if Catherine had truly realized the total lack of native support for her protégé it is likely that she would have drastically changed her policy. But her almost blind confidence in Şahin's worth was to delay this recognition until another revolt in 1782. Perhaps Rumjancev shrewdly understood Catherine's weakness towards Şahin and realized that the Christian exodus would make the Khan's position untenable. More probably Rumjancev sincerely feared for the safety of the Christians and wanted to remove a possible cause for more internal conflict. In any case the plans for the Christians' departure moved swiftly to fruition and by September 18, 1778, Rumjancev learned that all who were going had left. A total of 31 098 had set out for Azov *gubernija*, many "with tears in their eyes because they had to leave their immovable families [ancestors] behind"<sup>80</sup>.

Even with the Christians leaving, Şahin could feel fairly secure so long as the Russian army remained. They had fortified the harbors of Aktiar, Kefe and Yalta so as to prevent the possibility of an Ottoman invasion by sea. Prozorovskij kept regiments at Perekop and Arabat to preclude Turkish attacks from Ūzi or from across the Kubañ River. Şahin repeatedly asked Catherine not to remove these troops and she promised to leave him protection sufficient to insure his personal safety<sup>81</sup>.

In 1778 the Porte was to make one last half-hearted attempt to unseat the "infidel" khan. Under pressure from the conservative clergy in Istanbul, the Ottomans chose the *vali* [governor] of Trabzon, Canikli Hacı Ali Paşa, to lead a fleet to the Crimea. Stachiev reported that if the *vali*'s first attempts were unsuccessful the Ottomans would sacrifice him and recognize Şahin as khan<sup>82</sup>. Rumjancev felt sure of his forti-

<sup>78</sup> ILLIA Sobytiija pp. 110, 113, 127. ZINKEISEN (Geschichte vol. 6, p. 314) corroborates the fact that many of these Christians did not wish to move to Russia, and that in fact they were "misled" into this action.

<sup>79</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 2, pp. 322, 580; NOLDE La Formation vol. 2, p. 142.

<sup>80</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 2, pp. 698, 710–714. These included 7178 from Kefe, 2723 from Bahçesaray, 259 from Akmeçet. Suvorov reported that only 288 remained behind "of their own request." See: Piśma Suvorova k knjazju Potemkinu, in: Archiv knjazja Voroncova vol. 24 (1880) pp. 291–293.

<sup>81</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 2, pp. 716, 745.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem vol. 2, pp. 427, 430, 460, 537; Başbakanlık Arşivi. Hatt-i hümayun no. 797/e. "The Russian commander in the Crimea brought his army from Bahçesaray to Aktiar, there constructed earthenworks, armed them with cannon; all of this was in violation of the treaty; all sorts of tricks have been committed by Russia in addition to the intrigues of Şahin Girey, and for these reasons the imperial fleet will set out for Gözleve."

fications in Aktiar and expressed no concern about the expected attack. Hacı Ali Paşa appeared at Aktiar with only three ships, and after a few hours of shelling from the shore batteries he withdrew. Thus ended the last Ottoman attempt to regain their former influence in the Crimea itself<sup>83</sup>. The Porte now settled down to negotiations with Russia which brought about the Convention of Aynali Kavak. In return for their recognition of Şahin the Ottomans received the lands between the Bug and Dnestr Rivers, lands which they had always considered to be within the province of Ūzi, but which the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca had assigned to the Tatars<sup>84</sup>.

That the Porte was tired of the Tatar question is evidenced by their treatment of the exiles in Istanbul. Although the Ottomans continued to grant them salaries, the Tatars began to fight among themselves for Ottoman favor. With increased infighting and continual demands for Crimean invasions, the Grand Vezir decided to send some of the most vociferous exiles away from Istanbul. Selim Girey went to Edirne, Gazi Girey to Lemnos in the Archipelago, and Devlet who was "promising the Turks a golden mountain," if they would return him as Khan, died in September, 1780<sup>85</sup>.

The Ottomans were now willing to recognize Şahin. The Porte sent word to its commander in Ūzi that peace had been made and that Şahin was Khan<sup>86</sup>. If the Khan had not made serious threats against the Porte, there is no reason why further conflict would have developed so soon. But Şahin's dreams of glory regained strength after the Christian exodus and he soon began to make territorial claims against Ottoman territories. In the first place Şahin did not accept the loss of lands between the Bug and Dnestr Rivers required at Aynali Kavak. He sent officers to this area to organize a tax system there. These were captured however by the *paşa* of Ūzi and treated as spies. At the same time Şahin sent word to the Porte that he was claiming rights over Bessarabia, Wallachia, and Moldavia<sup>87</sup>.

That these latter lands had never belonged to the Crimean khanate was well known by both Russia and the Ottomans. Stachiev in Istanbul only half-heartedly presented these demands to the *reis efendi* and reported to Catherine that Şahin must be persuaded to drop the whole subject. But the Porte took no chances and ordered Ūzi to be reinforced<sup>88</sup>. As far-fetched as these plans were, no less so were Şahin's programs for

<sup>83</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 2, pp. 463, 550, 653—655.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 2, p. 872; vol. 3, p. 15. ANDERSON (*The Great Powers* p. 23) makes a case for French pressure being crucial in settling the Convention of Aynali Kavak. The whole question of the importance of the diplomacy of western powers in the solution of the Crimean question has been summarized by ANDERSON (*The Great Powers* p. 41): "Negotiations which produce no tangible or at least no immediate result are not usually a subject of great importance or interest. Those in question however deserve some attention for the light they throw on the state of European politics at this time." This writer agrees with Anderson that although European interest was high in the outcome of the Crimean question, their various complicated diplomatic maneuvers and negotiations did not appreciably affect the outcome of the question.

<sup>85</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 2, pp. 301—302, 581, 624, 681; Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye nos. 1890, 2405, 6323. ZINKEISEN (*Geschichte* vol. 6, pp. 210—211) speaks of two "parties" in the Ottoman *divan*, one for peace and one for war, and states that at this time the "peace party" gained the upper hand against the supporters of a Crimean invasion.

<sup>86</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye no. 649.

<sup>87</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Hatt-i hümayun no. 781/a; Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye nos. 2959, 4843, 6511.

<sup>88</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Askerî no. 18480; Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye no. 8933; DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 3, pp. 517, 545.

the Caucasus. The Abaza and Cherkess tribes living across the Kubañ River had been subjects of the Khan at times, and of the Ottoman Sultan at others. Their lands had not been included in the new Tatar state in 1774. But Şahin now sent officials into this region to set up a Crimean administration there. N. Panin and Catherine both warned Şahin not to act unwisely and Panin at this time described the Khan's character as "arrogant and remote"<sup>89</sup>.

For such a far-reaching foreign policy and with dreams of a Black Sea empire, Şahin needed to reassert his authority within the Crimea. The new Russian resident in Bahçesaray Konstantinov tried to persuade the Tatars that Russia would support Şahin to the end. He used the name of the khan in all dealings with the nobles and told them that "their loyalty and devotion to Şahin are necessary for the well-being of the state"<sup>90</sup>. But the Khan was having problems in gaining support among the Crimeans. The first blow had been the departure of his Christian subjects. The second was to be the removal of most of the Russian troops who had occupied the Crimea since 1777.

Relations between the Russian occupation army and the local inhabitants had been remarkably good considering the ferocity of the fighting during the civil war. The Russians had been under orders to treat the Tatars well and "not to take anything from them by force"<sup>91</sup>. But at Aynali Kavak Catherine had promised to withdraw her troops from the Crimea within a year. By June 1, 1779, the Russian Empress honored her agreement with the Ottomans and "not one Russian soldier remained"<sup>92</sup>. Understandably Şahin did not want to see them leave but no amount of pleading could change Catherine's mind. Either she was losing interest in the young Tatar Khan or she felt that he should be able to rule without the support of her armies.

Although he felt that Catherine had deserted him on the matters of the Christians and Russian occupation troops, Şahin resumed his program of westernization. Once more the Khan attempted to form a Russian-style army. By the end of 1778 he had reestablished his *beşli* guard and had brought one thousand Nogais from the Kubañ for his cavalry<sup>93</sup>. When his first guards deserted to the rebels in 1777 Şahin had lost all of the arms and munitions which he had earlier received from the Russians. In 1780 he tried to purchase new supplies from the Polish Count Wincenty Potocki who had provided arms to the Crimean Khan in 1769<sup>94</sup>. Potocki promised that if Şahin requested it he could form at least one regular army regiment made up of Poles and Austrians. But Veselickij, who was appointed Russian resident to the Khan in 1780, vetoed the idea of his hiring a mercenary army. Şahin now had to be satisfied with his small *beşli* force and abandoned his plans for a 20 000 man army once and for all.

Şahin's financial troubles mounted as the civil war had severely disrupted the failing Crimean economy. Although Catherine often contributed large sums to his treasury (100 000 rubles in February, 1778)<sup>95</sup>, he was never able to establish a systematic way of collecting local taxes which were necessary to finance his grandiose projects. Şahin's

<sup>89</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 3, pp. 154—156, 179—181, 373—374, 416.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 3, pp. 130—131, 139.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 2, p. 828.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 3, pp. 192, 352.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 2, p. 553.

<sup>94</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Cevdet Tasnifi. Hariciye no. 2232 (June, 1769).

<sup>95</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 2, p. 170.



administration had few trained officials and he found no one to purchase tax farming rights. Real trade between Russia and the Crimea, in addition to Russian handouts, had dropped drastically since 1776. In that year Russian exports to the Crimea had amounted to 370 000 rubles while by 1780 they had dropped to 130 000. Imports had increased slightly from 87 000 to 105 000 rubles<sup>96</sup>. Şahin made trade even more difficult with his mercantilist order that no money could leave the Crimea. If goods were marketed there, merchants could take out only goods in exchange<sup>97</sup>.

Şahin's second reign ended as his first one had, in failure. The Khan desperately needed to establish good relations with both the Porte and Russia if he were to have any opportunity of success, but his proud and ambitious character prevented this fact from bothering him. His conviction that he should be an autocrat caused him trouble with both the Ottomans and Russians. After the civil war, Şahin had not been able to reassert his authority over the Nogais in the Kubañ. His brothers Arslan, Gazi and Batir who had been his *seraskers* there in 1777 recognized Şahin's lack of power in the Crimea itself and began to act independently of Bahçesaray in 1778. This is not to say that at first they intended to create a new state or to challenge Şahin in the Crimea, but they did sever the ties of authority between the Khan and the Nogais<sup>98</sup>.

Since by laying claims to their lands in the Caucasus, Şahin was posing real threats to the Porte, the latter jumped at the opportunity to gain influence in the Kubañ region. Suleiman Ağa invited Şahin's brothers to visit Soğucuk to discuss the Kubañ situation. They accepted and arrived accompanied by representatives of the mountain Cherkess and Abazas. Şahin's official in Tamañ reported that these deputies had been overwhelmed with Ottoman gifts and had been tricked into taking oaths of allegiance to the Porte<sup>99</sup>. The Khan claimed that the expedition was successful and that the whole northern Caucasus was "again" subject to the Crimean state<sup>100</sup>. However this was only one of the "evidences" which Şahin created to substantiate his territorial claims in that region. The Cherkess had never submitted to his authority<sup>101</sup>. In fact, in March, 1780, Konstantinov learned that a "large army" under the command of Şahin's brothers was preparing to leave the Kubañ for the Crimea<sup>102</sup>.

This time revolt against the Crimean Khan began in the Kubañ, among the Nogais who had been the first group to recognize the sovereignty of Şahin Girey in 1775. Catherine had called the Nogais *legkomyslennye* and indeed they were. In their whole history they had never completely submitted to an outside authority and had changed their loyalty whenever it suited them. This revolt was not due so much to the interference of the Porte as to the inherent dislike by the Nogai chiefs of any authority

<sup>96</sup> WILLIAM TOOKE *View of the Russian Empire During the Reign of Catherine the Second, and to the Close of the Eighteenth Century*. 3rd. ed. Dublin 1801, vol. 3, p. 384. These figures refer to Black Sea trade, all of which passed through the Crimea. Tooke imputes this drop in trade to the hostility of the Tatars and was one of the commentators who praised the annexation of the Crimea in 1783.

<sup>97</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 3, pp. 568, 626.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 2, pp. 269–270, 714.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 2, pp. 437–438, 460–461; Čtenija vol. 96, part 1, p. 139.

<sup>100</sup> DUBROVIN *Prisoedinenie* vol. 3, p. 545.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 3, pp. 553, 574–575. The Russian resident admitted that Şahin did not receive any such pledges of allegiance.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem* vol. 3, pp. 552, 583.



which infringed upon their own. They had before and did now pledge allegiance to any power which would help them rebel against their present sovereigns.

The Russian command again decided that they had to take strong measures if they were to preserve the Crimean state. In June, 1781, Rumjancev ordered the frontier defenses strengthened in Azov *gubernija*. In September Leškevič moved his troops against the rebels in the Kubaň. He defeated a group of 500 Nogais and Cherkess and sent them fleeing into the mountains. In October Fabrician moved his regiment between two of the Nogai hordes to divide their strength<sup>103</sup>. Şahin proposed a more permanent division of the Nogais by forcibly resettling one horde north of Perekop and one within the Crimean peninsula. Prince Potemkin vetoed this idea because he felt that such a move would severely disrupt the new Russian settlements in the area. Catherine agreed with Potemkin's judgement<sup>104</sup>.

In April, 1782, Şahin's brothers prepared a long written argument for the Russians justifying their rebellion against the Khan. They charged that he had been installed on the throne only by the force of Russian arms, that he had tried to become more autocratic than the former Khans, and that he had established an army in the western fashion<sup>105</sup>. These were familiar arguments but ones which had not lost their validity.

At this time Catherine made one more effort to give Şahin additional stature in the eyes of his Crimean subjects. She ordered that he be appointed as a captain in the Russian Preobraženskij guard regiment<sup>106</sup>. But few Tatars liked the Russians and this action only provided more fuel to the fires of revolt. Şahin told Veselickij that he was powerless to crush the rebellion because he could not even count on the loyalty of the *beşlis*. His garrison in Tamaň joined the rebels in May, 1782. The fact of the matter was that he needed his army in the Crimea as well as in the Kubaň. The Khan's brothers Arslan and Batir entered into negotiations with elements there including some of the nobles, the *ulema*, and the *kadi* of Kefe<sup>107</sup>.

In May, 1782, the Kubaň leaders asked that representatives of the nobles come to Tamaň to discuss Şahin's policies. The Khan intercepted this message and replied to Arslan and Batir that "this state is not a republic. Thus they cannot go to the Kubaň for such discussions. You must come to Bahçesaray where we all can arrive at an agreement"<sup>108</sup>. But with good reason they feared a trap in the capital and preferred to wait and see.

One of the many Gireys, Halim, whose name had not been well-known before now, appeared as the leader of the dissidents within the Crimean peninsula. With only two hundred Tatars he attacked Kefe where the Khan and Veselickij were staying, and defeated Şahin and his remaining three hundred *beşlis*. On May 14, the Khan and his retinue fled by boat to the Russian fort at Kerč. Halim moved into Kefe where his company of Tatars elected Batir Girey as the new Khan and prepared to send a delegation to the Porte for the investiture<sup>109</sup>. The list of officials who made up the Khan's

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 107, 213—214, 272; SIRIO vol. 27 (1880) p. 192.

<sup>104</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 4, pp. 234, 270, 274.

<sup>105</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 426—427, 453—454.

<sup>106</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 235, 277, 417.

<sup>107</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 495—496.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, p. 508.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 512, 515, 524—527.

suite which arrived at Kerč gives some indication of the support which he enjoyed at the end of his reign. It totalled less than four hundred. Out of his army of *beşlis* only 160 remained. Five nobles, several Gireys, and his court officials accounted for the rest <sup>110</sup>.

The third period of Tatar independence was nearly at an end. Halim Girey controlled Kefe while Arslan had taken Arabat. Batir was master in the Kubañ and had been chosen Khan. Şahin and the Russian resident were refugees in Kerč. At the start of his first reign, when he had had the support of the Russian army and of much of Crimean society, Şahin had proved to be an incompetent ruler and had not understood that the main requirement for reform was power. In his second reign, Şahin's projects were even more ambitious than before, but what support he had formerly enjoyed was now practically nonexistent. The unknown factor was Catherine's reaction. Had she begun to realize that her protégé would never be able to rule an independent Crimea or would she try once more to place him on a secure throne?

#### IV. The Russian Annexation of the Crimea

Catherine had no intention as yet of removing her support from Şahin Girey. She ordered Veselickij to promise Şahin that "Her Imperial Majesty continues to bestow upon him Her good wishes and protection" <sup>111</sup>. The re-establishment of Şahin as Khan in late 1782 was almost a carbon copy of his re-entry in 1778. After an initial verbal peace feeler which received no response Catherine ordered the advance of Russian troops into the Crimea. She told Potemkin that "it is apparent that exhortation and other peaceful measures are not enough to bring peace to the Crimea and to suppress the Tatar revolt against their lawful sovereign . . . Our troops are to enter the Crimea immediately, crush the rebels, and again install Şahin Girey as their legal Khan" <sup>112</sup>.

By the end of October the final Russian conquest of the Crimea was over. De Balmen entered from the north, seized Perekop without a struggle, and proceeded towards Bahçesaray. Potemkin, Borzov, and Şahin advanced from Kerč <sup>113</sup>. Catherine replaced Veselickij with Sergej Laškarev as her resident in Bahçesaray. Laškarev had had a distinguished career as a Russian diplomat in the Ottoman Empire and had acquired fluency in the Turkish and Tatar languages. Unlike his predecessors he would not need native translators and could better determine public opinion in the Crimea <sup>114</sup>.

Şahin no longer harbored any illusions as to broad support in the Crimea for his rule. He repeated the cruelty which he had shown in 1778 but with even more ferocity. The Khan and his remaining *beşlis* carried out a repression of all elements of Tatar society that even alarmed Catherine and Potemkin. The Empress warned that "as Our generosity and kindness are not meant only for him, but for all of the Tatar peoples, he must stop this shocking and cruel treatment and not give them just cause for a new revolt" <sup>115</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 529—530.

<sup>111</sup> Ibidem vol. 4, pp. 583—584.

<sup>112</sup> SIRIO vol. 27 (1880) pp. 210—211.

<sup>113</sup> DUBROVIN Prisoedinenie vol. 4, pp. 827, 833, 836—837, 872.

<sup>114</sup> S. L. Laškarev, diplomat Ekaterininskago vremeni, in: Russkij archiv part 2 (1884) pp. 5—8.

<sup>115</sup> SIRIO vol. 27 (1880) p. 232.

It was at this point that Potemkin began preparations for eventual Russian annexation of the Tatar peoples.

Through the mediation of a Tatar confidant, Ivan Rudzevič (Iakub Ağa), who would later play an important role in native administration under the Russians, Potemkin found some Crimean elements which were not opposed to the idea of becoming Russian subjects. In late November, 1782, Rudzevič discussed this matter with members of the Şirin family, the leaders of the Tatar nobility. Rudzevič told the Şirins of the "bliss" in which all of the peoples in the Russian Empire lived. He mentioned "the happy situation of the Kazań Tatars and of all of the Muslim peoples who had freely entered the Empire, and of the many benefits accruing to these Muslims who were subjects of the Empress"<sup>116</sup>. Although there is no evidence which suggests that Catherine had ordered these preliminary negotiations it was apparent that her support for Şahin was wavering. In mid-December the Empress clarified her position on annexation. She bitterly complained of the tremendous expense which the Crimea had cost since 1774. Catherine estimated that she had spent more than seven million rubles and countless lives in her attempt to create a viable Crimean state. She enumerated to Potemkin several hypothetical cases in which "Our Will would favor the appropriation of this peninsula for Ourselves": if the Khan should die or if his enemies should easily drive him away (they had done this twice before); if his rule should be insecure (it had been since 1777); if Russia would not be given the port of Aktiar; if the Khan should show disloyalty to the Russian Empire; if the Porte should send troops to the Crimea or their fleet into the Black Sea (there was no treaty or agreement which forbade the latter); or if the Hapsburg Empire would seize lands in the Danubian principalities, Russia would be forced to make equal gains<sup>117</sup>. As early as 1773 a Russian geographer had spoken of Aktiar as the best natural harbor on the northern coast of the Black Sea, and in 1780–1782 Prozorovskij and Rumjancev had constructed permanent fortifications there. In 1783 Aktiar was to become the base of the new Russian Black Sea fleet and would eventually be renamed Sevastopol'<sup>118</sup>.

It was during Potemkin's stay in St. Petersburg in March, 1783, that he persuaded Catherine to take the last step and publicly declare the Russian annexation of the Crimea. Most probably his news that some important Tatar elements would not oppose such a move aided Catherine in her decision. Russia had almost completed the annexation in 1778 when Catherine placed Şahin on the throne for the second time. Her armies had treated the rebels as opponents of Russia as well as of the Khan. In accord with the Convention of Aynali Kavak Catherine did withdraw her troops in 1779 but they remained in Kerč, Yenikale and Kilburun on the peninsula. In late 1782 her armies had met no opposition. Şahin had all along received most of his income from Russia; he had relations only with Russian officials; the Russian ambassador was his spokesman in Istanbul. When Catherine issued the proclamation of annexation on April 8, 1783, it was no surprise to either the Turks or the Tatars.

<sup>116</sup> *Rasporjaženija svetlejšago knjazja G. A. Potemkina-Tavričeskago*, in: *ZOOID* vol. 12 (1881) p. 260.

<sup>117</sup> *SIRIO* vol. 27 (1880) pp. 222–223.

<sup>118</sup> *Z. ARKAS Načalo i dejstvija russkago flota na Černom moře s 1778 po 1798 god*, in: *ZOOID* vol. 4 (1860) p. 264; *Mery o privedenii v izvestnost' Novorossijskogo i Kavkazskogo kraja*, in: *ZOOID* vol. 10 (1877) p. 225.

Catherine justified the annexation by pointing out that Russia had never received her "just gains" from the war of 1768–1774. "During the last war with the Porte, when the force and victories of Our army gave Us full right to put the Crimea to Our own use," the Russian Empress had been willing to create an independent state for the Tatars. But the Crimeans had rejected this independence and Catherine now felt it her right to put an end to the problem<sup>119</sup>.

This brings us to the fate of Şahin Girey upon whom Catherine had expended so much hope and money. Potemkin persuaded the despondent Khan to come to Voronež with his harem and suite of followers<sup>120</sup>. But he never regained his pride and enthusiasm of former years. An Englishwoman travelling through southern Russia in 1786 described Şahin's situation as a pitiful one<sup>121</sup>. In the same year Bulgakov in Istanbul reported the arrival there of four Tatars bringing news that the former Khan desired to immigrate to Rumelia in the Ottoman Empire. After much hesitation Catherine permitted her protégé to leave and he arrived in Rumelia in early 1787 where the Porte provided him with a large estate<sup>122</sup>. Thus ended the career of the last Crimean Khan. With more effective outside support than any of his predecessors had enjoyed Şahin had proved to be an ineffective ruler. He had misunderstood the basic realities of Crimean society – the fact that the nobles held substantial power within the state.

Catherine's Crimean policy from 1774 until 1782 is difficult to understand. Her unlimited support for Şahin in the face of his obvious incompetency and his unrealistic, indeed fantastical, projects defy explanation unless one is willing to accept the proposition that she had become infatuated with him in 1771–1772 and had been persuaded that he could really "civilize" the Tatars. Her advisor for so long, N. Panin, had perhaps naively believed that independence and autocracy would be welcomed by Tatar society as a whole. It was only after more realistic individuals such as Bezborodko and Potemkin had gained sufficient influence with Catherine that she decided on annexation as the only way to solve once and for all her southern frontier problem. Why she thought that the Crimea could easily be unified under Şahin is inexplicable. But until 1782 Catherine had no intention of abolishing Tatar independence. She tried everything that she could think of to make the Crimea a viable state. It was only that her shrewd political sense, so often displayed in her internal Russian policies, had failed her in the case of Şahin Girey.

Many historians have felt that this annexation of the Crimea by Catherine was part and parcel of her grandiose "Greek Project," and should not be considered apart from it<sup>123</sup>. ZINKEISEN quotes a foreign ambassador in St. Petersburg to the effect that

<sup>119</sup> PSZ vol. 21 (1830) no. 15708, p. 897 and following. Anderson and most other historians repeat this theory that the Crimeans had "rejected" their independence and intimate that they preferred the Ottomans as sovereigns to the Russians. On the contrary, it was not their dislike of independence that led them to revolt, but their rejection of Şahin's attempt to create an autocratic regime in the Crimea. It was autocracy rather than independence that the Crimeans rejected.

<sup>120</sup> Rasporjaženija Potemkina p. 282.

<sup>121</sup> ELIZABETH CRAVEN *Voyage en Crimée et à Constantinople en 1783*. London 1789, p. 152.

<sup>122</sup> SIRIO vol. 47 (1885) pp. 181–182; Vyezd poslednjago krymskago chana Şagin-Gireja iz Rossii v Turciju v 1787 godu, in: ZOOID vol. 13 (1883) pp. 143–144.

<sup>123</sup> See note 1.

Catherine's removing of the Christians from the Crimea to the Azov region was intended to create "a part of the patrimony of Grand Prince Constantine," and thus even this action was considered to be part of the Greek Project. But this writer has found no single source in which Catherine herself connects the Crimean question with her Greek Project and no indication that Catherine had any intention of annexing the Crimea prior to 1782, three years after the "project's" inception<sup>124</sup>.

After 1783, the long process of assimilation of the Tatars was to begin. A great many fled to Ottoman provinces either because they could not give allegiance to a Christian ruler or because they refused to become serfs. Catherine employed sophisticated measures in fitting the remaining Tatar upper classes into Russian molds as she had done with the Muslims in internal Russian provinces. Her successors, however, were to undo much of her accomplishment and Tatar nationalism erupted again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Soviets arrived at the final solution for the Crimean Tatars — their liquidation as a nationality after World War II.

---

<sup>124</sup> ZINKEISEN *Geschichte* vol. 6, p. 315; For a good discussion of the Greek Project see: EDGAR HÖSCH *Das sogenannte "griechische Projekt" Katharinas II.*, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*. N. F. vol. 12 (1964) pp. 168—206.