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Forbidden Love: Ivan Mazepa and the Author of the *History of the Rus'*

SERHII PLOKHY

I LOVED, AND WAS BELOVED AGAIN," says the Ukrainian hetman, Ivan Mazepa, to King Charles XII of Sweden in Byron's poem *Mazeppa*, which first appeared in print in 1819. Although the king seems skeptical, the hetman remains hopeful of convincing him of the power of emotions over human destiny. "But all men are not born to reign," declares Mazepa, "Or o'er their passions, or as you / Thus o'er themselves and nations too."¹ Mazepa's stories of forbidden love, like the one retold by Byron in which the young Mazepa was tied naked to a wild horse as punishment for making love to the wife of a Polish aristocrat, or another that portrays him as an old man falling in love with his goddaughter Motrena Kochubei, turned Mazepa into an ideal hero of European romanticism, an object of interest and admiration all over the continent. There was one place in Europe where admiration for Mazepa had sources other than the romantic sensibilities of the age. That place was Ukraine. At the time Byron's poem was published, the men of Ukraine indeed were not born to reign over themselves or their nation. It would also appear that they did not have full control over their passions, for some of them maintained their admiration for their long-vanished hetman, Ivan Mazepa, despite their better judgment and significant risk to themselves.

In Ukraine, admiration for the fallen hetman came into direct conflict with the sense of duty and loyalty to ruler and state. Tsar Peter I ordered that Mazepa be anathematized after he learned that the hetman had sided with Charles XII in the fall of 1708, in the midst of the Northern War. This anathema, repeated every year in the churches of the vast empire, turned Mazepa into the most hated figure of the Russian political and historical imagination. The tsar even had an Order of Judas made, intending to bestow it on the elderly hetman once he was captured. Peter won the Battle of Poltava in June 1709, but the hetman was never caught. Instead, he became a symbol of treason to the ruler and the state; an object of government-sponsored hatred, association with whom was tantamount to sacrilege—a betrayal not only of secular authority but also of

the Christian faith. Admiring Mazepa under such circumstances was extremely dangerous, but not everyone was prepared to cast aside the memory of the old hetman.²

In 1810, just over a century after the Battle of Poltava, Oleksii Martos, a young officer in the Russian military and a descendant of an old Cossack family, visited Mazepa's grave in the Moldavian town of Galați. Two years later his father, the celebrated sculptor Ivan Martos, best known for his statue of Kuz'ma Minin and Dmitrii Pozharskii in Moscow's Red Square, unveiled a monument to Catherine II at the Column Hall in the same city. While the father celebrated the empress who had put an end to the existence of the Cossack polity in Ukraine, his St. Petersburg-born son took a different attitude to the imperial past and its heroes. A few years after visiting Mazepa's grave, most probably around 1819, the year that Byron's *Mazeppa* was published, Oleksii Martos left the following record in his memoirs:

Mazepa died far from his fatherland whose independence he defended; he was a friend of liberty, and for this he deserves the respect of generations to come.... He is gone, and the name of Little Russia and its brave Cossacks has been erased from the list of nations, not great in numbers but known for their existence and their constitutions. Besides other virtues, Mazepa was a friend of learning; he enlarged the Academy of the Brotherhood Monastery in Kyiv, which he renovated and embellished; he supplied it with a library and rare manuscripts. Yet the founder of the academy and of many churches and philanthropic institutions is anathematized every year on the Sunday of the first week of Great Lent along with Stenka Razin and other thieves and robbers. But what a difference! The latter was a robber and a blasphemer. Mazepa was a most enlightened and philanthropic individual, a skillful military leader, and the ruler of a free nation.³

THE PUZZLE

Martos was not the only "dissident" who questioned the official line toward Mazepa and regarded him as a protector of the rights and freedoms of his homeland. On 3 June 1822 Mikhail Pogodin (1800–1875), a twenty-year-old student at Moscow University, later a prominent Russian historian and one of the leaders of the Slavophile movement, recorded in his diary a conversation he had that day about the prevailing moods in "Little Russia"—the former Cossack lands of Ukraine.

Not a shadow of their former rights remains among them now. The Little Russians call themselves the true Russians and the others *moskali*. They

do not entirely like them. Muscovy was thus something apart. They also call the Old Believers *moskali*. They love Mazeppa [*sic*]. Earlier they did not supply recruits but [Cossack] regiments. Thus, there were regiments from Chernihiv, [Novhorod]-Siverskyi, and so on. That was much better: they were all from one region, and therefore more comradely, more in agreement. But now, someone from Irkutsk stands next to a Kyivite; a man from Arkhangelsk—next to one from Astrakhan. What is the sense of it?⁴

What exactly did Pogodin have in mind when he referred to the Ukrainians' "love of Mazepa?" We'll answer this question by taking a close look at his Ukrainian acquaintances and the views of history they subscribed to. We know that Pogodin discussed Ukrainian grievances and aspirations with Aleksei Kubarev, his older friend and mentor at Moscow University, and with Kubarev's close friend Mykhailo Shyrai, the son of Stepan Shyrai (1761–1841), a retired general, wealthy landowner, and marshal of the nobility of Chernihiv gubernia. It was from the younger Shyrai, also a student at Moscow University and Pogodin's rival in the dissertation competition for the university's gold medal, that Pogodin obtained the information on Ukrainian moods and their "love" for Mazepa. The rest of the conversation, as summarized by Pogodin, focused on "a certain Sudiienko, who, holding no civic office, governed the whole town merely by the respect that he commanded," and "Metropolitan Mikhail [of St. Petersburg]," who was "idolized in Chernihiv." The impressions recorded by Pogodin came from Shyrai's family circle in Ukraine. The Sudiienkos were related to the Shyrais, and Mykhailo Shyrai's father, Stepan, was closely associated with Metropolitan Mikhail Desnitskyi of St. Petersburg, formerly archbishop of Chernihiv, who had visited his family estate in Solovo near Starodub on several occasions.⁵

Stepan Shyrai was an important figure in Ukrainian political circles of the first decades of the nineteenth century. A retired major general who had taken an active part in the Russo-Turkish wars under Aleksandr Suvorov, Shyrai was elected marshal of the Chernihiv nobility in 1818 and spent a decade leading the struggle for its rights and privileges. He became a strong critic of the high quotas of recruits whom the serf-owning landlords were required to contribute to the imperial army. Shyrai was also well known for his stories of the good old days. Around 1828, when he was about to leave office or had just left it, the 67-year-old Shyrai, at odds with Governor General Nikolai Repnin of Little Russia, took it upon himself to disseminate to the wider world arguably the most subversive text produced in nineteenth-century Ukraine, a history of the Cossacks entitled *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Rus').⁶

Although the manuscript is attributed to the long-deceased archbishop of Mahilioŭ, Heorhii Konys'kyi (1717–95), and is supposed to have been completed in the late 1760s, its main ideas correspond closely to the list of Ukrainian

grievances recorded by Pogodin. The author, whoever he was, and whenever he wrote his text, believed that the Cossacks, or the “Little Russians”—not the “Great Russians,” or “Muscovites”—were indeed the true heirs of Rus’ and bona fide Russians. He believed that Rus’ and Muscovy were different entities, disliked the Muscovites, and was a sworn enemy of the Old Believers. The unknown author argues that the Cossacks had not received due recognition for the services they had rendered to the empire. There seems to be almost a perfect match between the views of the Ukrainian elites of the 1820s and the historical manuscript that popped up in the libraries of local notables around that time. Whether the *History* influenced the mood of the Chernihiv nobility or simply reflected it, there is little doubt that the work offers unparalleled insight into the historical views held by descendants of the Cossack officers of the Hetmanate at a time when Ukrainian culture was entering the all-important stage of “heritage gathering,” which led to the rise of the Ukrainian national movement in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷

There is, however, an important problem to be addressed before the thesis of a close correlation between the views of the Ukrainian nobility of the 1820s and those of the author of the *History* can be accepted without major reservations. This problem is expressed in Pogodin’s phrase about the Ukrainian elites’ “love of Mazeppa.” Unlike Pogodin’s Ukrainian landowners, the author of *History of the Rus’* has an ambivalent attitude toward Ivan Mazepa and his actions, and his feelings for the old hetman would be hard to characterize as “love” or admiration. Could Pogodin have misunderstood his fellow student back in June 1822 or exaggerated what he had heard from him? Or did Mykhailo Shyrai accurately express the views of his father’s circle, and does the problem lie with the author of the *History*? A first reading of the *History* offers no immediate answer to these questions. Depending on the nature and circumstances of the episodes described in the book, its author can be either critical or supportive of Mazepa, judgmental or forgiving. He appears to be seeking a balance between a frankly negative assessment of the hetman and an apology for him. In the process, he creates quite a contradictory figure, who embarks on a dangerous path, “along which he was led by excessive courage and extreme bitterness into an immeasurable abyss.”⁸

LETTING MAZEPA SPEAK

On the surface, the overall assessment of Mazepa and his actions in the pages of the *History* is more negative than positive. To begin with, the anonymous author considers Mazepa an ethnic Pole (a nationality that he vehemently despises), whose actions are guided by wounded honor. This is the leitmotif of the author’s treatment of the two Mazepa legends, one recorded by Voltaire

in his 1731 bestseller, *History of Charles XII*, and the other preserved as part of Ukrainian lore. According to both legends, Peter I provoked Mazepa's animosity by publicly humiliating him at one of his receptions. "The Czar, who began to be over-heated with wine, and had not, when sober, always the command of his passions, called him a traitor, and threatened to have him impaled. Mazeppa, on his return to the Ukraine, formed the design of a revolt," wrote Voltaire. Another version of this legend, apparently known to the author of *History of the Rus'* from local sources, placed the same episode at a dinner hosted by Peter's close associate Aleksandr Menshikov, whom the author considered a sworn enemy of Ukraine. According to this version, Peter slapped Mazepa in the face as a result of the conflict. "Both these stories, taken together, show the same thing—that Mazepa had a most harmful intent, inspired by his own malice and vengefulness, and not at all by national interests, which, naturally, ought in that case to have moved the troops and the people to support him, but instead the people fought the Swedes with all their might as enemies who had invaded their land in hostile fashion."⁹

Thus, the anonymous author basically accepted Voltaire's interpretation of Mazepa's actions as motivated by a personal desire for revenge. Writing after the French Revolution, the author was prepared to judge his protagonist's actions by the level of public support that they generated. Did he, however, approve not only the actions of the Cossack elites but also those of the popular masses? Throughout *History of the Rus'*, its author shows very little regard for the masses as such, and his assessment of their behavior toward the Swedish army in the months leading up to the Battle of Poltava is no exception. "The local people," he declares, making little effort to hide his contempt for the unenlightened and savage plebs, "then resembled savage Americans or wayward Asians. Coming out of their *abatis* and shelters, they were surprised by the mild behavior of the Swedes, but, because the latter did not speak Russian among themselves or make the sign of the cross, they considered them non-Christians and infidels, and, on seeing them consuming milk and meat on Fridays, concluded that they were godless infidels and killed them wherever they could be found in small parties or individually." The masses emerge from this description as xenophobic, superstitious, and uncivilized, while the account itself exhibits all the characteristics of enlightened Orientalism.¹⁰

The anonymous author's characterization of Mazepa as an irresponsible leader driven to avenge a personal insult is certainly full of contradictions. On the one hand, he denounces Mazepa's actions in light of their reception by the Cossack elites (the Cossack Host) and ordinary people. On the other hand, he considers this reaction, especially on the part of the Cossacks, to be ill-informed, if not completely ridiculous. One way of explaining this contradictory attitude is to posit that the anonymous author inwardly sympathized with Mazepa and his cause, or, in Pogodin's words, "loved Mazeppa," but found it

difficult to reconcile his feelings with the image of the hetman projected by official propaganda, which had an influence on him. For a variety of historical and political reasons, the author may also have been reluctant to manifest his true thoughts and feelings in the matter. If that was indeed the case, what was the source of his “love of Mazeppa”?

It would be futile to seek the answer to this question in those parts of the *History* where the author assumes the role of narrator. Speaking in his own voice, the author is more critical than supportive of the old hetman. His attitude changes when he allows his characters to speak on their own behalf, shielding the author from direct responsibility for what he has written; after all, he is only quoting existing sources without endorsing their views. More often than not, however, those sources are of the author’s own invention, or at least a product of his heavy editing. This is particularly true of the speech allegedly delivered by Mazepa to his troops at the beginning of the revolt and cited at length in the *History*.

It was in this speech that the author of the *History* gave Mazepa an opportunity to present his case. The long speech was allegedly delivered at the moment, decisive for Mazepa and his homeland, when the hetman decided to switch sides and join Charles XII. In order to maintain the loyalty of his men, Mazepa had to convince the Cossack Host of the justice of his cause. Mazepa (or, rather, the anonymous author) makes the fullest use of this opportunity to explain his view not only of the revolt but of Ukrainian history in general. In his speech to the Cossack Host Mazepa emerges as a protector of Ukrainian independence—the role ascribed to him by Oleksii Martos circa 1819. He also raises his voice in defense of the ancient rights and freedoms violated by the Muscovites, who allegedly deprived the Cossacks of their prior claim to the Rus’ land, of their government, and of the very name of Rus’—themes that, if one trusts the Pogodin diary, were dear to the hearts of the Ukrainian elites in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Mazepa’s call to arms was based on the dire circumstances in which his fatherland and the Cossack nation found themselves. “We stand now, Brethren, between two abysses prepared to consume us if we do not choose a reliable path for ourselves to avoid them,” begins Mazepa’s apocryphal speech, referring to the fact that two imperial armies were approaching the borders of Ukraine and that a clash between them was all but inevitable. The hetman tars Peter I and Charles XII with the same brush, depicting them as tyrants who rule arbitrarily over conquered peoples: “Both of them, given their willfulness and appropriation of unlimited power, resemble the most terrible despots, such as all Asia and Africa have hardly ever produced.” The hetman claims that the victory of either despot would bring nothing but destruction to Ukraine. The Swedish king would reestablish Polish rule over Ukraine, while the Russian tsar, who refused to confirm the rights and privileges guaranteed to Ukraine

in the times of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, has treated the Cossack nation and its representatives in autocratic fashion. "If the Russian tsar is allowed to become the victor," argues the apocryphal Mazepa, "then threatening calamities have been prepared for us by that tsar himself, for you see that, although he comes from a line elected by the people from among its nobility, yet, having appropriated unlimited power for himself, he punishes that people according to his arbitrary will, and not only the people's will and property but their very lives have been subjugated to the will and whim of the tsar alone."

Mazepa's solution to the seemingly insoluble problem of choosing between the two despots was most unusual. He proposed to remain neutral in the conflict between them, but that neutrality was of a particular kind. Ukraine would accept the protectorate of the Swedish king and fight only against those forces that attacked its territory, which under these circumstances could only be Russian forces. The Swedish king, along with other European powers, would guarantee the restoration of Ukrainian independence. Mazepa's speech, at once passionate and highly rational, left no doubt that he was acting in defense of his nation (*natsiia*), which he wanted to save from destruction and lead to freedom, restoring its independence and placing it on a par with other European nations. Parts of his speech specifically countered the arguments of his critics, including the anonymous author's own claim that Mazepa had betrayed the tsar for personal advantage. "And so it remains to us, Brethren," says the apocryphal Mazepa to his troops, "to choose the lesser of the visible evils that have beset us, so that our descendants, condemned to slavery by our incompetence, do not burden us with their complaints and imprecations. I do not have them [descendants] and, of course, cannot have them; consequently, I am not involved in the interests of our descendants and seek nothing but the welfare of the nation that has honored me with my current post and, with it, has entrusted me with its fate."¹¹

The text of Mazepa's speech in *History of the Rus'* is a product of historical imagination, but it is not completely divorced from the realities of Mazepa's era. The references in the speech to the Swedish-Ukrainian alliance of the Khmel'nyts'kyi era find clear parallels in the preamble to Pylyp Orlyk's Constitution of 1711. The passage in Mazepa's speech in which he argues the need for secrecy and denies any personal motive for switching from one ruler to another corresponds fully to the episode described by Orlyk in a letter to Metropolitan Stefan Iavors'kyi in 1721. According to Orlyk, Mazepa told him in 1707:

Before God the Omniscient I protest and swear that it is not for my private gain, not for higher honors, not for greater enrichment, nor for other whims of any kind, but for all of you who remain under my rule and command, for your wives and children, for the general good of my mother, my fatherland, poor unfortunate Ukraine, for the whole Zaporozhian

Host and the Little Russian people, as well as for the promotion and expansion of the rights and freedoms of the Host, that I wish to act, with God's help, in such a way that you, with your wives and children and our native land, along with the Zaporozhian Host, do not perish because of the Muscovite or the Swedish side.¹²

Mazepa's speech in *History of the Rus'* presents an image of the hetman that not only directly contradicts the imperial depiction of him as a Judas, a traitor to the tsar and his own people, but also departs significantly from the image of him that is presented by most eighteenth-century Ukrainian chroniclers. Writers of the first half of the century, including the author of the Hrabianka Chronicle, preferred to steer clear of a detailed discussion of the politically dangerous age of Mazepa, limiting themselves to a few short, dispassionate entries on the events of 1708 and 1709. Authors of the second half of the century, including Petro Symonovs'kyi and especially Aleksandr Rigelman, did not shy away from the controversial topic, but accepted and promoted the official viewpoint in their treatment of Mazepa. Even so, the image of Mazepa as a defender of Ukrainian rights, which emerges—though not without difficulty—from *History of the Rus'*, was not entirely without precedent in Ukrainian historical writing.

We know that a text of Mazepa's speech circulated in Ukraine in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but we do not have the text itself: Dmytro Bantysh-Kamens'kyi was promised a copy but he never received it. Nevertheless, Mazepa's speech in *History of the Rus'* finds parallels in certain extant sources. The main points of the speech correspond closely to the hetman's arguments as summarized in the *Brief Historical Description of Little Russia*. This narrative—written, according to a date on its title page, in 1789—is known today in a copy dated 1814. Its author claims that "Hetman Mazepa undertook to make use of the continuing war in Russia with the Swedish king in such a way as to renounce his subjection to the Russian sovereign and establish himself as an autocratic prince in the Little Russian regions with the help of Charles XII." The hetman

suggested to the Little Russian officers, first, that Little Russia had been subjected to destruction owing to the war with the Swedes, not for the sake of any interests of its own, but, in his opinion, even with impairment of its liberty; second, that the sovereign, exhausting it with taxes, would freely abrogate the treaties whereby it still prospered; third, that the present time offered a chance to think of the future; and, fourth, how difficult it was, having become accustomed to liberty, to endure never-ending bondage.¹³

What was certainly new in Mazepa's speech as rendered by the author of *History of the Rus'* was the eloquence and persuasiveness with which the hetman presented his argument. Among the first to be persuaded was the anonymous author himself—assuming, of course, that he was not the author of the speech, but the person who cited or edited an existing text. One can hardly imagine that he would have included such a text in his work if he were not at least partly sympathetic to Mazepa's argument and, by extension, to the hetman himself. Through the medium of Mazepa's speech, the anonymous author gave voice to many of his own ideas that he could not express on his own behalf. Despite the author's general verdict that Mazepa acted in his own interest, many of the prominent themes in the hetman's speech are picked up and further developed in those parts of the *History* where the narrator does not have to hide behind Mazepa in order to express his own views and ideas. The theme of Ukraine's neutrality in the Muscovite-Swedish conflict became a touchstone of the author's own reinterpretation of the Mazepa era, as well as the basis for his rejection of the anathema imposed on the old hetman.

Still, the strongest support for Mazepa's argument is not expressed by the author directly but through the medium of speeches by other characters, including the proclamation issued by Mazepa's ally Charles XII. The king corroborates everything declared by Mazepa in his own speech, and sounds the same themes of struggle against tyranny and the restoration of Rus'/Cossack independence (*samoderzhavie*) as does the apocryphal Mazepa. According to the *History*, Charles declares in his proclamation to the people of Ukraine:

The Muscovite tsar, being an intransigent foe of all the nations on earth and desiring to make them bend to his yoke, having subjected the Cossacks as well to his dishonorable bondage; despising, revoking, and annulling all your rights and freedoms established by solemn agreements and treaties with you, has forgotten and shamelessly contemned gratitude itself, held sacred by all nations, which is owed to you Cossacks and the Rus' nation by Muscovy, reduced to a nullity and almost to nonbeing by its internal conflicts, by pretenders, and by the Poles, but maintained and strengthened by you. For the whole world knows that the Rus' nation with its Cossacks was originally an autocratic nation—that is, dependent on itself alone, under the rule of its princes or autocrats....¹⁴

The author of *History of the Rus'* also gives voice to the other side, that of Tsar Peter I. Unlike Mazepa's speech and the proclamation of Charles XII, Peter's manifesto was not a product of the author's (or of a predecessor's) imagination but an actual document well-known in Ukraine. But the extract quoted from it in the *History* is much shorter than the one from Charles's alleged proclamation, to say nothing of Mazepa's speech. The author quotes

those parts of Peter's manifesto in which the tsar guarantees the rights and freedoms of Ukraine, not those in which he presents his main accusations against Mazepa. In *History of the Rus'* Peter merely defends himself against accusations that he violated the rights of Little Russia and promises to protect those rights in the future: "One may say without flattery that no people under the sun can boast of such privilege and liberty as our Little Russian people, for we have ordained that not one *peniaz'* [small silver coin] be taken from it for our treasury, and we have made this a testament for our successors." If Mazepa's statements are corroborated in *History of the Rus'* by those of Charles XII, and vice versa, Peter's declarations are left with no narrative support or corroborating evidence, and what the author of the *History* says about the behavior of Russian troops in Ukraine raises serious doubt about the validity of the tsar's statements. Judging by the space allotted to Mazepa and Charles on the one hand, and Peter on the other, to present their cases, there is little doubt that the author's sympathies lay with the former, not the latter.¹⁵

BETWEEN TSAR AND NATION

If the author of *History of the Rus'* preferred to express his support for Mazepa's cause through speeches and texts attributed to others, he used his own voice to express his (and, by extension, his readers') loyalty to the Russian ruler and to declare his support for Peter. Where the author speaks on his own behalf, he takes a position, which, unlike Mazepa's speech, does not tar both rulers with the same brush by depicting them as tyrants, but differentiates them, favoring Peter at the expense of Charles. It is not that the author is uncritical of Peter's actions, but he certainly prefers him to Charles, whom he considers a frivolous adventurer.¹⁶

This becomes especially clear in the author's treatment of Peter's attempts to reach agreement with Charles on the eve of the Battle of Poltava by sacrificing Russian territorial acquisitions and claims, which the Swedish king brushes aside in humiliating fashion. The following passage leaves no doubt about the author's sympathies in this particular case:

The Swedish king, drunk with the glory of a conqueror and with his constant victories, having rejected those offers [of peace], told those envoys of the tsar and foreign intermediaries striving to incline him toward peace that "he would make peace with the tsar in his capital city, Moscow, where he would force the Muscovites to pay him 30 million talers for the costs of the war and show the tsar how and over what to rule." Losing hope of achieving anything by peaceful means after such a brutal refusal, the sovereign began to rally his troops to the outskirts of

Poltava, and at the council of war that was held there, the whole general staff decided to give resolute battle to the Swedes, come what may.¹⁷

Sympathizing with Charles and Mazepa on the strength of their arguments while remaining loyal to the ruler was no easy task, partly because the anonymous author disapproved of the tsar's many actions and those of his Great Russian troops. He assuaged this dilemma by shifting responsibility to the tsar's advisers for those of Peter's actions of which he did not approve. To judge by the text of the *History*, Aleksandr Menshikov was the main culprit. He is depicted as the embodiment of absolute evil, especially in the vivid description of the Russian massacre of the defenders and peaceful inhabitants of Mazepa's capital, Baturyn. The author goes out of his way to describe the atrocities carried out by Menshikov's troops and to stress their commander's low social origins, apparently seeking not only to explain his cruelty but also to distance him as much as possible from the tsar.

Menshikov assaulted the unarmed burghers, who were in their homes and had no part whatsoever in Mazepa's designs; he slaughtered them to a man, sparing neither sex nor age, nor even suckling infants. This was followed by the troops' plundering of the town, while their commanders and torturers executed the bandaged Serdiuk officers and civil authorities.¹⁸

The loyalty to the ruler expressed by the author of the *History* did not automatically translate into loyalty either to the tsar's satraps or—an especially important point for our argument—to his Great Russian army and, by extension, his Great Russian nation. This distinction between the ruler and Great Russia was not the anonymous author's invention. It had already been made very clearly in Semen Divovych's *Conversation between Great and Little Russia*, written in 1762, shortly after Catherine II's ascent to the throne. The Great Russia of Divovych's poem was forced to admit that Little Russia was not subject to her (Great Russia) but to the ruler who governed both polities. Great Russia says to Little Russia in that regard:

I acknowledge that I myself am not your sovereign,
But our autocrat is our common master.
I do not dispute that he accepted you with honors;
I see that he often made his own equal to yours.
But say in peace, of which there was question above,
Do you win the war, supposedly, without my forces?¹⁹

The distinction between Great Russia and Little Russia allowed the author

of the *History* to take another contentious step and distinguish his loyalty to the ruler from loyalty to the ruler's troops. This distinction becomes particularly apparent in episodes where the anonymous author not only adopts a much more favorable attitude to the Swedish troops in Ukraine than to the tsar's army, but also contrasts the benevolence of the Swedes toward the local population with the harsh treatment meted out by the Great Russians:

The incursion of the Swedes into Little Russia by no means resembled that of an enemy invasion and had nothing hostile in it, but they passed through the inhabitants' settlements and plowed fields as friends and humble travelers, touching no one's property and committing none of the misdeeds, licentious acts, and excesses of every kind that are usually perpetrated by our troops in the villages on the grounds that "I am a servant of the tsar! I serve God and the sovereign on behalf of the whole Christian community! Chickens and geese, young women and girls belong to us by military right and by order of His Highness!" The Swedes, on the contrary, demanded nothing of the inhabitants and took nothing by force, but wherever they encountered them, they bought goods from them by voluntary trade and for cash.²⁰

In one case, referring to the massacres of Mazepa's supporters by the tsar's troops, the anonymous author even puts Russian persecution of the Little Russian (Rus') nation on a par with its past persecution by the Poles. His attribution of the cruelty of those massacres to Menshikov does little to hide the fact that, in his mind, the Great Russian regime has proved as oppressive toward his nation as was the Polish one, which created the first Rus' martyr, Severyn Nalyvaiko. Describing the massacre of Mazepa's supporters in Lebedyn, the anonymous author writes:

That punitive action was Menshikov's usual employment: breaking on the wheel, quartering, and impaling; the lightest, considered mere play, was hanging and decapitation.... It now remains to consider and judge—if, according to the words of the Savior himself, written in the Gospel, which are immutable and not to be ignored, "all blood spilled on earth will be required of this generation"—what requirement awaits for the blood of the Rus' nation shed from the blood of Hetman Nalyvaiko to the present day, and shed in great streams for the sole reason that it sought liberty or a better life in its own land and had intentions in that regard common to all humanity.²¹

The figure of Mazepa, traitor to the tsar and defender of Ukrainian rights, presented the author of the *History of the Rus'* with one more difficulty when it came to the anathema declared against him by the official church. Mazepa's

relationship to Christianity was a significant problem that had to be dealt with one way or another, as it constituted a major obstacle to the hetman's historical rehabilitation. The author of the *History* coped with the anathema in a number of ways. Some of his methods exemplify his Enlightenment-era tolerance of other religions, while others display his romantic readiness to bend the facts and invent stories if they fit his paradigm. The anonymous author rejects as a form of superstition the popular conception of the Swedes as non-Christians. He also brands as fables stories about Mazepa joining the Swedes in rejecting Orthodoxy and desecrating Orthodox icons. Furthermore, he claims that Mazepa had never spilled Christian—more precisely, Orthodox—blood.

In all these cases, the anonymous author is prepared to stand up for Mazepa, speaking now in his own voice and not hiding behind one of his characters. With regard to the spilling of Christian blood, the author first makes the apocryphal Mazepa declare neutrality in his speech to the Cossack Host, and then states that Mazepa had maintained his neutrality during the Battle of Poltava, refusing to send his troops against the tsar's army. If Mazepa's declaration of neutrality was sheer invention on the part of the author, his troops' nonparticipation in the battle was not. They were too insignificant in number and too unreliable in military training and political loyalty to be used in combat. This historical fact is interpreted by the anonymous author in a way that allows him to advance the thesis of Mazepa's neutrality, thereby undermining official accusations of political treason and betrayal of the Orthodox religion. According to the author of the *History*, Mazepa and his troops

remained at their camps and the Swedish ones at all times, constantly avoiding engagements with the Russians and maintaining the strictest neutrality toward them, stipulated by Mazepa with the Swedish king and announced in his declarations throughout Little Russia. For Mazepa, as everyone knows, was a Christian, deeply pious, having built many monasteries and churches at his expense, and he considered it a mortal sin to shed the blood of his compatriots and coreligionists, and he held to this with resolute firmness, yielding to no persuasions.²²

The *History's* emphasis on Mazepa's support of the Orthodox Church and the construction of Orthodox monasteries and shrines corresponds closely to the treatment of Mazepa by Oleksii Martos in his memoirs and was probably an important element of the Mazepa myth in early nineteenth-century Ukraine. Martos, who was close to the author of *History of the Rus'* not only in his assessment of Mazepa but also in his treatment of the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 and other episodes of Ukrainian history,²³ may have had an opportunity to acquaint himself with the *History* between 1818 and 1821, when he was actively working on his own history of Ukraine. It is much more likely, however, that both authors utilized the same sources or reflected the same attitudes of the

Ukrainian nobility (the Martos family, the Shyrais, and the anonymous author of *History of the Rus'* either came from the Chernihiv region or had strong connections with it).

In any case, both Martos and the author of *History of the Rus'* are highly critical of the anathema declared against Mazepa by the Russian Orthodox Church. The anonymous author characterizes the ritual declaration of anathema as "something new that had never yet existed in Little Russia; something terrible that was called 'Mazepa's companion to Hades.'" There can be little doubt that the author disapproved of Peter's presence at the ceremony, but, as always, he was prepared to shift the blame to one of the tsar's advisers, this time Feofan Prokopovych:

The numerous Little Russian clergy and the Great Russian clergy closest to these borders, deliberately summoned to Hlukhiv, under the leadership and inspection of the well-known bishop Prokopovych, having constituted itself as a so-called local synod, consigned Mazepa to eternal damnation, or anathema, on the ninth day of that same November. This dismal ceremony took place in the brick Church of Saint Nicholas in the presence of the sovereign, with a large assembly of officials and members of the public.²⁴

In both *History of the Rus'* and Martos's memoirs, Mazepa emerges not only as a defender of the interests of the Little Russian (Rus') nation but also as a proponent of its independence. The vision of an independent Ukraine, admittedly harking back to the past, is presented in the *History* as one of the goals of Mazepa and his ally, Charles XII. It must have been highly consonant with attitudes dominant in some segments of Ukrainian society, if Martos's memoirs are any indication. Given that the anonymous author's main strategy was to convince the imperial government to treat the Ukrainians as equals, Mazepa's references to independence should be regarded more as a threat than as a real political program.

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The author of *History of the Rus'* was caught between two contradictory imperatives—his loyalty to the ruler and the Romanov dynasty conflicted with his clear admiration for Mazepa as an embodiment of the Enlightenment ideals of struggle against tyranny, defense of human dignity, and protection of national rights. The solution to this seemingly insoluble problem was found in the concept of the nation, deeply rooted in Ukrainian historical writing of the previous era. While the anonymous author of the *History* stayed loyal to the tsar in his description of the Poltava episode and shifted responsibility for Peter's ruthlessness and cruelty to his advisers, he found no difficulty in

denouncing the tsar's Great Russian nation. If revolt against the tsar remained illegitimate for the author, the struggle of one nation against another in defense of its freedom and liberties certainly did not. The anonymous author was still faithful to Jean Bodin's notion that only God could judge and punish a ruler, but he was no less attuned to the ideal of national sovereignty as promoted by the leaders of the American and French revolutions.

In its interpretation of the Ukrainian past the *History* places the nation on a par with the ruler. The Rus' nation of the *History* was first and foremost that of the Cossack officers and their descendants, but on occasion it could include the popular masses as well. The author of the *History* was dismissive of people of low social status and critical of the actions of uneducated peasants, but he had no qualms about using their deeds as an argument in his exposition when it suited his purpose. In his treatment of Little Russians and Great Russians, the anonymous author was unquestionably following in the footsteps of Semen Divovych and his *Conversation between Great and Little Russia*, but he was prepared to go even further and treat their relations as those between separate nations, not just distinct historical and legal entities. The anonymous author also emerges from the pages of his *History* as the first Ukrainian intellectual to struggle with the notion of the religious and ethnic closeness of Russians and Ukrainians. He recognizes the depth of the cultural association between the two nations, but rejects the actions of the popular masses informed by that affinity. Instead, he turns the affinity into his principal weapon, claiming Ukraine's historical primacy as the Rus' nation, attributing the Rus' name almost exclusively to his compatriots and trying to shame the Russian state and society into granting equal rights to their Little Russian brethren.

If one judges by *History of the Rus'*, the Ukrainian elites of the early nineteenth century could not help admiring Mazepa, despite their best efforts to remain loyal to the monarchy. Mazepa, however, never became an unambiguously positive character in Ukraine. Unable to resolve the problem of Mazepa's disloyalty to Peter, the elites had to conceal and qualify their admiration for the hetman. After all, according to Pogodin's diary, the Chernihiv nobility not only "loved Mazeppa" but also admired Osyp Sudiienko, a descendant of a prominent Cossack officer family who in 1811 donated one hundred thousand rubles to build a church commemorating Peter's victory at Poltava.

NOTES

1. *The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (Boston; New York, 1905), 409.
2. On the anathematization of Mazepa, see Nadieszda Kizenko's article in this volume.
3. A. I. Martos, "Zapiski inzhenernogo ofitsera Martosa o Turetskoi voine v tsarstvovanie Aleksandra Pavlovicha," *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 7 (1893): 345. On Oleksii

- Martos, see Volodymyr Kravchenko, *Narysy z istorii ukrains'koi istoriohrafii epokhy natsional'noho Vidrozhennia (druha polovyna XVIII-seredyna XIX st.)* (Kharkiv, 1996), 91–98. On Ivan Martos, see I. M. Gofman, *Ivan Petrovich Martos* (Leningrad, 1970).
4. Diary of Mikhail Pogodin, Russian State Library, Manuscript Division, fond 231, vol. 1, fols. 188v–189r. Cf. Nikolai Barsukov, *Zhizn' i trudy M. P. Pogodina*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1888), 153.
 5. Diary of Mikhail Pogodin, vol. 1, fols. 188v–189r. Cf. Barsukov, *Zhizn' i trudy*, 1:153; Oleksander Ohloblyn, *Liudy staroi Ukrainy* (Munich, 1959), 155–57; “Pamiatnoe delo,” *Osnova* (July 1861): 41–74, here 52–53.
 6. *Istoriia Rusov ili Maloi Rossii: Sochinenie Georgiia Koniskogo, arkhiepiskopa Belorusskogo* (Moscow, 1846); Volodymyr Sverbyhuz, *Starosvits'ke panstvo* (Warsaw, 1999), 122–24; I. F. Pavlovskii, *Poltavtsy: ierarkhi, gosudarstvennye i obshchestvennye deiateli i blagotvoriteli* (Poltava, 1914), 38–45.
 7. See Mykhailo Vozniak, *Psevdo-Konys'kyi i psevido-Poletyka (“Istoriia Rusov” u literaturi i nautsi)* (Lviv; Kyiv, 1939), 5–7; O. P. Ohloblyn, *Do pytannia pro avtora “Istoriï Rusiv”* (Kyiv, 1998); Kravchenko, *Narysy*, 87, 101–57; Serhii Plokhly, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto, 2008), 49–65.
 8. *Istoriia Rusov*, 200.
 9. Voltaire, *History of Charles the Twelfth, King of Sweden* (New York, 1858), 127–28; *Istoriia Rusov*, 200.
 10. *Istoriia Rusov*, 209.
 11. *Ibid.*, 203–5.
 12. *Persha konstytutsiia Ukrainy het'mana Pylypa Orlyka, 1710 rik* (Kyiv, 1994), iii–vii; see Orlyk's letter to Metropolitan Iavors'kyi in *Osnova*, no. 10 (October 1862): 1–28; Orest Subtelny, *The Mazepists: Ukrainian Separatism in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Boulder, Colo., 1981), 190.
 13. “Kratkoe istoricheskoe opisanie o Maloi Rossii do 1765,” *Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, no. 6 (1848): 37.
 14. *Istoriia Rusov*, 209–10.
 15. *Ibid.*, 210.
 16. Kravchenko, *Narysy*, 151, 154.
 17. *Istoriia Rusov*, 214.
 18. *Ibid.*, 206–7.
 19. Semen Divovych, “Razgovor Velikorossii s Malorossiei,” in *Ukrains'ka literatura XVIII stolittia* (Kyiv, 1983), 398.
 20. *Istoriia Rusov*, 208–9.
 21. *Ibid.*, 212–13.
 22. *Ibid.*, 215.
 23. Kravchenko, *Narysy*, 97.
 24. *Istoriia Rusov*, 211–12.