

THE QUESTION OF ANGLO-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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The question of Anglo-Ukrainian relations in the seventeenth century has not been fully elucidated either in English or in Ukrainian historiography. Ukrainian historians have very seldom made Anglo-Ukrainian relations the subject of their research.¹

The English first learned about the Ukrainian Cossacks and their activities late in the sixteenth century from certain contemporary European publications as, for example, the books by Jean Lasicki² and Leonard Gorecki.³ These books were circulated in all European countries; in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they were widely read in England. Elie Borschak⁴ presented data concerning English attitudes toward the Cossacks in the early seventeenth century and reviewed some publications about the subject. I. Krypyakevych⁵ gave details concerning the international situation of that period, and concerning the Protestants' intentions, regarding the Ukrainian Cossacks. Evidently, in the 1620's and in the early 1630's, the Cossacks played an important role in the political plans of Sweden, England and Transylvania. In the 1650's these states watched with ever increasing attention the events of the national revolution led by Khmelnytsky and the strengthening of the Cossack state.

In 1882 Oleksander Lazarevsky published in *Kievskaya Starina*

¹ An interesting paper by Elie Borschak is one of the few exceptions in this regard. Cf., Elie Borschak, "Early Relations Between England and Ukraine," *Slavonic Review*, 1931, Vol. 10, No. 28, pp. 138-160.

² *Johannis Lasocii Historia de ingressu Polonorum in Valachiam cum Bogdano voiuoda*, Frankfurt, 1578.

³ *Leonhardi Gorecii Descriptio belli Ivoniae*, Frankfurt, 1578.

⁴ Elie Borschak, *ibid.*, pp. 138-143.

⁵ Iv. Krypyakevych, "Kozachchyna v politychnykh kombinatsiyakh 1620-1630 r.," *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*. 1913, Vol. CXVIII, p. 74.

the following excerpt from a letter which he believed might have been written by Cromwell to Khmelnytsky:

Theodatus Chmielnicki, Dei gratia generalissimus ecclesiae Graecorum, imperator omnium cosacorum Zaporoviensium, terror et extirpator nobilitatis Poloniae fortalitioremque expugnator, exterminator sacerdotum Romanorum, persecutor ethnicorum, Antichristi et Judacorum.⁶

Only this excerpt remains from Cromwell's alleged letter to Khmelnytsky. The excerpt was found in the Ossolineum Library in Lviv, in a manuscript volume having the number 113. Lazarevsky did not furnish the name of the author of the manuscript, mentioning only that

the book belonged to a person, not known to us, who in the middle of the seventeenth century wrote down in this book excerpts from the books and manuscripts read by this person.⁷

The above excerpt was entered on page 831 of the manuscript, under the year 1649. Bohdan Khmelnytsky's title occupied three lines; the rest of the page was left blank. It is known now that the manuscript volume was a notebook which belonged to a resident of Kraków, Martin Golinski, and consisted of two parts. The first part ends with the year 1648; the second part, compiled in 1665, has the title, *Termina różnych rzeczy które się działy r. 1648 do r. 1664*.

In the course of research for the present paper, the author elicited the opinions of several Ukrainian historians concerning Cromwell's alleged letter, and concerning the correspondence between Cromwell and Khmelnytsky in general. Elie Borschak⁸ and Olexander Ohloblyn⁹ do not believe that any relations be-

⁶ "Izvestiya i zametki," *Kievskaya Starina*, 1882, Vol. I, p. 212.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Elie Borschak, letter of January 11, 1954, Paris: "I think that the source of Cromwell's letter to Khmelnytsky is just a legend, having its origin in the work by Chevalier who applied to Khmelnytsky the name 'A Cromwell of Rus'." Kubalya popularized this expression by Chevalier and thus the legend was born." Cf., *Ukrayina*, Paris, 1953, Vol. IX, p. 790.

⁹ Olexander Ohloblyn, letter of April 21, 1955, Ludlow, Mass: "In my opinion, the problem of Khmelnytsky-Cromwell relations is veiled by legends. It seems to me that no documentary evidence exists."

tween Cromwell and Khmelnytsky took place. Natalya Polons'ka-Vasylenko¹⁰ assumes that these relations were possible, yet she points to a lack of documentary and other sources concerning these relations.

Some historians, however, merely on the basis of the above excerpt of the letter, considered the existence of relations between Cromwell and Khmelnytsky an irrefutable fact. Dmytro Doroshenko supports this contention.¹¹ Ivan Krypyakevych asserts that "Cromwell wrote to Khmelnytsky as his equal and called him 'the Ruler of the Cossacks Lands'."¹²

In his recent work on Khmelnytsky, Krypyakevych considered the "Cromwell letter" an authentic document, but he did not state categorically that Cromwell personally had written the letter.¹³

George Vernadsky likewise assumed the existence of Anglo-Ukrainian relations in Cromwell's time. He writes that Khmelnytsky's agents tried to contact Cromwell through Rakoczy and Karl Gustavus.¹⁴ Vernadsky mentions that "there was even at one time a suggestion of direct coordination between them."¹⁵ He believes that the relations between the English and the Cossacks were established in 1656.

The so-called Cromwell letter was found in Golinski's notebook under the year 1649. However, a study of the turbulent events of this year in England, raises the question whether Cromwell might have written any letter at that time to Khmelnytsky who was just beginning to enter the broad European scene as

¹⁰ N. Polons'ka-Vasylenko, letter of January 23, 1956, Germany.

¹¹ D. Doroshenko, "Die Ukraine und ihre Geschichte im Lichte der westeuropäischen Literatur . . ." *Abhandlungen des Ukrainischen Wissenschaftlichen Institutes in Berlin*, 1927, Vol. I, p. 3.

¹² I. Krypyakevych (ed.), *Velyka istoriya Ukrayiny*, I. Tyktor Publishing House, Winnipeg, 1949, p. 472.

¹³ I. Krypyakevych, *Bohdan Khmelnytsky*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian S.S.R., Kiev, 1954, p. 399.

¹⁴ George Vernadsky, *Bohdan, Hetman of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941, p. 110.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

a representative of the new Cossack power. On January 29, 1649, the King of England, Charles I, was beheaded. Cromwell, who played an important role in the events leading to the King's execution, was at that time the general of the Army of the English Parliament, but not the dictator of England. Following the execution of Charles I, Parliament proclaimed the Commonwealth under the rule of the Council of State. John Bradshaw headed the Council; Cromwell became one of its most active members.

Khmelnysky's title and the spelling of his name in the "Cromwell letter" present additional arguments against the authenticity of this letter. In 1649 Western European countries were rather well informed about Khmelnysky's activities. However, the spelling of his name was distorted in dispatches concerning the Cossack uprising. For example, the most popular contemporary European newspaper, *Gazette de France*, in 1648, alluded to *Ehmielecki* or *Zmilsky*.¹⁶ English documents of that time called Khmelnysky *Chimilski*, *Chmielinsky* and *Chmilinski*.¹⁷ The first two spellings were used in 1653; the latter, in January 1655. Contrary to those erroneous transcriptions of Khmelnysky's name in English documents, the "Cromwell letter" of 1648 gave the correct transcription, *Theodatus Chmielnicki* with the title, *imperator omnium cosacorum Zaporoviensium* . . . Perhaps Golinski himself corrected an erroneous English transcription. The title given to Bohdan Khmelnysky in the "Cromwell letter" is not typical for Cromwell, who, in spite of the etiquette of the period, was chary of writing full titles of sovereigns in his letters to them. The title of the King of Sweden was the only exception, being always written by Cromwell in full. There was a custom at that time to write at the top of the letter the names of the addresser and of the addressee, e.g.: "Oliver Protector of the Republic of England to the Most Serene Prince of

¹⁶ "Trysta rokiv tomu v Ukrayini," *Ukrayina*, Paris, 1949, No. 1, p. 35 (article based on materials of the Paris paper *Gazette de France*).

¹⁷ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe Esq. In seven volumes, from the year 1638—the Restoration*, printed by Thomas Woodward and Charles Devis, London, 1742; Vol. I, pp. 321 and 476; Vol. III, p. 691.

Transylvania, greetings—Most Serene Prince” . . . etc.¹⁸ There is no name of the addresser in Golinski’s notebook.

The author had an opportunity to peruse compilations of Cromwell’s letters and speeches, including letters to the King of Sweden, but did not succeed in finding any mention in them of Khmelnytsky and the Cossacks. Elie Borschak once informed this author that he had searched archives in London for Cromwell’s letters to Khmelnytsky, but did not find them.¹⁹

In view of all of the above evidence, it would seem that the letter in Golinski’s notebook was not written by Cromwell.

In 1663 Pierre Chevalier published in Paris his book on the history of the Ukrainian Cossacks.²⁰ In 1672, it was translated into English by Edward Brown.²¹ In his preface Brown explains his interest in the Ukraine as follows:

Although Ukraine be one of the most remote Regions of Europe, and the Cossackian name very Modern; yet hath that Countrey been of late the stage of Glorious Actions, and the Inhabitants have acquitted themselves with as great Valour in Martial affairs, as any Nation whatsoever; so that this, and other Motives have made me earnest to put this account of it into English.²²

Then the author compares the feats of the “sea dogs” with those of the Cossacks, conquerors of the wild steppe. He writes:

The Ocean is our delight, and our Engagements upon the Seas, have rentered us considerable to the World. Cossacks do in some measure imitate us, who took their rise from their Victories upon the Euxine, and settled themselves by incountring the Tartars in those Desert Plains, which do so far resemble the Sea, that the

¹⁸ W. C. Abbott, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1945, Vol. III, p. 370.

¹⁹ A personal communication.

²⁰ Pierre Chevalier, *Histoire de la guerre des Cosaques contre la Pologne. Avec un discours de leur origine, país, moeurs, gouvernement et religion, et un autre des Tartares Precopites*, Paris, 1663.

²¹ Pierre Chevalier, *A Discourse of the Original, Countrey, Manners, Government and Religion of the Cossacks, with another of the Precopian Tartars. And the History of the Wars of the Cossacks against Poland*, translated by Edward Brown, London, 1672.

²² Pierre Chevalier, *A Discourse . . .*, The Preface, p. 1.

Mariners Compass may be useful for Direction in the one, as well as the other.²³

Brown considered the Cossacks to be the "Eastern Frontiers of Europe" and great lovers of freedom. There is an interesting characterization of Khmelnytsky in the preface, typical for the seventeenth century. Brown writes:

The Actions of Kmielniski, General of Cossacks, are very remarkable; and how he raised himself to that greatness, as to be feared by a Nation, which neither the Power of Christendom, nor the Turks could shake.²⁴

In the French edition of Chevalier's book Khmelnytsky was compared with Cromwell. This comparison is missing in the English translation. According to Borschak, this comparison of Khmelnytsky with Cromwell gave rise to the legend of their relations.

The legend concerning the correspondence between Cromwell and Khmelnytsky resulted in the obfuscation of the question of Anglo-Ukrainian relations during the Khmelnytsky period. However, it is quite possible that these relations existed.²⁵ The abundant material showing the interest of the English in Bohdan Khmelnytsky's struggle are to be found in John Thurloe's published papers.²⁶ John Thurloe (1616-1668) became Cromwell's secretary in 1653, and was in charge of the English intelligence service and secret police.²⁷ Beginning with 1653 there are systematic notations on Khmelnytsky's victories and defeats in Thurloe's seven volumes. These notations were mostly made on the basis of reports of the English agents. The relevant excerpts from Thurloe's papers were published in Ukrainian translation by Volodymyr Bezushko.²⁸

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁵ Cf. Elie Borschak, "Early Relations . . .," where English publications of that time are reviewed manifesting an interest in Ukrainian affairs.

²⁶ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*

²⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Sidney Lee, New York, 1898, Vol. LVI, pp. 324-344.

²⁸ Volodymyr Bezushko, "Khmelnychchyna v korespondentsiyi Dzhona Terlyova," *Litopys Chervonoyi Kalyny za 1931 rik*," No. II, pp. 8-9, No. III, pp. 18-20.

Almost no information has been found concerning the relations between the English diplomats in Constantinople and the Cossacks. On June 12, 1651, Semen Reni reported from Constantinople to the Emperor Leopold concerning contacts between the English, the French, the Transylvanian, and the Cossack diplomats.²⁹ However, nothing is known about the negotiations of the Cossack delegates with the English in Constantinople.

Late in 1653, Cromwell received the title of Lord Protector of the Republic of England and concentrated all power in his hands.

In November 1655, Khmelnytsky, through his envoy, Father Danylo Hrek, proposed to Karl X Gustavus "a broad military plan of coalition of Sweden, the Ukraine, Muscovy, England, Venice, Austria, and Persia. This coalition was planned with the purpose of defeating and liquidating Turkey and liberating all the Christians from Turkish slavery; the Greeks would be liberated first."³⁰ In this author's opinion, this proposition was inspired by Father Danylo Hrek, who was a prominent leader of the Greek liberation movement in exile. Possibly, he was a mediator between Khmelnytsky and Cromwell. Khmelnytsky's proposal for the creation of an anti-Turkish league which would include England was never realized. However, the proposal is evidence that Khmelnytsky considered England a prospective ally.

It would seem that the years 1656 and 1657 were favorable for the development of Anglo-Ukrainian relations. At that time Khmelnytsky's political plans were in agreement with those of Cromwell. A coalition of the Ukraine, Moldavia, Walachia, Transylvania, and Sweden was created, with an anti-Polish and anti-Muscovite character. Karl X Gustavus and George Rakoczy, for their part, had friendly relations with Cromwell, who aimed at creating a league of European non-Catholic states. England, through its agents, followed the Cossack-Swedish negotiations.

²⁹ *Zherela do istoriyi Ukrayiny-Rusy*, Lviv, 1911, Vol. V, p. 479.

³⁰ V. Lypynsky, *Ukrayina na perelomi*, Bulava Publishing Corporation, New York, 1954, p. 49.

On September 12, 1656 an English agent informed his government:

Hier at Elbing is arrived a patriarch sent from Chmielnitsky, generall of the Cossakes, to the king of Sweden for to treat with his majesty a liga and conjunction of armes against the Muscoviter. He goes tomorrow from hence to Frauenburg to the king; and the report goes, that the king will send with this patriarch two of his gentlemen to the above named generall Chmielniczky for to conclude and confirme the treatie, whereof I shall impart more particulars of with the next post. . . ³¹

It is known that shortly afterward, Karl X Gustavus sent two envoys, Welling and Törnshjöld, to the Ukraine in order to conclude a treaty with Khmelnytsky.

On the basis of the available material, the existence of direct relations between Cromwell and Khmelnytsky cannot be proven. Nevertheless, English sources reveal an interest by the English government in Ukrainian affairs in the seventeenth century, while Bohdan Khmelnytsky gave consideration to a coalition with England, and the Cossack diplomats had the opportunity to meet English envoys abroad.

³¹ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, Vol. V, p. 473.