

Lesson 17: The Khmel'nyts'kyi Era

His reign, the Khmel'nyts'kyi Era elicited an emotion upheaval never before experienced by the Ukrainian masses. This elemental force, misled later by those often in foreign service after Khmel'nyts'kyi's death was more destructive than creative, especially during the so-called Ruina Period (1663-1674), but it arose an individual and collective feeling which was to leave an indelible mark. The Ukrainian masses idealized Khmel'nyts'kyi's struggle against the Polish lords and yearned for the Ukraine--a utopian land of the ideal Cossack freedom. Hence, it is not surprising that after the term Malorossiiia became discredited because it became a symbol of the colonial policies of the Russian Empire after 1709, the son of the people, Taras Shevchenko, associated his great talent not with the name Malorossiiia, but with the name Ukraina and, thus, resolved the question of what these people should be called. This is important to understand how it happened that the name Rus' or Little Rus' was replaced by the name Ukraina.

What political conceptions developed after the Khmel'nyts'kyi Revolution? There were two: (1) the conception of the Zaporozhian Host. The old conception, which dated back to the middle of the sixteenth century,

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was of the popular level. The new conception was of the principedom or principality of Rus', which would be in union with Poland-Lithuania or with Sweden or with another power. A kind of intermediary solution is in the Pereiaslav Treaty. Officially, the state was still called the state of the Zaporozhian Host, but Aleksii Mikhailovich assumed the title of Tsar of Malaia Rossiia. Now, there was a tsardom of Malaia Rossiia, a new political unit of which Michael Fedorovich was the suzerain, but Khmel'nyts'kyi was the actual ruler. We will discuss this later.

By the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were several uprisings, either by Cossacks or peasants, in connection with the special situation of this territory. As I mentioned before, they were originally granted twenty or thirty years, depending on the territory, they were free from all duties, but in the meantime. By the end of the sixteenth century, they had to start their servitude. After having had thirty years of freedom, no one wanted to return to serfdom. Until 1638, there were different types of uprisings, which we will not discuss in detail, but everything ended in 1638 with the defeat of the Cossacks. The Cossack revolts, led first by Pavliuk, by Ostriainin, and Hunia, were crushed by the Polish government. The causus beli was the

decision of the Polish senators not to antagonize the Turks, but fortify the Dnieper near the rapids in order to hinder the naval activities of the Cossacks, which occurred in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. The French engineer Beuplan, who, as you know, left an important description of the Ukraine with wonderful maps, drew the maps of the Dnieper. He was working in the Ukraine in the mid-1640's. He was engaged to select an appropriate site for a fortress. This was Kodak, built in July, 1635, but destroyed by Hetman Sulyma, who was returning from a Black Sea raid in August of the same year. After Hunia's army was defeated, the Cossacks had to accept very harsh terms. The registered Cossacks were deprived of their former privilege and self-government, while unregistered Cossacks were reduced to peasant status and were forced to endure countless insults from the administration. Now, the administration believed that they had suppressed forever the Cossack "hydra," as they used to call it. Now, we have the period from 1638 to 1648, known as the Golden Period in Polish history. At that time there were no significant changes in Ukrainian-Polish relations. There was a peace, but it was too peaceful, and, therefore, too suspicious. It was enough for a spark to ignite the fire. Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, a captain in the Chyhyryn regiment suffered

injustice at the hands of Polish officials, his family estate being seized, his buildings destroyed, and his family insulted. After he was unable to find justice in the Polish courts, he made his way to the Zaporozhian Sich, a refuge for the Cossacks. This man, who was to open a new period in Ukrainian history and in East European history in general, was the son of an Orthodox squire and had served in the staff of the Polish hetman Ziolkewski. Born circa 1595, Bohdan got an education at the Jesuit college near Iaroslav, near L'viv. He took part, with his father, in the Polish campaign against Turkey in 1620. His father was killed and Bohdan was taken prisoner. He, by chance, we know from the Turkic chronicler Naima, was sold to the household of the Sheikh of Islam who is similar to the Roman pope, the highest religious official within the Muslim world. The connections with the Muslim who was able to establish later, of course, were for him of great importance. He learned Turkish and there were some rumors that he converted to Islam. But we have no proof of this. He had friends not only among the Turks, but also among the Crimean Tatars. As you know, the future khans, when they were crown princes, normally had to stay in Constantinople. Through his Tatar friends, Khmel'nyts'kyi got in touch with the Crimean khan, whom he urged to join the Cossacks to

invade the Polish lands. The khan was at odds with the Polish king because he had not paid him the regular contributions. Here, I have to mention an important thing: the Crimean khans of the so-called Girey line of the Genghis dynasty were the only successors of the Golden Horde and there was a special and interesting situation within the Muslim world, the most legitimate dynasty was the Crimean one. As to the Turkish dynasty, they were parvenueau, but they had the actual power. Theoretically, the Crimean khan was over the Turkish sultan; practically, he was a vassal of the Porte. On that basis, there were always some misunderstandings and problems between Crimea and Ottoman Turkey. Khmel'nyts'kyi and other politicians often made use of this situation.

Now, there is another moment. In 1340, the Old Rus' dynasty in the Kingdom of Galicia and Volhynia, died out. The Polish king Casimir occupied Galicia and the Lithuanian prince Lubart occupied Volhynia. Theoretically, the Kingdom of Galicia and Volhynia since 1240 was more or less a kind of vassalage of the Golden Horde. After the Golden Horde ceased to exist, it was the Crimean Horde which claimed these rights. Later, when Jagailo or Witold gradually incorporated the White Ruthenian and Ukrainian territories, they had theoretically to pay a ufiminki (in

Polish), to had to sent gifts to the Crimean khan for the rights to reign in these territories. From time to time, Polish kings decided not to pay this ransom or tribute. Wladyslaw IV was one of these kings who refused to pay. Now, Khmel'nyts'kyi had a good opportunity to convince the Crimean khan than it was time to act. The khan at that time was Islam Girey III. The khan promised to come to the aid of Khmel'nyts'kyi and ordered two high bey and the tatar army to join Khmel'nyts'kyi. As soon as the Cossacks in the Zaporozhia learned of Khmel'nyts'kyi's alliance with the Tatars, they decided to raise the standard of revolt. Khmel'nyts'kyi was elected Hetman, news was sent out secretly that war against the Poles would break out in the following spring, and all the secret paths to the Zaporozhia were choked with volunteers going to join the Cossacks. The Polish government, having learned of the impending rebellion urged the great Hetman Potocki to make order. Shortly after Easter, 1648, Potocki made his appearance in the Ukraine with a powerful army. His son, Stephan, was ordered forward with the cavalry to meet Khmel'nyts'kyi, while Potocki, accompanied by General Kalinowski, and the main army units, slowly advanced, picking up Polish garrisons on their way to meet the Cossack army. Khmel'nyts'kyi, having completely destroyed Stephen's cavalry at Zhovtyi Vody, on May 6, 1648, marched against the main Polish army, which he met

near the city of Korsun. He wiped it out in a bloody battle, capturing all the officers, including both generals and the hetman. At this time, Khmel'nyts'kyi and his close advisors had no intention of breaking off all relations with the Commonwealth, but wished only to repeal the unjust law of 1638, to restore full freedom to the Cossack Host, and to increase the contingents of the Cossacks to 12,000. With this thought in mind, Khmel'nyts'kyi dispatched his ambassadors to the king, but, in the meantime, Wladyslaw IV died. Poland was now left without a king, without a hetman, without an army to face the victorious Cossacks. The convocation of parliament met at Warsaw and discussed means of keeping the good will of the Cossacks, but made no provisions for meeting their demands, and although the Orthodox senator, Adam Kysil, was sent with a commission to negotiate with Khmel'nyts'kyi, a new army was mobilized for use against the Cossacks. As soon as it became evident that the Poles were not ready to make concessions, Khmel'nyts'kyi moved with great caution, pretending to be quietly awaiting a reply from the peace commission. His Cossack officers, however, were busily engaged in raising the countryside, especially the Kiev and Bratslav governments, which they did so successfully that Jeremiah Wisniowiecki, the owner of large estates in Left Bank Ukraine,

was forced to take flight from Kiev to Podolia and then to Volhynia.

Khmel'nyts'kyi marched slowly to Volhynia and, after a Tatar detachment

joined him at Pidliantsi, he forced the Poles into an engagement and fell

upon them with the full force of the united Cossack and Tatar armies.

The Poles lost the battle. The remnants of the Polish army gathered in

Lemberg and entrusted the chief command to Wisniowiecki, who retreated

to Zamosc. Khmel'nyts'kyi continued westward at a slow pace, hoping for

the news of the election of the new king to bring the war to an end.

Jan Kasimierz, the brother of Wladyslaw IV, was elected. One of his first

acts was to send Khmel'nyts'kyi a letter, notifying him of the results

of the election, to promise many favors to the Cossacks, and to beg him

to postpone further military operations, pending the arrival of Commissioner

whom he was sending. Replying that he would submit to the will of the

king, Khmel'nyts'kyi returned to Kiev. By 1648, Khmel'nyts'kyi was over

fifty years old. He was not a revolutionary type, but was rather a man

who preferred to find a modus vivendi, and only if forced, he acted.

Of course, at that time he did not have in mind to create an independent

state. The only problem he believed he had to pursue was to restore the

rights of the Cossacks and his own rights. But something happened.



Khmel'nyts'kyi went to Kiev. Upon his arrival in Kiev in January, 1649, he was so overwhelmingly welcomed by Metropolitan Kosiv, and by Patriarch Boinsins of Jerusalem as the liberator of the Ukrainian Orthodox people from the Polish yoke.

A decade before 1648, in the time of Metropolitan Iov Boreckyj, Kievan spiritual leaders held lofty political aims for the "nation" (it had a different meaning than now), but there had been at that time no force capable of putting them into effect, since the Cossack Host had only comprised a small organization. But now, under the leadership of Khmel'nyts'kyi, the Cossacks had grown into a powerful army. The Patriarch Boisius of Jerusalem, who was paying a visit to the Ukraine (in order, of course, to collect some funds and so on), made a number of bold suggestions to Khmel'nyts'kyi, even going so far, it is said, as to address him as king of all-Rus' and Ukraine, and as a leader of a union of Orthodox states. With this encouragement from Boisius, Khmel'nyts'kyi himself began to view his position and his responsibilities in a new light and to make plans not only to enlarge his army, gain additional rights for the Cossacks, but also to promote the interests of all the Rus'-Ukrainian people in the whole territory of the Ukraine. This purpose he first

outlined in early 1649 to the royal commissioners who visited him. They were led by Adam Kysil. Khmel'nyts'kyi's outline was as follows:

"I have hitherto undertaken tasks which I had not thought through. Henceforth, I shall pursue aims which I have considered with care. I shall free the entire people of Rus' from the "linkhs" (the Poles). Up to now, I had fought because of the wrongs done to me personally. Now I shall fight for our Orthodox faith, for our Rus' nation, for the Rus' common people, as far as Lublin and Cracow will help me, and I shall not abandon the common people, because they are ours. I am a small and insignificant man. But, with the will of God, I have become the sovereign (samoderzhets') of Rus'."

Khmel'nyts'kyi revolution resulted in the establish of a new form of a new institution of government, the Hetman state. I would like to say in a few words what happened. The Polish army was destroyed and Khmel'nyts'kyi, of course, could so far as to Warsaw and so on. He would have found no resistance. But he never went to Warsaw. Modern historians often ask why he did not realize that there would have been problems with the Polish government, but Myron Korduba asserted that in spite of the fact that Khmel'nyts'kyi was an ingenious strategist, and military commander and it is not just by accident that a contemporary writer compared him to Cromwell. But his situation was more complicated than that of Cromwell.

Cromwell, of course, was a capable military, religious, and political leader, but he could rely on an army already in existence. He could rely on an administration that existed before. What he did was just to replace some highest positions by his people--that was all. Now, Khmel'nyts'kyi had to create everything from nothing. The administration until 1648 was the Polish one. Now, they were no longer in existence. Now, it was necessary to replace them. Of course, it was very easy to get the support of the so-called "masses," but as you know, when the first difficulty would arise, the masses will leave you. Therefore, Khmel'nyts'kyi had first to establish the new order there and to create a system which fulfill new needs and demands. The division of the Cossack Host into regiments (polks) led to the division of the territory governed by them into corresponding administrative units (polks), existing as early as in the decade of 1630. They were polks of Chyhyryn, Cherkasy, Kaniv, Korsun, and so on. Even at that time the Cossack colonels (polkovnyks), captains (sotnyks), and squad leaders (desiatnyks) were not merely military officers in time of war but had begun to perform administrative and juridical functions, in time of peace, replacing every other organ of authority. During the Hetmanate of Khmal'nyts'kyi, after his return

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to Kiev in 1649, the Cossacks had established their system of government throughout the expansive area of the Ukraine, especially in the governments of Kiev, Bratslav, and Chernihiv, where they had driven out the Polish administration. Only the elected wardens in the towns and the old administration in the monastic and Church estates remained. The population outside this area were free men, most of whom became Cossacks. Those who did not enlist in the Cossacks, registered as townspeople, regardless whether they lived in the cities or villages. From these people, various taxes were collected for the benefit of the Cossack treasury. The Cossack population was not subject to taxation, but performed military service. The number of regiments in Khmel'nyts'kyi's army was not always the same, but according to the registration record of 1649, there were nine west of the Dnieper and seven east of the Dnieper. The regiments west of the Dnieper were the Chyhyryn, Cherkasy, Kaniv, Korsun, Bila Tserkva, Uman', Bratslav, Kal'nyk, and Kiev regiments. The regiments east of the Dnieper were the Pereiaslav, Kropyvna, Myrhorod, Poltava, Pryluky, Nizhyn, and Chernihiv regiments. The territory of the three Polish-Lithuanian governments were divided into smaller units, which were better suited for administrative purposes. The colonel governed his district with the assistance of a

regimental staff: Regimental chief ordnance officer (osaul), regimental judge (suddia), regimental secretary (pysar), and so on. The military type of organization, although theoretically restricted to its jurisdiction to the Cossack army, began now to assume the character of a territorial government. The army's staff became the Hetman's cabinet of minister, the secretary-general became the chancellor or prime minister. The council of general staff officers, made up of the chief ordnance officer, the two general judges, the general adjutant, and the general secretary, became members of the cabinet.

When the Polish commissioners arrived in 1649, they found already a new administrative system in the Ukraine and the country fully prepared for war. Khmel'nyts'kyi refused to discuss with the commissioners the future arrangements for the Cossack army on Polish terms. The Poles were called to the colors and began to make preparations for a campaign, while the Polish regular army set out at once to attack the Cossack army in Volhynia. Khmel'nyts'kyi marched to meet them. They retreated to the strong fortress of Zbaraz, not far from Lemberg, where Khmel'nyts'kyi later besieged the fortress and harrassed the Poles by repeated attacks and continuous bombardment. In order to save the army, the king marched toward

Zbaraz, but the Cossacks surrounded the king's force so completely that it was unable to move. The Poles wrote the Khan, who was with the horde in person, to promise him everything he wished if he would desert Khmel'nyts'kyi. The Khan consented and began to urge Khmel'nyts'kyi to make peace with the king, whereupon Khmel'nyts'kyi realized how dangerous it was to rely upon the Horde. In order to prevent the Horde from attacking him, he accepted the Khan's advice. Negotiations were opened and the terms of peace were agreed upon in early August, 1649. This was the famous Zboriv Treaty, later the basis for the Pereiaslav Treaty. Practically at Zboriv, Khmel'nyts'kyi was granted on paper almost everything he wanted. I will now read the main provisions of the treaty, which created a semi-independent state.

In the territories of the three governments, Kiev, Chernihiv, and Bratslav, all Polish administrators were not allowed to stay there. This territory was given to the Cossack administration. The registered Cossack army was increased to 40,000 men, they had rights to stay in the lands of the king's domain or Polish lords. No Polish troops were allowed to stay there. In these three governments, all higher officers were to be filled by the Orthodox only. The Union was abolished and the Orthodox

Metropolitan was to receive a seat in the Polish Senate. The Cossack Hetman was to have Chyhyryn as his official seat.

Khmel'nyts'kyi desired to carry out the terms of the Treaty of Zboriv, but he recognized the fact that the Ukrainian non-Cossack elements would not permit him to do so. The problem was that the revolution or that the main driving force during the revolution were the peasant masses. Now, the peasant masses were not included in the Treaty and, of course, this was a very complicated problem. This was the middle of the seventeenth century and it was not the time when peasant masses were regarded as human beings. But still in the Ukraine the situation was a little different because due to the problems I described in my other class, they were granted freedom, and now of course, they saw themselves as abandoned. On the other hand, Khmel'nyts'kyi saw that the Poles also that the Poles did not fully approve of the treaty and had failed to fulfill some of its terms, as for example, to permit the Metropolitan to take seat in the senate, to abolish the Church Union, and so on. It was evident that the Poles were merely awaiting an opportunity to annul the Treaty of Zboriv. Khmel'nyts'kyi and his staff were convinced that they would have to take up arms again if they wished to secure their independence. War was resumed

and in June, 1651 the Poles defeated the Cossacks at Berestechko.

Contemporary writers and the so-called Cossack chronicles spoke here again about the treason of the khan, but modern scholarship proved that the Polish victory was due to the fact that Jan Kasimierz was able to hire German officers and German heavy infantry. 1648 was the end of the Thirty Years War. There were plenty of unemployed soldiers. It was possible to hire them and they had thirty years of experience. Apparently, the Polish victory was due to the fact that the Polish army was able to have better soldiers.

A new treaty in Bila Tserkva in September 1651 was signed, placing limitation upon the rights granted in the Treaty of Zboriv. The number of registered Cossacks was reduced to 20,000 and the autonomous territory of the Cossacks was reduced just to the government of Kiev. No mention was made of the abolishment of the Union. It was clear, of course, that Khmel'nyts'kyi once he recovers his strength, would not keep to that treaty.

This was an outline of the first three years of the Khmel'nyts'kyi revolution, concentrating on the situation in Poland, the Ukraine, and Crimea. But in order to understand Khmel'nyts'kyi's revolution and problems connected with it, it is necessary to recall some facts from



European history. First of all, there were leagues in action. On one side, the anti-Turkish league, headed by Venice, which regarded itself as the successor to Byzantium's former center of trade on Mare Nostrum and trade with the Levant and Persia and so on. Venice was in alliance with Austria and the Hapsburg Monarchy. The Hapsburg Monarchy was, more or less, the representative of the Catholic side in the struggle against the Reformation. As to the Reformation, the main powers engaged in East European affairs were, on one side, the Swedish king, Karl X, and on the other side, the vovoda of Transylvania, George Rakosci. For Khmel'nyts'kyi, the problem was that it was not possible to find at least two powers which would not be engaged in a mutual conflict. For instance, if one takes Transylvania--Transylvania had some common interests with Khmel'nyts'kyi, but, on the other hand, when Wladyslaw IV died, the prince of Transylvania was, as was the king of Sweden, interested in obtaining the Polish throne.