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## **Abstract/Résumé analytique**

### **Voltaire on Mazepa and Early Eighteenth-Century Ukraine**

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*This study offers a comparison of Voltaire's treatments of Ivan Mazepa and his Ukrainian Cossack homeland in two of his best known historical works: his History of Charles XII, King of Sweden and his History of the Russian Empire under Peter the Great. It also discusses Voltaire's use of written and oral sources and his historical method in general. Voltaire's attitude towards the Ukrainian rebel "Hetman" or ruler, Mazepa, and Ukrainian independence in general, was basically positive in his earlier work on Charles, but was much more guarded, indeed negative, in his History of the Russian Empire, which was a work commissioned by the Russian court that greatly praised the reforms of the iron-willed Tsar. However, in extensive revisions of his book on Charles, done simultaneously with his work on Russia, Voltaire did not change his generally positive view of Mazepa and Ukrainian independence, and so, his true attitude remains somewhat difficult to determine. Voltaire's work on Charles in particular was very influential throughout Europe during the Romantic period and was the ultimate source of Byron's poem on Mazepa, and after him, many other works of literature, painting and music that treated the Mazepa theme.*

*Dans cet article, nous étudions la façon dont Voltaire traite d'Ivan Mazepa et de sa patrie cosaque ukrainienne, dans deux de ses essais historiques les plus connus : Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède et Histoire de l'Empire russe sous Pierre le Grand. Nous discutons aussi de l'emploi que fit Voltaire des sources écrites et orales et aussi de sa méthode historique en général. L'attitude de Voltaire envers le rebelle « Hetman » ou Mazepa, le chef, et l'indépendance ukrainienne en général, était au fond assez positive au début, dans son oeuvre sur Charles, mais devint beaucoup plus circonspecte, voire même négative dans son Histoire de l'Empire russe qui avait été commanditée par la cour de Russie qui vantait énormément les mérites des réformes de ce tsar à la volonté de fer. Toutefois, en apportant de considérables révisions à son livre sur Charles — révisions entreprises en même temps qu'il écrivait son livre sur la Russie — Voltaire ne changea pas son opinion, qui était en général positive, sur Mazepa et sur l'indépendance ukrainienne et, par conséquent, son attitude véritable demeure quelque peu difficile à déterminer. L'ouvrage de Voltaire sur Charles, en particulier, a eu beaucoup d'influence à travers l'Europe durant la période romantique et fut la source fondamentale du poème de Byron sur Mazepa, et, après lui, de nombreuses autres oeuvres d'art tant en littérature qu'en peinture et musique qui eurent Mazepa pour thème.*

Thomas M. Prymak

## VOLTAIRE ON MAZEPA AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY UKRAINE

*J'ay vu un temps où vous n'aimiez guères l'histoire. Ce n'est  
après tout qu'un ramas de tracasseries qu'on fait aux morts  
[... history is, after all, nothing but the pack of tricks that the  
living play on the dead].*

— Voltaire, Letter of 9 February 1757,  
to Pierre Robert Le Cornier de Cideville.

François-Marie Arouet, or Voltaire (1694-1778) as he is better known to history, was one of the outstanding figures of the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. He was the Enlightenment *philosophe* par excellence, a prolific writer, a poet, playwright, and novelist, a wit and satirist, whose sharp pen was loved and feared all over the Europe of his day from England to Russia. He was a deist, an advocate of “reason” in affairs public and private, and a fierce critic of superstition and the abuses within the Roman Catholic Church and the *ancien régime* under which he lived. His battle cry against superstition, censorship, and fanaticism “*écrasez l'infâme*” (crush the infamy) rings throughout both his published works and private letters.<sup>1</sup>

Although today Voltaire is known primarily as a satirist who, for example, savagely ridiculed philosophical optimism in his tale titled *Candide* (1759), in his

<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to Voltaire which includes an essay on his work as a historian, see Nicholas Cronk, (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Voltaire*, (Cambridge, 2009). Also very useful in this regard are Raymond Trousson and others (eds.) *Dictionnaire Voltaire*, (Bruxelles, 1994), and the somewhat more detailed Jean Goulemot and others (eds.) *Inventaire Voltaire*, (Paris, 1995). The most authoritative biography of Voltaire is the five volume study by René Pomeau and his collaborators, *Voltaire en son temps* (Oxford, 1985-1994). Also see Raymond Trousson, *Voltaire* (Paris, 2008), which gives a good account of Voltaire as a historian and even mentions his treatment of Mazepa (p. 131). For recent biographies in English, see Roger Pearson, *Voltaire Almighty: A Life in Pursuit of Freedom* (London, 2005), and Ian Davidson, *Voltaire: A Life* (London, 2010), with a detailed analytic bibliography. For a biography in Russian, which stresses Voltaire's ostensible role as an advocate of European peace, see A. Akimova, *Volter* (Moscow, 1970). This latter work, of course, was subject to strict Soviet censorship.

own day he was also well-known as a historian who was critical of what he believed to have been the narrow interests and scholarly pedantry of many of the historians who had preceded him. Striving to write "philosophical" history which took up big themes, paying much attention to story and style, avoiding laborious and annalistic history, and jettisoning much of the traditional scholarly apparatus, such as extensive citation of sources in footnotes or elsewhere, in his various historical works he described many of the most important people and events of his own time, or, at least, of the times immediately preceding him. His *Le siècle de Louis XIV* described France in the age of the "sun king" and expanded the field of history from wars and politics to economics, law, culture, manners and morals; his wide-ranging *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* also attempted to expand it geographically and culturally beyond Europe and Christianity to encompass China, India, the Americas, and the lands of Islam. Both works shifted the emphasis in history from ancient Greece and Rome, that is, classical antiquity, to more modern times.<sup>2</sup>

All three of these shifts, that is, from politics to culture, from western Europe narrowly defined to a wider world, and from classical antiquity to modern history are present in his historical works touching upon eastern Europe in general and the Ukraine of the Cossack ruler or "Hetman," Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709), in particular. Hetman Mazepa, already an important political figure in his own right, and well respected throughout the various far-flung Ukrainian lands for his patronage of architecture, literature, and the arts, was to make a great impression upon European opinion by his unexpected revolt against Russian rule, and Voltaire did not ignore this surprising event.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The most convenient edition of Voltaire's historical works is his *Oeuvres historiques*, René Pomeau (ed.), (Paris, 1957), 1813 pp. Unless otherwise noted, all references in this paper are to this edition. However, I have also consulted the relevant critical editions published in his voluminous *Oeuvres complètes* (Oxford, 1968ff.), hereafter *OC*, and collated references to the various volumes of that edition. For analysis, see in particular, Jean Goulemot, "Historien," *Inventaire Voltaire*, pp. 660-61; J.B. Black, *The Art of History: A Study of Four Great Historians of the Eighteenth century* (New York, 1965), pp. 29-76; G.P. Gooch, "Voltaire as Historian," in his *Catherine the Great and Other Studies* (Hamden, 1966), pp. 199-274; and especially J. H. Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian* (Westport, 1958; 1985). Also see Siofra Pierce, "Voltaire Historiographer: Narrative Paradigms," in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, no. 5 (Oxford, 2008), who at the end of this study gives useful summaries of Voltaire's various historical works, including his important article on "History" from the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert. For a Russian translation of this article together with an essay by A.D. Liublińskaia on historical thought in this encyclopedia, see A. D. Liublińskaia (ed.) *Istoriia v entsiklopedii Didro i D'Alemberta* (Leningrad, 1978), especially pp. 7-18. Also in Russian, see E.A. Kosminsky, "Volter kak istorik," in B.P. Volgin (ed.) *Volter: Stati i materialy* (Moscow, 1948), pp. 153-82.

<sup>3</sup> For general introductions to Mazepa's life in English, see Clarence A. Manning, *Hetman of Ukraine: Ivan Mazepa* (New York, 1957) which, however, is marked by a romantic tone of hero-worship, and L. R. Lewitter, "Mazepa," *History Today*, VII (1957), pp. 590-96, which is more sober but less detailed. Manning made close use of the much more authoritative French language work of Élie Borschak [Ilko Borshchak] and René Martel, *Vie de Mazepa* (Paris, 1931). As well, there are three recent more critical biographies in either Ukrainian or Russian. See Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa* (Kyiv: Alternatyvy, 2003); D.V. Zhuravlov, *Mazepa: Liudyna polityk lehenda* (Kharkiv, 2007); and Tatyana Tairova-Iakovleva, *Mazepa* (Moscow, 2007). Also see the beautifully illustrated collection of articles edited by Olha Kovalevska, and titled *Hetman* 2 vols. (Kyiv, 2009). At this point, it should be

Although Voltaire never penned a separate essay or historical work specifically about Mazepa's Ukraine, he did touch upon this land in two very different histories dealing with eastern Europe, or "*le nord*," or "*l'Europe septentrionale*," as it was then usually called. The first is his *Histoire de Charles XII roi de Suède* (1731) which was his first important historical work and a great success, reprinted many times during his lifetime and many more afterwards. This history described the military exploits of the young and warlike king of Sweden whose career took him from Scandinavia through parts of Germany and the vast Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and after many great victories, into Ukraine where he suffered his first great defeat at the hands of the Russians, or "Muscovites" as they were then usually known. This defeat occurred at the Battle of Poltava (1709) in the eastern part of that country. It constituted a defeat from which the Swedish Empire never recovered and it was a victory for his opponent, Peter I, already called Peter the Great by some of his contemporaries, through which Russia suddenly attained status as a European Great Power.<sup>4</sup>

The second history in which Voltaire examined Ukraine and mentioned Mazepa was his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1759-62). This history, which was one of Voltaire's last historical works, differed in both form and substance from his earlier work on Charles XII. While the earlier work concentrated upon the magnetic personality of Charles XII and described in detail his personal bravery, his wars, and his spectacular march across central and eastern Europe, and thus, despite a somewhat innovative "novelistic" style, more or less fell into the traditional category of "drum and trumpet" history, the latter work treated military history less enthusiastically and concentrated upon how Peter transformed the old Tsardom of Muscovy into the new "Russian Empire" through economic, social, and legal reforms. In this latter work, it is not Peter himself who is the subject so much as the Russian Empire which he ostensibly created. In the first

mentioned that the western convention of spelling "Mazeppa" with two "p's" which Voltaire himself did not initiate but firmly established, and was thereafter followed by numerous writers, artists, and musicians, is an error. Mazepa himself always spelled his name with only one "p." See Theodore Mackiw, "Mazepa or Mazeppa?" *Ukrainian Review*, X (London, 1963), pp. 42-45. In this paper, I have also modernized and standardized proper names such as "Tatars," not "Tartars," and "Kyiv," not "Kiev."

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII roi de Suède*, in *Oeuvres historiques*, pp. 53-320; and translated by M.F.O. Jenkins as Voltaire, *Lion of the North: Charles XII of Sweden* (Rutherford, 1981). Both the French text and the English translation are based upon the revised edition of Voltaire's collected works which he prepared for publication shortly before his death. They were printed in the Kehl edition of 1784-90, which represents, says René Pomeau, "le dernier état de la pensée de Voltaire", *Oeuvres historiques*, (p. 37). I have also consulted the critical edition of Gunnar von Proschwitz, *OC*, vol. VI (1996). For studies of this work, see Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian* pp. 5-25, which is primarily a historiographical analysis, and Lionel Gossman, "Voltaire's Charles XII: History into Art," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, XXV (Geneva, 1963), pp. 691-720, which is more literary. Also see Lawrence Wolff, "Voltaire's Eastern Europe: The Mapping of Civilization on the Itinerary of Charles XII," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, XIV (1990), pp. 623-47, who notes that by turning south to Ukraine, Charles shattered the concept of "pays septentrionaux," with which Voltaire began his study but thereafter slowly abandoned and in a way "made the idea of Eastern Europe inevitable" (p. 637).

work, Voltaire was critical of Charles for his foolish military escapades and untrammelled personal ambition – half Alexander, half Don Quixote – but in the second work, which was actually commissioned by the Russian government, Voltaire largely praised Peter and his exploits, not just military, but also social, economic and administrative.<sup>5</sup> The treatment of Mazepa also differs considerably in the two works. Let us take the earlier work first.

In his history of Charles XII, Voltaire describes how several European powers, namely, Denmark, Saxony, Poland, and Russia ganged up on the young Charles, who had just come to the Swedish throne, but through a series of amazing military victories knocked all of them but Russia out of this Great Northern War, as it came to be called. After defeating Denmark, and then Augustus the Strong of Saxony and Poland, and placing his protégé, Stanisław Leszczyński (1677-1766), on the Polish throne, Charles turned east towards Muscovy. But after this long campaign – six years in fact – in a strange land, the winter of 1708-9 was exceptionally severe and Charles's army, stuck in the eastern borderlands of this still vast Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, lacked sufficient supplies and was beginning to dwindle in numbers for lack of new Swedish recruits; he therefore left the road to Moscow and turned south to Ukraine, a fertile land, as the French *philosophe* put it, "located between Little Tataria [that is, the Crimea], Poland, and Muscovy," where supplies and a potentially powerful ally, Prince Mazepa, awaited him. Voltaire continued:

Ukraine has always aspired to be free [*L'Ukraine a toujours aspiré à être libre*]; but surrounded as she is by Muscovy, the states of the Grand Seignior [of Turkey], and Poland, she has been obliged to seek a protector, and consequently a master, in one of these three nations. First of all, she placed herself under the tutelage of Poland, which treated her too much like a dependency; then she gave herself to the Muscovite, who did his best to enslave her. To begin with, the Ukrainians enjoyed the privilege of electing a prince known as their general [*D'abord les Ukrainiens jouirent du privilège d'élire un prince sous le nom*

<sup>5</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, in *Oeuvres historiques*, pp. 339-604; see also Voltaire (trans. M.F.O. Jenkins) *Russia under Peter the Great* (Rutherford, 1983). I have also consulted the critical edition of Michel Mervaud in *OC*, vols. XLVI and XLVII (1999), which are paginated consecutively. For a detailed study of this work, see Carolyn H. Wilberger, "Voltaire's Russia: Window on the East," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, CLXIV (Oxford, 1976), and Mervaud's extensive introduction of over 300 pages. Also see E. Shmurlo, *Volter i ego kniga o Petrom Velikom* (Prague, 1929), which provides some documentation on how Voltaire composed this history. For some general remarks on Voltaire and Russia, which, however, concentrate on his later ties to Catherine the Great, that is, long after he had written his last word on Mazepa, see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994). Also see Christiane and Michel Mervaud, "Pierre le Grand et la Russie de Voltaire: Histoire ou mirage?" in Serguei Karp and Larry Wolff (eds.) *Le Mirage russe au XVIIIe siècle* (Fernel, 2001), pp. 11-35.

*de général*]; but they were soon stripped of that right and their general was appointed by the Court of Moscow.<sup>6</sup>

Voltaire then turned to Mazepa himself and penned the following words which were to make a great impression on the European reading public with important consequences for both the history of literature and art: "The current holder of that office," he wrote, "was a Polish nobleman named Mazepa, a native of the Palatinate of Podolia who had been brought up as a page of Jan Kazimierz [the former king of Poland]."

As a youth, he was caught having an affair with the wife of a Polish nobleman; the husband had him bound stark naked on the back of a wild horse and sent him off in that condition. The horse, which was from Ukraine, returned home, taking with it Mazepa, who was half-dead of exhaustion and hunger. Some peasants rescued him; he stayed among them for a long while and distinguished himself in several raids against the Tatars. His superior knowledge caused him to be greatly revered by the Cossacks, and his reputation, growing from day to day, obliged the Tsar to make him Prince of Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

Voltaire then turned to the causes of Mazepa's revolt against the Tsar. He related an incident which supposedly happened sometime before the Battle of Poltava: Mazepa, "a courageous, enterprising man, tirelessly industrious although advanced in years," was dining in Moscow with Peter and the latter told him that the Ukrainian Cossacks should be disciplined and made more dependent upon Moscow. Voltaire says that Mazepa replied "that the situation of Ukraine and its national spirit were insuperable obstacles," (*Mazepa répondit que la situation d'Ukraine et le génie de cette nation étaient des obstacles insurmontables*) to

<sup>6</sup> Voltaire, (ed. Pomeau) *L'histoire de Charles XII*, p. 153; and trans. p. 121; von Proschwitz, *OC*, p. 332. The actual title of the ruler in Ukrainian was "Hetman," which was borrowed from the Polish "Hetman," signifying a "general" or "Commander-in-Chief" of all military forces in the state. (It was, in fact, a Polonized and then Ukrainianized version of the German "Hauptmann".) During the Ukrainian insurrection against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1648ff.), the leader of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, took the title "Hetman" and when Ukraine became de facto an independent state, this title was retained by its rulers. The Zaporozhians of southern Ukraine, however, always retained a certain autonomy and after the death of Khmelnytsky in 1657, more and more looked to their own local leader or Otaman (from the Turkish *ata*, "father") first, and the ruler of the entire Cossack state, dubbed by historians "the Hetmanate," second. See Iu. A. Mytsyk, "Hetman," in the *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*, vol. II (Kyiv, 2004), p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> Voltaire, *L'histoire de Charles XII*, p. 153; tr. p. 122; von Proschwitz *OC*, pp. 332-33. In fact, Mazepa was born and raised near the town of Bila Tserkva in the Kyiv Palatinate of what was then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He was educated at the Mohyla Collegium in Kyiv and elsewhere before being sent to serve at the king's court. During this period, he also spent about three years studying in western Europe, including Holland and France, before returning to the Commonwealth as a well-rounded and multi-lingual courtier. See Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa*, pp. 22-30; Zhuravlov, *Mazepa: Liudyna polityk*, pp. 13-16; and Tairova-Iakovleva, *Mazepa*, pp. 15-17.

which the Tsar, who was already somewhat drunk and could not control his anger, called him a traitor and threatened to have him impaled. When Mazepa returned to Ukraine, he plotted rebellion and resolved "to become independent [and] ... build a powerful kingdom out of Ukraine." To achieve this, he made a secret covenant with the king of Sweden. But the Muscovites discovered his designs, attacked his land and cities, and he was forced to cross over to the Swedes at an inopportune moment. At the Swedish camp, he appeared, says Voltaire, "more like a fugitive than a powerful ally." Nevertheless, he knew his land well and brought Charles hope of holding out in a strange country. He was loved by all the Cossacks and groups of them continued to defect to the Swedes and keep their camp well supplied. Voltaire's description of Mazepa ends with the remark that only this aid from Mazepa's Cossacks kept the Swedish army from perishing and that enticements on the Tsar's part to return to Russian service failed and "the Cossack remained faithful to his new ally." (*"Le Cosaque fut fidèle à son nouvel allié."*)<sup>8</sup>

Voltaire said nothing about Mazepa's role in the actual Battle of Poltava (which was actually quite modest) and very little about the Cossack participation in it, but in his description of Charles's retreat afterwards noted that the king crossed the Dnipro in the same boat as the Hetman who was compelled to scuttle several chests of his treasure along the way.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the French writer ignored Mazepa's service to Charles as a guide who led him across the desert plains of southern Ukraine to safety in the realm of the Ottoman Sultan at Bender in Moldavia, and he said nothing about the Hetman's death from exhaustion shortly afterwards. Also ignored was the election of Mazepa's close aide, Pylyp (Philip) Orlik (1672-1742) as Mazepa's successor as "Hetman-in-exile" and his subsequent campaign against the Russians.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear from Voltaire's account that Mazepa had played a definite role in attracting Charles to Ukraine in the first place, and the Cossack country, which till then had been little known to the outside world, gained a certain fame throughout Europe because of it.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Voltaire, *L'histoire de Charles XII*, pp. 155-59; trans. pp. 122-27; von Proschwitz *OC*, pp. 332-44.

<sup>9</sup> Voltaire, *L'histoire de Charles XII*, p. 166; trans. pp. 135-36; von Proschwitz, *OC*, p. 359.

<sup>10</sup> Some of these subjects were, however, taken up later by Voltaire's rival, the Swedish historian, J. A. Nordberg in the second volume of his detailed *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède*, 4 vols. (La Haye, 1742-48), which is filled with numerous original documents and exposed many of Voltaire's errors. See especially, p. 319 for Mazepa as guide across the desert plains, and pp. 339-40 on his death and funeral. Nordberg had been the king's pastor and was present at almost all of the important events of his Ukrainian campaign. Borschak and Martel, *Vie de Mazeppa*, p. 186, write: "Cette oeuvre essentielle, et de très grande valeur historique en tant que source a été fort cavalièrement et fort injustement disqualifiée par Voltaire: 'C'est,' disait-il, 'un ouvrage bien mal dirigé et bien mal écrit.' Passons condamnation sur la forme, mais le témoignage de Nordberg reste essentiel." Also see von Proschwitz, *OC*, pp. 68, 557-66.

<sup>11</sup> On this subject generally, see the synthetic work of Teodor Matskiv [Theodore Mackiw], *Hetman Ivan Mazepa v zakhidnoeuropaiskykh dzherelakh 1687-1709* (Kyiv, 1995). Also see Dmytro Nalyvaiko, *Ochyma zakhodu: Retseptsiiia Ukrainy v zakhidnii Ievropi XI-XVIII st.* (Kyiv, 1998), pp. 398-419, and Dmytro Doroshenko [Doroshenko], *Die Ukraine und Deutschland: Neun Jahrhunderte*

In reading Voltaire's account of Mazepa and early eighteenth century Ukraine, the questions immediately arise: What were his sources for this exciting history and to what degree does it accord with historical fact? Firstly, it must be said that Voltaire never visited Sweden, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or the Russian Empire, let alone Ukraine, and therefore he derived his knowledge of them from reading and from interviews and correspondence with others who were more directly acquainted with these areas; that is, Voltaire writes as an analytic historian (a "philosophical" historian, as he would have it) and not an eyewitness of the events he describes, though these events occurred during his own lifetime, that is, just a few decades before he took up his pen on the subject; thus there were still many participants in these events still alive. In the first edition of his *Histoire de Charles XII*, Voltaire clearly states that he based his work on several personal accounts of people who had spent several years with either Charles or Peter, but he does not name these persons; in later editions (in response to certain critics) he actually named several Frenchmen and others who had been with Charles in Turkey, and he also named Count Stanisław Poniatowski (1676-1762), a Pole who had been with Charles at Poltava and later lived in exile in western Europe. Printed sources which Voltaire acknowledged in his text included Demetrius Cantemir's history of the Ottoman Empire (which he probably used in Latin manuscript in England), F.P. Dalerac's *Anecdotes de Pologne* (1699), and John Perry's *État present de la Grande Russie* (1718). But his greatest debt, especially in the earlier parts of his book, in the opinion of the Voltaire scholar, J.H. Brumfitt, was not acknowledged; this was to Henri-Philippe Limiers' *Histoire de Suède sous le règne de Charles XII* published in 1720. "It is clear," writes Brumfitt, "that for a considerable part of his account, Voltaire has done little but copy Limiers." Voltaire even seems to have copied many of Limiers' errors, some of them corrected in later editions of his *Histoire de Charles XII*.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, though his personal library contained detailed travel accounts and descriptions of Muscovy such as that of Olearius and others, it seems to have been lacking the two greatest French language sources on seventeenth century Ukraine, the *Description d'Ukraine qui sont plusieurs provinces du Royaume de Pologne* (1651) by Guillaume le Vasseur, Sieur de Beauplan, and the *Histoire de la guerre des Cosaques contre la Pologne* (1663) by Pierre Chevalier. Although Voltaire did list Beauplan as one of his sources elsewhere, he never seems to have consulted Chevalier and as both of these works contained detailed geographical and ethnographic descriptions of the Cossack country which would have been of considerable interest to Voltaire, it is puzzling why they are missing from his personal library which was very large for its time.<sup>13</sup>

*Deutsch-Ukrainischer Beziehungen* (Munich, 1994), pp. 39-43. In general, prior to Mazepa's revolt, Ukraine had been primarily known to the outside world as the "Land of the Cossacks" which had largely shaken itself free of Poland under the leadership of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky (d. 1657).

<sup>12</sup> Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian*, pp. 17-20, gives a brief analysis of Voltaire's major sources, and von Proschwitz, *OC*, pp. 11-36, gives a more detailed one.

<sup>13</sup> See M. P. Alekseev (comp.), *Biblioteka Voltera: Katalog knig* (Moscow, 1961). Though the extensive prefatory materials in this bulky volume (1170 pp.) are in Russian, most of the entries are, in

Some Ukrainian historians, greatly impressed by Voltaire's generally sympathetic treatment of Mazepa and Ukraine in his *Histoire de Charles XII*, believe that Voltaire might have got accurate information about the country from two Poles who lived in France after the defeat of Charles at Poltava: firstly, there was the Count Poniatowski already mentioned, who was the father of Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732-1798), the last king of Poland, and who corresponded with Voltaire and commented on his history, and secondly, King Stanisław Leszczyński, who lived in exile in France and Lorraine after losing the Polish throne and whom Voltaire personally knew and acknowledged in later editions of his book. Both Poles would have been sympathetic to their former ally, Mazepa, and would have had more accurate knowledge of Cossack Ukraine than most of their west European contemporaries.<sup>14</sup> However, Voltaire only seems to have gotten to know Stanisław Leszczyński in 1748, long after the publication of the first edition of his book, and since later editions contained no changes in their treatments of Mazepa, and very little on Ukraine in general, the historian could not have got his original information on the Cossack Hetman from him.<sup>15</sup>

The problem of Voltaire's sources on Ukraine was first seriously taken up in the 1920s by the Ukrainian émigré historian living in Paris, Ilko Borshchak (1895-1959), who was known as Élie Borschak to French readers. Borshchak was intrigued by Voltaire's treatment of Ukraine and realized that he could not have gotten much more than some very general information from printed sources such as Beauplan, Limiers, Cantemir, and the others. He also rejected Leszczyński as a source for the reason given above. Thus from whom did Voltaire get his view of a "courageous, enterprising, and tirelessly industrious" Mazepa, and of a Ukraine which "has always aspired to be free"? Borshchak, who assiduously studied the lives of Mazepa's followers in exile, thought he had the answer. He discovered that Pylyp Orlik's son, Hryhor (Gregory) Orlik, who eventually took service in France, in 1729 wrote to his father, the Hetman-in-exile, that he had "found out that a certain French nobleman was writing a scholarly history of Charles XII."

fact, in French, Latin, or English. It is interesting to note that Limiers' book on Charles XII was also missing from Voltaire's library, though it contained his book on Louis XIV on whom Voltaire also later wrote. See p. 558, no. 2119.

<sup>14</sup> Myroslav Nebeliuk, "Mazepa v. otsyntsi Voltera," in *Ukrainskyi istoryk*, XXIV (1987), pp. 72-82, especially p. 75, believes that Voltaire obtained some information on Mazepa from these two influential Poles. Raymond Trousson and others, *Dictionnaire Voltaire*, p. 99, also list Stanisław Leszczyński as a source, though not specifically on Mazepa, and von Proschwitz OC, writes that "le comte de Poniatowski a pu laisser sa marque un peu partout dans *L'histoire de Charles XII*," p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> However, some twenty years later, the historian did ask the former king, now resident in Lorraine, to check the work for errors. We know that he did so because in a letter to Voltaire on July 29, 1759, Leszczyński referred to his check "au sujet de l'exacte vérité de tous les faits contenus dans votre histoire de Charles XII." See *Voltaire's Correspondence*, (ed. Theodore Besterman), vol. XXXVI (Geneva, 1958), pp. 225, 235. According to Anne Soprani, "Stanislas Leszczynski," *Inventaire Voltaire*, pp. 1269-70, the *philosophe* had first met Leszczyński in 1725 during the celebrations of the marriage of Louis XV and Maria Leszczyńska. On the former Polish king's relations with Voltaire more generally, see Edmund Cieślak, *Stanisław Leszczyński* (Wrocław, 1994), especially p. 237, and Anne Muratori-Philip, *Le roi Stanislas* (Paris, 2000), pp. 220-32.

Thus both Orliks knew of Voltaire's book before it was published. Borshchak knew that while Voltaire was in England in the 1720s, he was friendly with Baron Friedrich Ernst von Fabrice, a German diplomat who knew Pylyp Orlik and other Ukrainian émigrés from their time in Bender, and later on corresponded with Orlik; Borshchak also discovered that in 1729 the younger Orlik and Voltaire had a common friend in Jean René de Longueil, Marquis de Maisons, who died a couple of years later, that is, shortly after the publication of the *Histoire de Charles XII*. Borshchak speculated that Maisons had solicited information about Mazepa's Ukraine from Hryhor Orlik, who in turn questioned his father about Mazepa's plans for a revolt against Muscovy, a secret alliance with Charles, and an independent Ukraine, and passed it on to Voltaire. This theory seemed to be confirmed by a letter Hryhor wrote his father on March 6, 1730, that is, just before the publication of Voltaire's history. In this letter, Hryhor informed his father that the prospective biography of Charles XII contained much information that would be irritating to their enemy, Augustus the Strong, and that everyone would soon find out about, as he put it, "the true project of Hetman Mazepa of blessed memory, and the gentry [or officer class] of the Cossack nation which has suffered so terribly to the present time." Thus it seems fairly clear that Hryhor Orlik had discussed Voltaire's study with Maisons prior to its publication and probably was a major source of its positive attitude toward Mazepa and the entire question of Ukrainian independence. As well, Baron Fabrice who, as Voltaire later put it, "told me some facts so extraordinary that I could not resist the desire to write about them," may well have played some role in this.<sup>16</sup>

Mazepa's reputedly attractive personality, his higher education, his treaty with Charles, and Ukraine's general desire to be free of Russian or Polish rule might have been points made by Orlik to Voltaire through Maisons, but what of Voltaire's statement that Mazepa was originally "a Polish nobleman" who only later took service with the Ukrainian Cossacks? In fact, Mazepa was of Orthodox faith and Ukrainian Cossack origin. The Orliks certainly knew this and were unlikely to describe him otherwise. Voltaire's statement, it seems, was pretty much based upon a report that Count Poniatowski gave him in response to a question posed by the historian about what kind of man Mazepa really was. This report described him as

<sup>16</sup> Ilko Borshchak, "Volter i Ukraina (Za nevydanymy dokumentamy)," in *Ukraina*, no. 1 (Kyiv, 1926), pp. 34-42; repr. in *Khronika* 2000, nos. 2-3 (Kyiv, 1995), pp. 118-127; Élie Borschak [Ilko Borshchak], (trans. George S.N. Luckyj), *Hryhor Orlik: France's Cossack General*, (Toronto, 1956), p. 29. For Voltaire's remark about Fabrice, see von Proschwitz, *OC*, p. 21. Borshchak's ideas are fully accepted by Nicholas D. Chubaty, "Mazeppa's Champion in the 'Secret du Roi' of Louis XV, King of France," in *Ukrainian Quarterly*, V (1949), pp. 37-51, especially p. 43. However, Nebeliuk, "Mazepa v otsintsi", points out that Borshchak's hypothesis is based entirely upon circumstantial evidence, pp. 75-76; and Iryna Dmytrychyn, *Grégoire Orlyk: Un cosaque ukrainien au service de Louis XV* (Paris, 2006), p. 350, remarks that they remain unsupported by any further evidence.

originally being "*un Gentilhomme Polonois*," and probably was a simple recognition of his former status as a subject of the Polish crown and had nothing to do with his ethno-religious origins.<sup>17</sup>

The account of his amorous affair with the wife of a Polish nobleman presents a much more complex problem. What of this story of his wild ride as a youth tied naked to the back of a horse by a jealous husband and carried off from Poland to Ukraine? This story, which dated from early in the Hetman's life, also found a place in Poniatowski's response to Voltaire's question about Mazepa's character. The historian only simplified Poniatowski's wording a bit and left out a few details. But the question remains: what truth was there in this extraordinary story and from where did the Polish count get his information about an incident which was supposed to have happened long before the two men could ever have met? It should be noted that the tale has usually been treated with a certain amount of skepticism by historians interested primarily in politics. But it did not grow out of a vacuum and may have had some highly attenuated basis in fact.

The story seems to have originated in the memoirs of Jan Chryzotom Pasek (1636-1701), a Polish nobleman from Mazuria, who, like Mazepa, was a page at the court of the Polish king Jan Kazimierz. In 1661, Pasek seems to have maintained secret relations of some sort with some rebels, or "confederates" as they were called at the time, who opposed his patron. As a loyal servant of the king, Mazepa reported this to his sovereign. As a result, Pasek, who was exonerated after an inquiry, turned against Mazepa and, later on, gleefully related the story of Mazepa's humiliating ride in his memoirs. Pasek, who may have simply taken his "Ride" theme from classical Latin literature, in particular Seneca's *Phaedra*, which had recently been translated into Polish and printed in Poland, actually gives this humiliation as the reason why Mazepa deserted the king's service for life with the Ukrainian Cossacks. The same story, with some added details, is told by another early eighteenth century Polish author, Franciszek [?] Otwinowski (d. 1745), who recounted it in his *Dziejów Polski pod panowaniem Augusta II* (History of Poland under the Rule of Augustus II). Neither Pasek's memoirs nor Otwinowski's history were printed in the eighteenth century, but both, especially the former, circulated in manuscript and Pasek's, at least, was probably well known to Poles living in exile in France, like Poniatowski. Voltaire picked up the story from Poniatowski and perhaps also from some other third hand source.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In this same way, during his youth in western Europe, aged about eighteen in 1657 Mazepa was for a time registered in a school in Deventer, Holland, as a *Nobilis Polonus* (a Polish nobleman), where he studied artillery. See Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa*, p. 25, and Zhuravlov, *Mazepa: Liudyna politik*, p. 15. For the relevant text of Poniatowski's report, see von Proschwitz, *OC*, pp. 333-34, n. 24.

<sup>18</sup> The entire story is related under the year 1662 in Pasek's memoirs. See Jan Chryzostom z Gosławic Pasek (ed. Jan Czubek) *Pamiętniki*, (Cracow, 1929), especially pp. 316-18; Jan Chryzostom z Gosławic Pasek (trans. Catherine S. Leach) *Memoirs of the Polish Baroque: The Writings of Jan Chryzotom Pasek, A Squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania* (Berkeley, 1976), especially pp. 155-56. As mentioned above, Pasek concludes gleefully that this affair was the reason why Mazepa "z samego wstydu pojechał z Polski" [left Poland in shame]. Eventually this story was picked up by the French ambassador to Stanisław Leszczyński, the Marquis de Bonac, with the added detail that the

The story did not end there. A generation or two after Voltaire's death, Lord Byron picked it up while reading the *Histoire de Charles XII* and made it the focal point of his influential *Mazeppa: A Poem* (1819), where the relevant passages from Voltaire were quoted in extenso. This poem enjoyed a wide resonance among the European reading public which was just awakening to the Romantic Movement. Thereafter, Victor Hugo, who was influenced by Byron, continued the theme in *Les orientales* (1829), and the painters Géricault, Delacroix, and Vernet created canvases depicting it, while Liszt wrote his famous symphonic poem about it. This romantic theme in turn spurred a number of other writers and composers to turn to Mazepa, though with a different emphasis which ignored the Ride, concentrating rather on other controversial aspects of his career. So he became a champion of Ukrainian liberty to the Russian rebel Kondraty Ryleev, and a symbol of treachery and corruption for the loyalist Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin; others continued the Mazepa tradition long after the romantic era had ended and in the twentieth century the Cossack Hetman was turned into a truly national hero by many Ukrainian authors and painters, all of whom were aware of Voltaire and Byron's treatment of the theme, but not all of whom took the Ride story seriously.<sup>19</sup>

The historians were even more skeptical than the writers. In the nineteenth century, the Ukrainian historian, Mykola Kostomarov (1817-1885), who penned the first full biography of Mazepa and judged him rather severely, related the accounts of Pasek and Otwinowski, but passed no judgment upon them other than to say that it was unlikely that Mazepa returned to Ukraine as a result of this Ride.<sup>20</sup> In the 1930s, Borshchak and Martel thought it impossible to distinguish the real from the fictional in Pasek's tale and simply referred to it as an improbable "invention."<sup>21</sup> The premier Ukrainian émigré historian of the Cold War period,

naked Mazepa was smeared with honey (?) and feathers before being sent off to the steppes. The relevant part of de Bonac's memoirs is in the "Mémoires du Marquis de Bonac sur les Affaires du Nord, de 1700 à 1710," in Charles-Henri Schefer (ed.), *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, no. 3 (1889), pp. 101-102, and quoted in full in Ukrainian translation by Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa*, p. 34. Voltaire may thus have picked up the story from de Bonac, as well as Poniatowski, simply omitting the honey and feathers detail as being rather implausible. Claude Nordmann, *Charles XII et l'Ukraine de Mazepa* (Paris, 1958), p. 10, n. 48, who was unaware of Poniatowski's report, believed de Bonac to be Voltaire's source. The Seneca connection was first suggested by Khrystyna Pelenska, "Polska lehenda pro Mazepu," in *Vidnova*, no. 3 (1985), pp. 79-86.

<sup>19</sup> There is a significant literature on this subject which goes beyond the parameters of this paper. See for example, Hubert F. Babinski, *The Mazeppa Legend in European Romanticism* (New York, 1974), and Wiktor Weintraub's detailed review of this work in the *Keats-Shelley Journal*, XXV (1976), pp. 176-79. Also see Walter Smyrniw, "Hetman Ivan Mazepa in Life and Literature," [www.uocc.ca/pfd/reflections/Mazepa%20life](http://www.uocc.ca/pfd/reflections/Mazepa%20life) and John P. Pauls, "Musical Works Based on the Legend of Mazepa," in *Ukrainian Review*, II (London, 1964), pp. 57-65; as well as Uliana Skalska, (ed.) *Mazepa Hetman Ukrainskiy u poetychnykh obrazakh koryfeiv ukrainskoi literatury vid Shevchenka do Sosiury* (Drohobych, 2007). I have used the first edition of Lord Byron, *Mazeppa: A Poem* (London, 1819), especially pp. 1-9.

<sup>20</sup> N. I. Kostomarov [Mykola Kostomarov], *Mazepa* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 20-23. This work was first published in 1882. On Kostomarov's interpretation of Mazepa more generally, see my *Mykola Kostomarov: A Biography* (Toronto, 1996), especially pp. 176-77.

<sup>21</sup> Borschak and Martel, *Vie de Mazeppa*, pp. 9-10.

Oleksander Ohloblyn (1899-1992), who penned the most scholarly portrait of Mazepa to appear during this era, quietly ignored it in his adulatory biography of the Hetman; the American historian, Clarence Manning, in his somewhat romanticized English language biography of Mazepa, published during this same period, did not take it seriously, and, later on, that is, since the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of an independent Ukraine, Mazepa's three most respected biographers, Serhii Pavlenko, D.V. Zuravlov, and Tatiana Tairova-Iakoleva all rejected it.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, during the Cold War, the respected British specialist on eighteenth century Poland, L.R. Lewitter, actually thought there was no reason to doubt Pasek and therefore Voltaire's veracity, especially as his story was seconded by Otwinowski whom he thought (probably mistakenly) an independent source,<sup>23</sup> and after Ukrainian independence, one of the country's most respected historians, Nataliia Iakovenko, in her general history of early modern Ukraine, briefly related Pasek's story without passing any judgment on it.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the whole tale, which Voltaire made so widely known to the European public of his day and passed on to Byron sometime later, remains somewhat clouded, though it may in some general way reflect Mazepa's supposed lifelong predilection for getting involved in amorous affairs which often seem to have had completely unforeseen consequences, often political in nature, although this has been questioned by some.<sup>25</sup>

Other points made in Voltaire's treatment of Mazepa have been generally confirmed by subsequent scholarship. In particular, his appearance at Charles' camp with only a few thousand followers "more like a fugitive than a powerful ally," has been echoed in the scholarly literature, both Ukrainian and Russian. Voltaire's point about the Ukrainian population keeping the Swedish camp well supplied, however, is more disputed. Ukrainian historians generally stress the successful reign of terror that Peter unleashed on Ukraine in response to Mazepa's defection, which inhibited further defections, while Russian and Soviet historians, including

<sup>22</sup> I have used the most recent edition of Oleksander Ohloblyn, (ed. Liubomyr Vynar [Lubomyr Wynar]) *Hetman Ivan Mazepa ta ioho doba*, (New York, 2003); Manning, *Hetman of Ukraine*, pp. 42-45; Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa*, pp. 29-35; Zhuravlov, *Mazepa: Luidyna politik*, pp. 17-18; and Tairova-Iakovleva, *Mazepa*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> See Lewitter, "Mazepa", who calls Pasek "the Polish counterpart of Samuel Pepys" p. 590.

<sup>24</sup> Natalia Iakovenko, *Narys istorii serednovichnoi ta rannomodernoi Ukrainy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Kyiv, 2006), p. 401.

<sup>25</sup> Other "affairs" in which the Hetman was involved include (as a young man) with Olena Kowalewska, the young wife of the judge Jan Zagorowski which some historians (I. Kamanin and others) think led to Pasek's ostensible calumny; see Serhii Pavlenko, *Ivan Mazepa*, p. 35, as an old man with the equally young Motriia Kochubei, which resulted in her father denouncing him to the Tsar as a traitor, and with the pro-Leszczynski Princess Anna Dolska, which was essentially a political relationship and eventually helped make possible his defection to Charles XII. (Dolska was his initial intermediary with Leszczynski and the Swedes.) For some general remarks on this, which, however, question the validity of Mazepa's reputation as a "Don Juan," see Olena Tarasova, "Zhyntky u zhytti Ivana Mazepy: Mif i realnist," in *Dnipro*, nos. 9-10 (Kyiv, 2001), pp. 129-32. Also see Roman Koropecyky, "The Slap, the Feral Child, and the Steed: Pasek Settles Accounts with Mazepa," in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, XIV (1990), pp. 413-26.

Soviet Ukrainian historians, generally claim that the Ukrainian population as a whole were unsympathetic to the Swedes and refused to support the invaders.<sup>26</sup>

Voltaire's *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* differs considerably from his earlier *Histoire de Charles XII*. While the earlier work was a biography with a focus upon the personality and ambitions of the Swedish king himself, the second was much more a general history of Russia during the time of Peter with much less concentration upon the personality of the ruler. Indeed, Voltaire seems to have assiduously avoided discussing Peter's personality for certain transparent reasons discussed below. The book on Charles stressed war and politics, that on Peter, economic, religious, administrative, and social reforms; the first, the foolish pursuit of empire, the second, the patient creation of empire. Both works reflected Voltaire's general approach as a "philosophical" historian with lessons for the general public, namely, in the one, the foolishness of unmitigated ambition and unnecessary war, and in the other, the wisdom of the ostensible social reformer and "lawgiver" who supposedly only used warfare as a means to an end. In Voltaire's own judgment of his two books: "The history of Charles XII was entertaining; that of Peter the Great is educational." (*"L'histoire de Charles XII était amusante, celle de Pierre Ier est instructive."*)<sup>27</sup>

In the second book, Voltaire considerably changed his interpretation of Mazepa and Cossack Ukraine. These subjects are briefly treated in two separate parts of the first volume of Voltaire's Russian history: in his general geographical survey of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the volume, and then in a different way, in his account of Charles' invasion of Ukraine in 1709 at the end of the volume. But in the very first pages of this book, Voltaire made some general observations on toponymy — geographical name practice — which had a bearing on the very concept of what "Russia" and "Ukraine" really were.

In these passages, Voltaire wrote that he was presenting the reader with a history *de la Russie ou des Russies* (Russia or the Russias) and that this name was very ancient but had been dropped for a time in favour of the term *Moscovie* because the name of the capital city of this empire, more vast than that of Rome or Darius, was originally Moscow. Voltaire then stated that the term *Russie* was now once again prevalent, but he did not go into details why. This statement was important to the eighteenth-century reader because in those days the term *Moscovie* or "Muscovy" still lingered on, with the understanding in the background that the term *Russie*, for some observers at least, such as the geographer Belleforest, or the

<sup>26</sup> Compare, for example Ohloblyn, *Hetman Ivan Mazepa*, especially the section: "Moskovskiy teror na Ukraini," [The Muscovite Terror in Ukraine], pp. 284-92, and his article on "Mazepa, Ivan," in the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. III (Toronto, 1993), pp. 353-55, with N. I. Pavlenko, *Petr Velikii* (Moscow, 1990), especially the chapter: "Izmena Mazepy" [The treason of Mazepa], pp. 261-91, and V. A. Diadychenko, "Mazepa, Ivan Stepanovych," in the Soviet Ukrainian historical encyclopedia titled *Radianska entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*, vol. III (Kyiv, 1971), p. 67, who concluded somewhat oversimplistically that "the people did not support the traitor."

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, (ed. Pomeau), *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, Avant-propos, pp. 353, 414.

cartographer Beauplan, the lands that today compose "Ukraine" were the true *Russie*, while the Tsardom to their north-east was simply *Moscovie*. Thus even the very title of Voltaire's book was somewhat innovative, recognizing, for example, that the term *Russie* was changing in meaning, perhaps taking account of the fact that it now was composed of several different lands that claimed this name. The French historian again turned briefly to this theme when he specifically discussed "Ukraine," and what it was.<sup>28</sup>

Voltaire began his description of Ukraine with the remark that it consisted of the Province of Kyiv, also called "Little Russia" ("*la petite Russie*") or "Red Russia," ("*la Russie rouge*"), which is cut in half by the Dniro River, called the Borysthenes by the ancient Greeks. He then continued with a few brief historical remarks. He admitted that he had no idea of where the Slavic ancestors of the country's inhabitants had come from: they simply burst upon the scene as conquerors and established close relations with the Greeks who in turn greatly influenced ancient Kyiv. This city, in fact, so he claimed, had originated as a colony of the Byzantine emperors. It prospered till the Mongol or "Tatar" conquest. As for the modern Ukrainians, he wrote:

The Ukrainians, who are called Cossacks [*les Ukrainiens qu'on nomme Cosaques*] are a motley pack of former Roxolani, Sarmatians, and Tatars. This territory formed part of ancient Scythia [which was the old name for the country]. Rome and Constantinople, which held sway over so many lands, fall short of Ukraine with respect to fertility of soil. Nature strives to benefit the Ukrainians, but they have not responded to her. Existing on the fruits of a land that is as little cultivated as it is productive, dependent even more on rapine, excessively fond of a possession far superior to anything else – namely their liberty – and yet having served in turn both Poland and Turkey, they eventually gave themselves to Russia in 1654, without conceding too much in actual fact, but Peter [has] subjugated them.<sup>29</sup>

Voltaire then described the government and administration of Cossack Ukraine, which was ruled by an elected "hetman" and divided into ten regimental districts. Of the hetman's power, he noted, it was similar to that of a west European governor in regions which still enjoyed "certain privileges." As to religious history, he erroneously believed that the inhabitants were originally pagans and Muslims, but became Catholics under the Poles, and then Orthodox under the Russians. He

<sup>28</sup> See the discussion of this point in Mervaud, *OC*, p. 421, n. 12. More generally, see Kaléna Uhryn, *La notion de "Russie" dans la cartographie occidentale : du début de XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1975), and Bohdan S. Kordan, (ed. and comp.), *The Mapping of Ukraine: European Cartography and Maps of Early Modern Ukraine, 1550-1799* (New York, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, p. 364; trans. p. 47; Mervaud, *OC*, pp. 449-50.

closed this description with a few remarks on the Zaporozhian Cossacks who lived "beyond the rapids" (the origin of their name) on the Dnipro River: they were freebooters, courageous brigands, who lived without women in their colony and were of the Greek faith. They served the Russian army, and, he concluded ominously "woe betide anyone who falls into their hands."<sup>30</sup>

In his account of Charles XII and Poltava, Voltaire again turned to Ukraine and noted that the Swedish king's "strange" decision to enter that country was inspired by Mazepa "who was an old man of seventy."

Having no children, he should to all appearances have been thinking only of ending his days in peace. Gratitude should also have ensured his attachment to the Tsar, to whom he owed his position, but, whether he had genuine grounds for complaint against that monarch, whether he was dazzled by Charles XII's name, or whether he was simply seeking independence, he had betrayed his benefactor and secretly defected to the king of Sweden, deluding himself that he could make his entire nation join his rebellion. [*Il avait trahi son bienfacteur, et s'était donné en secret au roi de Suède, se flattant de faire avec lui révolter toute sa nation.*]<sup>31</sup>

Voltaire then repeated much of the story told in his earlier book: Mazepa's promises, Ukrainian support and supplies, and Mazepa's appearance more like a fugitive than a prince. But the tone is different and Voltaire now claimed that in large it was the Swedes and not the Russians who devastated the Ukrainian towns and villages, and that Charles was simply "beguiled" that the Ukrainian population would rise up against the Muscovites. Voltaire ends with a colourful but very negative portrait of the Zaporozhian Cossacks whose leader, Kost Hordienko, met with Mazepa: "The two barbarians had a parley," says Voltaire, and a treaty of alliance was concluded. But the support of Mazepa and the Zaporozhians rendered Charles no good; he was still defeated at Poltava, which subsequently gave the Tsar a free hand to continue his reforms and, to use Voltaire's own expression, "police a great part of the world."<sup>32</sup>

The changed attitudes toward Mazepa and Ukraine in Voltaire's two accounts, his history of Charles XII, and his history of Russia, are self-evident. In the former, Ukraine is a country which has always aspired to be free; in the latter, it is the homeland of barbarous Cossacks who deserved to be put down so that Peter could

<sup>30</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, p. 365; trans. p. 47-48; Mervaud, *OC*, pp. 450-52.

<sup>31</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, pp. 461-62; trans. p. 132; Mervaud, *OC*, p. 669-70.

<sup>32</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, "Elle a donné au Czar la liberté de policer une grande partie du monde," pp. 463-68, 472; trans. pp. 132-37; Mervaud, *OC* pp. 673-88, especially p. 688. Jenkins translates this last remark as to "civilize a great part of the world," which may be taking translator's license rather far, though in general Voltaire certainly thought in such terms.

expand his reforms and civilize a greater part of the world. In the former, Mazepa is a gifted, industrious, and wise ruler, who strove to actually make his land free; in the latter, he is a foolish fellow who mistakenly thought that all his compatriots would follow him. Again, in the former, he is "loyal" to Charles despite the seductions of Peter; in the latter, he is simply "a traitor" to his benefactor, the Tsar.

However, most surprising to the modern student of Ukrainian history is the later Voltaire's simple dismissal of Mazepa as a "barbarian," who cared nothing for culture, and his simultaneous praise of Peter as the new beacon of "civilization." In actual fact, Mazepa seems to have been the well-educated and well-mannered cosmopolitan, the Latin-speaking ruler, who charmed almost all he came into contact with, including the Tsar, while Peter was the poorly educated, boorish, and brutal despot with a fiery temper whom everyone feared. Both men knew something of western Europe, but Mazepa knew it better. Both men promoted learning and the arts, Mazepa elevating the Mohyla Collegium to the status of an academy, building churches and other buildings, and renovating the great church of Saint Sophia in Kyiv, while Peter founded the Russian Academy of Sciences, built St Petersburg, and concentrated upon the technological, especially military, advancement of his country. But Mazepa was also a poet and a great bibliophile, like Frederick the Great, or even Voltaire himself; Peter, however, preferred the shipyard and the workshop to the library and the archives, and his literary efforts did not go beyond keeping a simple journal of his activities. Given all this, perhaps it would be more à propos to call Mazepa the "civilized" man and Peter the "barbarian," but such labels have properly fallen out of use in recent times. At any rate, these untoward characterizations which mar Voltaire's second book were almost entirely missing from his first one, and it was this first one which always remained the most popular throughout Europe, with the single exception of Russia.<sup>33</sup>

In light of all this, the question immediately arises: What brought about Voltaire's changed interpretation of Ukrainian history? Was it simply the passage of time and a maturing sense of history and proportion? Or, was it the gradual accumulation of new evidence which compelled a different analysis and altered conclusions? Or again, were there more mundane, not to say base, reasons for his new interpretations? In actuality, it seems to have been a combination of all three factors, though the last seems to have been exceptionally important.

The fact of the matter is that Voltaire's *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* was a commissioned work. After several years of growing interest

<sup>33</sup> The irony of the later Voltaire's erroneous juxtaposition has also been lost upon many modern students of Russia. Most of Peter's recent biographers, for example, have simply ignored Mazepa's "civilized" side, concentrating, of course, on Peter's reforms. For a true appreciation of this point, one must turn to Ukrainian history itself. See, for example, the brief remarks of Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 4th ed. (Toronto, 2009), pp. 160-61, 195-96, who refers to a "Mazepist or Cossack baroque," and Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and its Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 2010), pp. 272-74, who sums up Mazepa's "strong commitment to education and the arts." This theme is taken up in much greater detail in Ukrainian language works. See, for example, Valerii Shevchuk, *Prosvichenyi volodar: Ivan Mazepa iak budivnychyi kozatskoi derzhavy i iak literaturnyi heroï* (Kyiv, 2006).

in the subject and repeated approaches to the Russian court, Voltaire was finally hired by Peter's daughter, the Empress Elizabeth I, to write a history of her father and his times. The work was paid for by the empress and supported in part with materials supplied by her emissaries, in particular, Count Ivan Shuvalov, who in general oversaw the project. Through Shuvalov, Voltaire was able, though with some difficulties due to the war that was then raging in Europe, to receive materials collected by various Russian scholars such as G. F. Müller and Mikhail Lomonosov. There can be little doubt that these scholars, Müller the proud German academician who owed his very position to Peter's westernizing reforms, Lomonosov the fierce Russian polymath and nationalist who resented the German's influence but likewise admired Peter, and the cosmopolitan Shuvalov himself, all pushed Voltaire in a certain direction, though self-censorship certainly played an important role. It should be remembered that the Russian court under Elizabeth was a creature of Peter's reforms and the iron-willed Tsar was simply idolized by it. Thus, for example, Voltaire simply could not freely and uninhibitedly discuss untoward or embarrassing subjects such as the Tsar's shocking cruelties, crude manners, and drunken escapades in which, we now know, he mocked Orthodox Christianity; nor could he go into details about the base origin of Peter's wife and successor, Catherine I, or openly and frankly discuss Peter's ostensible murder of his only son, Alexis. Moreover, Peter's enemies were loathed by the court and Mazepa turned out to be one of the opponents that most infuriated the Tsar. Therefore, in spite of the fact that, so far as we know, most of the Russian materials supplied to the *philosophe* did not contain any evaluation of Mazepa and his revolt, and some might not even have reached him in time for inclusion in the first volume of his history, for this particular public, the Hetman could hardly be painted in any other way than that of an evil "traitor" to Russia; and, in the end, Voltaire did pretty much take this position in his book. Of course, the story of Peter's drunken threat to have Mazepa impaled is also omitted from this account. Moreover, Ukraine, now also called "Little Russia" by Voltaire, belonged to the new Russian Empire created by Peter, and therefore there could be no discussion of any land which had "always aspired to be free."<sup>34</sup>

Of course, this did not mean that Voltaire was a dishonest hypocrite who wrote things that he did not honestly believe. In fact, he did truly believe in Peter's ostensible genius and his supposedly almost miraculous transformation of Russia

<sup>34</sup> For a glimpse of the extent to which Voltaire was censored by the Russian court, and Shuvalov in particular, see his letter to Shuvalov dated at Ferney, June 11, 1761, in Pomeau *Oeuvres historiques*, pp. 598-602; trans. pp. 252-55, in which Voltaire uses his usual irony (not to say sarcasm) to defend some of his positions against Russian criticisms. In this letter, however, Voltaire, knowing, so it seems, on which side his bread was buttered, does not address major issues, let alone the Ukrainian question, only discussing certain points of detail. On Lomonosov's influence, in particular, see the brief discussion in Wilberger, pp. 36-49, especially p. 49, and the more detailed one in Mervaud, *OC*, pp. 101ff., who also discusses Voltaire's relations with Shuvalov and the Russian court generally and emphasizes communications difficulties between the *philosophe* and the Russians. Some of the French language texts of Voltaire's various exchanges with the Russian scholars are collected in Shmurlö, *Volter i ego kniga*.

from a "barbarous north" into a "civilized" country. His paeans of praise in favour of the new Russia were genuine. This is clearly revealed by the fact that he had praised Peter's reforming and westernizing program as early as 1731 in his book on Charles XII, that is, long before he became an employee of the Russian court. Moreover, a few years later, when his admirer and correspondent, the young prince, Frederick of Prussia (also called "the Great") told him he thought the reforming Tsar was nothing more than a despot who pushed despotism as far as it could go, a "*fantôme héroïque*" created by ignorant foreigners, who in reality was cowardly, brutal, cruel, and hated by his own subjects, Voltaire preferred to dismiss these opinions, pointing out Peter's creation of new cities (including a new capital), and new fleet, the promotion of religious reforms, and the advancement of the arts and sciences. Perhaps Peter was less valorous than Charles in war, and quite literally less sober in his personal conduct, but warfare was not something that Voltaire particularly claimed to admire, and he pretty much thought the Tsar's personal life could be safely ignored. Even in his history of Charles XII, concludes in her own interesting way the foremost specialist on Voltaire's Russia, Carolyn Wilberger, the French historian is "...most philosophic when speaking of Russia."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, specifically with regard to his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, Voltaire seems to have truly thought that he was taking a moderate position between some of the more extreme criticisms of Russia that had arisen during the Seven Years War, and Lomonosov's flowery panegyric of Peter that Shuvalov had sent him. Thus his altered view of Mazepa and Ukrainian liberty may also to some degree reflect Voltaire's honest and independently-formed sentiments rather than just the general influence of St Petersburg.<sup>36</sup>

This is made clear by Voltaire's revision of certain parts of his *Histoire de Charles XII* which were outside the control of Elizabeth, Shuvalov, and the Russian court. With regard to Ukraine, there was only one major revision of this kind, but

<sup>35</sup> Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, pp. 29-32. Also see Otto Haintz, *Peter der Grosse, Friedrich der Grosse, und Voltaire: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Voltaires 'Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand'* (Mainz, 1961), and Mervaud, *OC*, pp. 9-16. The building of St Petersburg is a particularly apt example of Voltaire's solicitous attitude towards Peter's reforms. Voltaire does not seem to have been aware of it, but the difficult, dangerous, and extremely costly construction of this city on the swampy land near the Baltic was done partly at Ukrainian Cossack expense, and the conscripted Cossacks suffered terribly in this enterprise, which was one of the many reasons for Ukrainian discontent with the Tsar. In Ukraine it was commonly said that "St Petersburg was built on Cossack bones." B. Kravtsiv, "St Petersburg," in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. IV (Toronto, 1993), p. 507. Voltaire, however steadily diminished this cost as his admiration for Peter grew. In his *Histoire de Charles XII*, he stated that 200,000 forced workers were lost, then in his brief *Anecdotes sur Czar Pierre le Grand* (1748), he reduced it to 100,000, then finally in his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie* there is no hint of forced labour at all and the workers who died are an amorphous "nombre prodigieux." See the discussion in Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, p. 104. It should be noted, moreover, that these highly unpopular conscriptions were done after 1709, that is, after the failure of Mazepa's revolt. Of all these connections, Voltaire seemed blissfully unaware.

<sup>36</sup> See in particular, the discussion in Mervaud, *OC*, pp. 119-22.

it was telling. He added a long paragraph deploring what he believed to be the brutality and barbarism of the Zaporozhian Cossacks.<sup>37</sup> This addition, which Voltaire most certainly made entirely on his own, reflects very accurately his new theme of Russian "civilization" versus Ukrainian "barbarism." But it was not unqualified.

The fact that Voltaire changed nothing else on Ukraine in his *Histoire de Charles XII* seems to support the notion that the French historian stood by his guns in his opinion that Mazepa was at heart a virtuous man who greatly cared for his country and that, in fact, Ukraine always desired its freedom. The passages touching upon these particular points were completely untouched. Moreover, even in his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie*, Voltaire tiptoed around the question of Mazepa's so-called "treason," offering more than one explanation for his defection to Charles and not excluding the Hetman's possible genuine grounds for complaint against the Tsar and true desire for the political independence of his country. Thus despite the altered tone of his work on Russia, on the question of Ukraine at least, Voltaire did not sell out completely to Shuvalov and the Russian court.<sup>38</sup>

Although in western Europe, Voltaire's *Histoire de l'empire de Russie* never attained the popularity of his *Histoire de Charles XII*, it was welcomed by many eminent *philosophes* including both Diderot and d'Alembert, and in Russia itself the first volume was greeted by the Empress Elizabeth who immediately sent the French author a large sum of money, seemingly as a token of her appreciation,<sup>39</sup> though it should be noted that she never deigned to personally write the *philosophe*, only passing on a brief message through her intermediary, Shuvalov. However, upon the publication of the second volume, her eventual successor, Catherine II, was much more forthcoming; she immediately started up a warm correspondence with the historian which eventually consisted of over a hundred and eighty letters. Catherine was obviously very pleased with the picture Voltaire drew of Peter and his "new" empire, the empire over which she now ruled and wished to carry further down the road on which the revolutionary Tsar had started. Thus the new empress and the *philosophe* seemed to agree upon certain basic principles. Voltaire's pre-eminent biographer, René Pomeau, concludes that the so-called "Bronze Horseman," the great statue/shrine which Catherine had erected in the capital to Peter was, in fact, nothing other than a "...monumental translation of Voltaire's *Peter the Great*" (emphasis added).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p. 159; trans. p. 128; von Proschwitz, *OC*, p. 345. Compare, for example the 1732 text in Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basle, 1732), pp. 141-42.

<sup>38</sup> Orest Subtelny, "Mazepa, Peter I, and the Question of Treason" in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, II (1978), pp. 158-83, argues that the concept of "treason" is impossible without the idea of the "state," especially the modern state, which claims the supreme loyalty of the individual. It may be that Voltaire used the term in this particular sense (he certainly admired the supposedly "new" state that he believed Peter was building), though this is a subject which requires further research.

<sup>39</sup> See Akimova, *Volter*, pp. 270-71, and more generally, Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, pp. 199-273, especially p. 235.

<sup>40</sup> Pomeau, *Voltaire en son temps*, IV, p. 125.

However, the praise was not universal, either in Russia, or in western Europe. In this way, in both Russia and Germany, specialists such as Lomonosov, Müller, and Büsching picked apart many of the points made so glibly by Voltaire. Thus with regard to Ukraine in particular, they criticized the *philosophe* on the grounds that he did not know even that "*slava*" was the Slavic word for "glory," (believed to be the origin of the name of the "Slavs"), that he could not distinguish between "Little Russia" and "Red Russia," invented a Greek origin for Kyiv, was ignorant of the fact that the Ukrainians had always been Christians of the Greek Rite, believed that virtually all Ukrainians were Cossacks, while many were in fact agriculturalists or town dwellers, and he thought that all these Ukrainians lived by "rapine," while this was true, in their opinion, only of the Zaporozhians. Neither did he know that these Zaporozhians were led by an "Ataman" (Russian orthography) and not a specific "Hetman" of their own. These revelations might have seemed to be little more than scholarly pedantry by some, but they did point out either ignorance or sloppiness on the historian's part.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile further west, the criticisms went well beyond simple pedantry. There Voltaire's general position was vociferously opposed by several important figures. Perhaps his most important critic in this regard was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who in Book 2, Chapter 8 of his *Contrat Social* stated that he thought his colleague's positive portrait of Russia and its Tsar completely misleading. Like Frederick the Great, Rousseau pointed to the Tsar's brutality in implementing his reforms, the continued "barbarous" nature of Russian society, and its continued lack of freedom. In particular, thought Rousseau, Voltaire ignored what he believed to be Russia's basic national character which inhibited extensive positive reform.<sup>42</sup> This question of national character became very important in the next century when in Russia itself various "westernizers" followed in the steps of Voltaire in admiring

<sup>41</sup> See the line by line criticisms of Voltaire's history made by Lomonosov, Müller, and Büsching printed in Shmurlo, *Volter i ego kniga*, pp. 282-87

<sup>42</sup> See, in particular, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond), "Du Contrat Social," in his *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. III (Paris, 1964), pp. 349-472, especially p. 386, and the discussion in Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, pp. 199-273. It is interesting to note that one of the most important studies of Rousseau and national character was by Oleksander Shulhyn (1889-1960), a Ukrainian émigré living in France after the revolution. See Alexandre Choulguine, "Les origines de l'esprit national moderne et Jean Jacques Rousseau," *Annales Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, XXV (1937), 1-285. On a different level, the generation of historians which succeeded Voltaire was also much more critical in its judgment of the *philosophe*. For example, in his *Histoire de Russie*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1782ff.), IV, Pierre Charles Levesque (1736-1812), a French historian, who had actually lived in Russia for several years, pointed out that Voltaire had simply ignored the changes in Muscovy that had taken place before Peter, thus exaggerating his role in Russian history, and he accused his predecessor of simply "selling out to the Russian court." Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, p. 253, while the Hungarian subject, Johann Christian Engel (1770-1814) in his *Geschichte der Ukraine und der ukrainischen Cosaken wie auch der Königreiche Halitsch und Wladimir* (Halle, 1796), pp. 321-22 skillfully juxtaposed Swedish and Russian sources to produce a very balanced portrait of Mazepa which was quite independent of Voltaire. On the latter, see my essay "On the 200th Anniversary of the Publication of Johann Christian von Engel's "History of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Cossacks" in *Germano-Slavica*, X (1998), pp. 55-62. But after Levesque and Engel, of course, it was the debate on national character which became of overriding significance.

Peter, while so-called "Slavophiles" were much more critical of him and argued for Russia's different path and special place in the world.<sup>43</sup> In this same century, Ukrainian reactions to Voltaire were somewhat different.

The nineteenth century was the age of the Ukrainian national awakening when after a century of repression Ukrainian opinion again began to poke through the cover of Tsarist censorship. At the very beginning of the century, in the anonymous so-called *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Ruthenians), the very first work of historical thought, not to say scholarship, that was widely circulated in manuscript among the Ukrainian gentry of Left-Bank or eastern Ukraine, where Mazepa had once ruled, "the illustrious philosopher and writer" Voltaire was approvingly cited and his *Histoire de Charles XII* quoted in extenso to help prove the freedom-loving nature of the Ukrainians and the validity of their current strivings for autonomy, if not full independence. The *Istoriia Rusov* explained Mazepa's reasons for wanting Ukrainian independence (which could not be discussed in legal publications), but was somewhat restrained in its attitude towards him, even accepting Voltaire's story about his ostensible Polish origins, as did Russian opinion generally.<sup>44</sup> This *Istoriia Rusov* was clandestinely circulated in manuscript for almost half a century until it was finally printed in the 1840s, but it seems to have influenced entire generations of Ukrainians in their attitude towards Mazepa, if not necessarily towards Voltaire. A good example of this influence was the Ukrainian national poet, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), who read the *Istoriia Rusov* and seems to have greatly admired Mazepa's try for Ukrainian freedom, but was more cautious in his attitude towards Voltaire, writing with irony of his close relationship with Elizabeth's eventual successor, the Russian empress, Catherine II, who was widely disliked by Ukrainians for reintroducing serfdom into their country after it had been absent for more than a century.<sup>45</sup>

The revolution of 1917 temporarily opened new vistas for Ukrainian scholarship and, as mentioned above, in the 1920s even the émigré, Ilko Borshchak, published on Voltaire in Kyiv. But the curtain of censorship came down hard with Stalinism and all pro-Mazepa or even merely independent scholarship was driven into exile in central or western Europe. During this period, émigrés like Borshchak in France, Borys Krupnytsky in Germany, and Dmytro Doroshenko in Prague and

<sup>43</sup> See Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia*, p. 235ff.

<sup>44</sup> For the Russian language text, see *Istoriia Rusov ili Maloi Rossii sochinenie Georgiia Koniskago Arkhiiepiskopa Beloruskago* (Moscow, 1846; photorepr. Kyiv, 1991), pp. 184, 200. There is a discussion of these passages in Élie Borschak [Ilko Borshchak], *La légende historique de l'Ukraine: Istoriia Rusov* (Paris, 1949), pp. 151-52. Also see Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate 1760-1830s* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 272-73.

<sup>45</sup> John P. Pauls, "Shevchenko on Mazepa," in *Ukrainian Review*, XV, 3 (London, 1968), pp. 59-65; "Volter," in *Shevchenkovskiyi slovnyk*, 2 vols. (Kyiv, 1976), I, p. 136. On Catherine's role in the reintroduction of serfdom to Ukraine, see Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, p. 184, and Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, p. 338.

Warsaw, published positive materials in west European languages on the Hetman.<sup>46</sup> And with regards to Voltaire, during the Cold War, Roman Smal-Stocki (1893-1969), an American-based émigré specialist in Ukrainian philology, even believed that the French *philosophe* was so pro-Ukrainian that he penned his own "History of Ukraine," which would certainly have surprised Voltaire specialists the world over.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, in the USSR, the official attitude towards Voltaire was equally positive, though for entirely different reasons. In the Soviet state, Mazepa was thoroughly vilified as a traitor to both the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, but Voltaire was in general hailed for his "progressive" attitudes toward religion and politics; that is, as an enemy of Christianity and "feudal" social structure, though he was acknowledged to have supported the idea of God to hold the "ignorant" masses in check, and "enlightened despotism" rather than democracy as the best form of government for his own age. Given Voltaire's enthusiasm for the "new" Russian Empire created by Peter, his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* was often cited, but his *Histoire de Charles XII* largely ignored, especially in works aimed at Ukrainian readers such as the major Brezhnev era general Ukrainian encyclopedia.<sup>48</sup> Such attitudes continued to hold the field until the advent of the Gorbachev reforms when the censorship was considerably loosened.

But the situation was only fully corrected sometime later. Thus after Ukrainian independence, an especially authoritative encyclopedia of Ukrainian history in its article on Voltaire cited both of his histories dealing with Ukraine and even quoted his remark that Ukraine always wanted to be free.<sup>49</sup> Thus attitudes towards Voltaire and his interpretation of early eighteenth century Ukraine, including Hetman Mazepa, varied with political conditions from era to era and from place to place.

In general, however, there is no doubt whatsoever that Voltaire's pronouncements on Mazepa and his time, despite their brevity, were enormously influential throughout Europe. These pronouncements, of course, were both positive and negative. On the one hand, in his *Histoire de Charles XII*, Voltaire praised Mazepa, thought him gifted and virtuous, loyal to his country and to his new ally, Charles XII, and devoted to Ukrainian independence, which he associated with the idea of

<sup>46</sup> In addition to the titles by Borshchak cited above, see his *L'Ukraine dans la littérature de l'Europe occidentale* (Paris, 1935), especially pp. 59-63. Also see Borys Krupnyckyj [Krupnytsky], *Hetman Mazepa und seine Zeit 1687-1709* (Leipzig, 1942), and Dmytro Doroschenko [Doroshenko], "Hetman Mazepa: Sein Leben und Wirken," in *Zeitschrift für osteuropäische Geschichte*, VII, N.F. 3 (1933), pp. 51-73.

<sup>47</sup> See the discussion in Nebeliuk, "Mazepa v otsintsi," pp. 74-75.

<sup>48</sup> N. O. Modestova, "Volter," in *Ukrainskaadianska entsyklopediia*, 2nd ed. Vol. II (Kyiv, 1978), p. 385. This work plainly stated that there was a "discussion of Ukraine" in Voltaire's history of Russia, but it entirely ignored his history of Charles XII.

<sup>49</sup> M. M. Varvartsev, "Volter," *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*, vol. I (Kyiv, 2003), p. 629. Varvartsev also wrote: "Voltaire's name as embodied in the term 'Voltairianism' or free thought and criticism of tyranny and clericalism, found expression in the activities of [the Ukrainians] Ia. Kozelsky [who was an eighteenth century philosopher and translator of French literature], I. Kotliarevsky [the father of modern Ukrainian literature], the [rebel] Decembrists, and others."

liberty. On the other hand, some thirty years later in his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, Voltaire saw some foolishness in Mazepa's character, described him as a traitor to Peter, and stressed what he believed to be the "barbaric" elements in Ukrainian culture which he contrasted to the new "civilization" promoted through the reforming measures of the Tsar. This contrast between "civilization" and "barbarism" was one of the main themes in his history of Russia under Peter and it revealed the extent to which Voltaire believed that all men were ultimately alike and that rational government by an "enlightened" ruler could only produce good and should be always supported. But as some of his critics led by Rousseau pointed out, Voltaire's ideas took no account of the individual characters of various nations and, in particular, this posed a great problem in the case of Russia, which was quite unlike the Europe that Voltaire knew best. Indeed, Voltaire's praise of a brutal ruler whose personal character was not without certain traits of the "barbarism" that the philosophic historian claimed to be against, and of which he was certainly aware, made him something of a propagandist for the Russian court, and a paid propagandist at that. When it came to Ukraine, the later Voltaire was just doing his job.

The parallels with western intellectuals of more recent times who were enamored with Russia and its most despotic "reforming" rulers are obvious. Intellectuals like George Bernard Shaw, who actually visited Stalin's USSR and saw nothing amiss, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb who in the 1930s praised *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization* were in many ways not unlike Voltaire who seems to have been the first in a long line of such writers. In the 1930s, neither Shaw nor the Webbs had much time for Ukraine, though that country was then often in the headlines because of the Great Famine of 1932-33; indeed, Shaw even denied the very existence of the famine.<sup>50</sup>

Of course, Voltaire's devotion to Peter was not entirely unqualified and he did tip-toe around the question of legitimate Ukrainian rights in his book on the revolutionary Tsar. Moreover, he changed very little on Ukraine in the extensive revisions to his book on Charles. Thus honesty and conscience remained to some degree present in his pursuit of "philosophical" history, at least as it related to Mazepa and Ukraine. He was, in fact, quite proud of his achievements in this area. For example, there is evidence that on December 16, 1767, he wrote to [Étienne François, duc de] Choiseul, that "whatever one may say, I have devoted much labour to writing the history of Charles XII..."

One must take into consideration that I was the first to write about it. In the case of Ukraine, for instance, we knew only the book of [Guillaume le Vasseur Sieur de] Beauplan, but this book was written by a man favourably disposed towards the Poles. In

<sup>50</sup> On George Bernard Shaw and the Webbs, see in particular, David Caute, *The Fellow Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* (London, 1977). For Shaw's remarks on the famine, see his essay, "On the Rocks," (1934).

the meanwhile, Ukraine under Hetman [Bohdan] Khmelnytsky became almost an independent state, and later on was in alliance with Muscovy....I have collected much material about Mazepa.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, if we can believe this quotation, which admittedly is of uncertain provenance, long after he had published his *Histoire de Charles XII* and several years after he published his *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, Voltaire retained an honest interest in Mazepa and a certain genuine pride in his work. Moreover, despite certain drawbacks, such as lack of proper referencing which, as we have seen, are extremely frustrating to modern students of his writing, these two histories remain good examples of Voltaire's philosophical history: they expanded the subject matter of history beyond western Europe to other lesser-known lands; they helped shift the emphasis from classical antiquity to modern times; and to some extent, they were a protest against the concentration on war and politics to the detriment of greater questions of civilization, that is, economics, justice, and progress. For all these reasons, Voltaire's histories played an important role as an example for future historians, and even today, we may conclude, serve to remind them that, as he put it so succinctly, "Ukraine has always aspired to be free."

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in full in Volodymyr Sichynsky, *Ukraine in Foreign Comments and Descriptions* (New York, 1953), p. 136, citing an unnamed study by Borshchak. I was neither able to find this letter in Theodore Besterman (ed.), *Voltaire's Correspondence*, vol. LXVII (Geneva, 1961), which covers this period; nor was it found in later volumes of this work.