

Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, vol. 8: *The Cossack Age, 1626-1650*. Trans. Marta Daria Olynyk, ed. Frank E. Sysyn. Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2002. pp lxxv+808, 4 maps. Cloth \$119.95.

Conveying an understanding of the history of vanished political entities, as Ottoman historians know well, is no easy task. Spare a thought, then, for historians of the northern Black Sea steppelands who write of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy, the Tatars (of the Crimean Khanate, the Bucak, and elsewhere) and the Cossacks (of the Dnieper—Ukrainian Cossacks known as the Zaporozhians—and of the Don) - places and peoples that

must closely concern Ottoman historians, but of which few have more than the vaguest of ideas. It is true that some Ottoman scholars have considered particular aspects of the Porte's relationship with its northern neighbours, but they have rarely set the events they discuss within a context which would allow the reader to understand the longer-term ebb and flow of this relationship. All the more reason, then, to welcome the publication in English of volume 8 (hereafter, H8) of Mykhailo Hrushevsky's magisterial *History of Ukraine-Rus'*; this is the second volume concerning the history of the Cossacks, of which the first—Volume 7 (H7), entitled *The Cossack Age to 1625*—appeared in 1999. Originally published between 1898 and 1937, Hrushevsky's work is the ur-text for a narrative of Ukrainian history unalloyed by the imperialistic slant of historians of "Great Russia"—and he accordingly suffered persecution by both Tsarist and Soviet authorities on account of his fearless presentation of a version of history at variance with the received one.

The evolution of Cossackdom was a phenomenon related to the specific conditions of the steppe: here, in this "vacuum," central government control was weak and the inhabitants able to pursue a way of life at odds with that of the settled population—fishing and hunting, raiding the merchants plying their trade between the Black Sea and the towns and cities to the north of the steppe, and fighting the Tatars who were their close neighbors, rivals, and sometime allies.

The word "Cossack" (cf. *kazak*) first appeared in the early fourteenth century, when it denoted a "guard", and to the Tatars meant a free man but also a roaming bandit or adventurer: the Slavic term used to denote the regions where these people lived was "Ukraina," meaning "borderland." With the appearance of the Ottomans on the northern Black Sea seaboard in the later fifteenth century, and their ensuing symbiosis with the Tatars of the Crimea, the geopolitics of the steppe were transformed as the Polish nobles of Ukraine—who themselves barely acknowledged central authority—recruited Cossack warriors to defend their estates against Tatar raids. A century later, after the creation of the Commonwealth in 1569, the relations of the Polish king with the Cossacks as a defense force began to be regularized, and complaints about their incursions into zones the Ottomans considered within their sphere of influence began to be addressed by the Porte to their nominal overlord, the Polish king. By the seventeenth century, Cossackdom was a legally recognized institution of the southeastern borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian state, which had once stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

H7 told the story of the gradual sedentarization of the Ukrainian borderland and the establishment of a Cossack "register," whereby numbers of Cossacks from among this permanently armed population were recruited as a standing militia, both to defend the southeastern reaches of the Com-

monwealth against the Tatars in particular, and also in the hope of restraining the Cossacks from provoking the Ottomans. The size of the register was a constant issue between the Cossacks and the Polish Crown. The fiercely Jesuitical King Sigismund III (1587-1632) succeeded in pushing the Cossacks to become equally fiercely Orthodox and, on occasion, to gravitate towards Muscovy for protection—but Muscovite foreign policy was very conservative and the tsar rarely sought to exploit their seemingly inviting overtures, not least for fear of the Ottoman reaction.

Of much interest to Ottoman historians in H7 are the Cossack forays across the Black Sea into the Danubian and Anatolian fringes of the Ottoman lands—which the Porte found itself largely impotent to resist—and Hrushevsky's treatment (the most detailed available in a western language that I am aware of) of the Ottoman-Commonwealth Hotin war of 1621 when the Cossacks fielded an army equal in size to the Polish forces. Less familiar, perhaps, is the Tatar-Cossack alliance initiated in 1624—considered significant as the first of several such alliances—when the Cossacks were enlisted to help the brothers Mehmed and Şahin Gerey resist the Porte's attempt to reinstate their kinsman Canbeg as khan.

H8 takes up the story where H7 leaves off, in 1625, the year the Polish Crown turned on its Cossack subjects and erstwhile allies at Hotin, from fear that their intervention in a power struggle in the Crimea would again bring an Ottoman army marching northwards: as matters turned out, the confrontation ended in a stalemate. Nonetheless, this did not prevent the Zaporozhians from again coming to the aid of Mehmed and Şahin Gerey in 1628 and 1629 in the course of the brothers' renewed and final struggle with the Ottomans when they succeeded in reinstating Canbeg Gerey with the aid of the powerful Bucak Nogays under their chief, Kantemir. Fortunately for the Porte and the Commonwealth, this phase of the first Crimean Tatar-Cossack alliance did not succeed in realigning the regional balance of power. However, the danger that these two frontier powers would again ally against one or both of their respective suzerains remained.

The growth of the numbers and military might of the Ukrainian Cossacks, and their increasing presence on the international scene as both destructive interlopers and players in political combinations, meant that they became more and more assertive in their aspirations for recognition as a "knightly" estate within the Commonwealth, that is, as an equivalent to the nobiliary estate—this effort can be compared with the Ottoman *sanca-sekban* aspirations for recognition as *kapıkulu*. Control of the Cossacks proved to be a constant challenge for the Polish Crown and magnate regime, and in 1635 the Crown authorities decided to build a fortress on the lower Dnieper to control the movements of the Cossacks between the Ukrainian hinterland, the Zaporizhia, where their stronghold known as the Sich was located, and the

Ottoman Black Sea. The Cossacks destroyed it within a year, however, as they had an earlier one built further downriver in 1627 by Şahin Gerye. Such encroachments by the Crown contributed to the dissatisfaction that coalesced in popular rebellion among the Cossacks.

In 1635-37, Khan Inayet Gerye relied on Zaporozhian Cossack support in his struggle with Kantemir, a struggle that the Ottomans had reason to regard as a direct threat since Inayet not only besieged Ottoman towns such as Akkerman, Kili, and Kefe, but also threatened to march on Istanbul itself. As in his discussion of the Cossack-Tatar alliance of the 1620s, so here, too, Hrushevsky relies on material that complements what is available in the Ottoman sources, including Polish manuscripts that perished during the Second World War. One consequence of the instability that Inayet Gerye brought to the northern Black Sea frontier was a lapse in Crimean participation in the defense of the vicinity of the Ottoman fortress of Azak (Azov) at the mouth of the Don River; in mid-1637 the Don and Zaporozhian Cossacks captured this strategic stronghold from the Ottomans. It was five years, after several inconclusive Ottoman siege campaigns, before the Cossacks voluntarily withdrew, but not before they razed much of the stronghold.

The unending complications that the Tatars and Cossacks brought to the search for stability between the Porte and the Commonwealth offered opportunities for parties on either side interested in war on the Black Sea frontier rather than in the traditional good relations between the two states. Thus, throughout most of the 1630s and 1640s, a renewed Ottoman-Commonwealth war hung in the balance. In 1633-4 the Ottomans initiated a conflict, with Abaza Mehmed Pasha's incursion across the Dniester border and clash with Polish and Cossack forces near Kamenice (Kamianets). In the following year, hoping to take advantage of the Commonwealth's current war with Muscovy, Murad IV mobilized forces for a sultanic campaign against the former. However, the conclusion of the Muscovite-Commonwealth conflict meant that Ottoman interest waned before full operations could begin, and this "phony war" ended with a reaffirmation of peace. H8 provides materials on this conflict, and a perspective different from those hitherto available to Ottoman historians.

Of great interest, and virtually unknown to Ottoman historians, are King Wladyslaw IV's (1632-48) long-standing plans for a "Turkish War" which, prior to Hrushevsky, were considered to have been prompted by the Ottoman-Venetian war over Crete from 1644. Hrushevsky shows, however, that Wladyslaw was engrossed in such a project virtually from the start of his reign, that is, as soon as war with Muscovy ended in 1634. Wladyslaw's scheme was for the Commonwealth to take the Ottoman vassal states of Moldavia and Wallachia, and allow Muscovy to annex the Crimea were it to ally with the Commonwealth against the Turks and the Tatars. The King hoped

to use the Cossacks to provoke an Ottoman military response, which would have forced the hand of the magnates to vote in the Diet for the assignment of war funds. But the nobility was always reluctant in the extreme to take any action that might increase the power of the Crown, and Wladyslaw had to seek another option, that of utilizing substantial monetary aid promised by the Venetians; moreover, denied military support by the nobiliary forces, he would have to rely entirely on Cossack participation instead.

The Polish magnates were as loath to allow any expansion of the ranks of the Cossacks, whom they viewed as posing a direct challenge to their colonization of the rich Ukrainian steppelands, as they were to vote money for the King's Turkish War. In their view, after a popular uprising in 1637-8 was crushed and the Cossacks suppressed, the "Cossack Problem" was essentially solved. The next ten years, until the proto-national revolt led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, are known in Polish historiography as the "Golden Peace"—by implication they were far from this for the Cossacks. The King continued secret negotiations with his Cossack interlocutors, one of whom was Captain Khmelnytsky, during the second half of the 1640s. However, in 1648 the sudden Cossack revolt led by Khmelnytsky, now the Cossack military leader, or hetman, threatened to dash the hopes of an anti-Ottoman crusade led by the Commonwealth. The *casus belli* of the revolt was the seizure of Khmelnytsky's lands by a Polish official; unlike many of his fellows, Khmelnytsky refused to accept such behavior and events were set in motion that would lead to outright war between the Cossacks and the Commonwealth and one of the most cataclysmic of seventeenth-century European revolutionary movements. Khmelnytsky's revolt and its consequences were an important element in preparing the ground for the great power struggle between the Commonwealth, Muscovy, and the Ottoman Empire in the steppe, which came to a climax over a century later with the partition of Poland, the end of the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman retreat from the northern Black Sea. Incidentally, as late as 1650 some close to the Polish Crown still hoped to defuse the Khmelnytsky revolt conflict by realizing the late Wladyslaw's elusive Turkish War and thereby providing a diversion for Cossack energy and fury.

Historical writing that lurches from one "big event" to another explains little; few Ottoman historians have hitherto had the opportunity to understand what processes within Ukrainian history produced the 1648 revolt, and Hrushevsky's work provides the chronological and explanatory foundation that non-specialists need in order to bridge the gap of cause and effect between the "big dates" of 1621 and 1648. Few, indeed, are aware of the Ottoman and Crimean dimension of the 1648 revolt: in starting his rebellion, Khmelnytsky's first move was to secure the military support of the Crimean Khanate and this third and greatest Tatar-Cossack alliance was the linchpin

of the Hetman's military successes, as the combination of Cossack infantry and Tatar cavalry proved unbeatable; this alliance was also his Achilles heel, for whenever the Tatars abandoned him he was forced to come to terms with the Commonwealth. In the meantime Khmelnytsky was in close contact with the Ottomans, and eager to gain Ottoman military support—which never materialized. Nonetheless, the Hetman played a strong Ottoman card, parleying with the Porte to gain its protection since at least 1649, accepting vassaldom in 1651 and using this to blackmail the ever-reluctant and cautious Muscovy to relent and extend its protection in late 1653. This was the first step in drawing Muscovy more closely into the international politics of the Ukrainian steppe which, perforce, affected the Ottomans' northern policy in the future (these events are to be related in H9).

Hrushevsky's monumental work is narrative history *par excellence*. Contemporary sources in the Slavic languages provided him with a treasure chest of material which he often quoted from at length. Like most historians writing a century ago, his access to Ottoman primary sources was limited; he lacked documents, but thanks to a Polish translation of Naima's *History* was sufficiently familiar with the Ottoman chronicles of the seventeenth century to incorporate the Ottoman framework of events into his project. Indeed, although much of Hrushevsky's *History* focuses on internal Ukrainian and Commonwealth matters, he provides an original and elegant explanation of Khmelnytsky's complex and seemingly contradictory foreign policy which was of direct interest to the Porte—and thus also to today's historians. In Hrushevsky's view, the Hetman at various times, and to some extent simultaneously, operated according to several different foreign policy alignments—an Ottoman system in which Ukraine would become a vassal of the Porte, alongside the Crimean Khanate, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania; an anti-Catholic block of Orthodox and Protestant states—Muscovy, Ukraine, Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania and Sweden; an anti-Ottoman coalition involving Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Muscovy and even the Commonwealth (or a variation—a European, largely Catholic, alliance, involving Venice, the Commonwealth, and Ukraine); or an anti-Muscovite combination—Ukraine and the Crimea with possibly the Commonwealth. Until the Treaty of Pereiaslav with Muscovy in 1654, his main hope was the Porte, and even thereafter the Hetman continued to profess his vassalage to the Ottomans. However, the failure of the latter to engage in an active North Black Sea policy at this time and the Crimean Khanate's abandonment of the Cossacks in its striving to maintain a balance of power to its north meant that the Ukrainian Ottoman orientation had to be abandoned until the 1670s. The story of the turning away from the Ottomans belongs to H9, which will be published in spring 2004.

Aside from its value for Ottoman historical studies (here we might also note that another topic of interest is the coverage of the relations between the Kievian Metropolitanate and the Patriarchate of Constantinople), H8 abounds in material relating to Turkic and other peoples in the northern Black Sea steppe, that is mainly the Tatars and Nogays, but also the newly-arriving Kalmyks, and their relations with the Cossacks and other political entities to the north and west (including Moldavia in addition to Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy). The volume includes rich detail on Tatar slaving raids, and on problems of steppe warfare as practiced by all sides—be they Tatars, Cossacks, Ottomans, or Poles and Lithuanians. Of particular interest to Ottoman military historians is the rich source material on the Cossack *manière de combattre* with Ottoman and Commonwealth forces (which also included European mercenaries), their use of gunpowder weapons and their rapid and adept deployment of the *Wagenburg* (wagons arranged so as to encircle and defend an encampment) and earthworks. An important chapter of the history of the Ukrainian and south Russian steppes is the Ukrainian colonization movement to the east in the 1640s that followed the suppression of the Cossacks during the “Golden Peace,” a movement comparable to the earlier southward colonization of the steppe covered in H7.

In Hrushevsky's treatment the history of Ukraine is rescued from the concerns of not only Russian historians, but also Polish; not unsurprisingly, these have usually considered the Ukraine and the Cossacks to be a troublesome distraction, and their writings on the subject have traditionally been far from dispassionate. But H8 is not a work of nationalistic myth-making on behalf of Ukraine: despite the fact that it was written in an age of nationalist fervor, it is serious and meticulous history-writing about a broad region, and essential reading for Ottoman historians who have even modest pretension to understand the rhythm of the empire in the seventeenth century. The exemplary scholarly apparatus and painstaking efforts of the translator (Marta Olynyk) and editors (Frank Sysyn and Myroslav Yurkevich) of this volume deserve the highest praise.