

Ivan Mazepa and the Russian Empire. By Tatiana Tairova-Yakovleva. Trans. Jan Surer. The Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Research, no. 11. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press and Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2020. xvi, 406 pp. Notes. Index. Maps. \$49.95, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.197

In this remarkable archival-based study of the political, social, and cultural dynamics of Hetman Ivan Mazepa's rule in Ukraine (1687–1709), Tatiana Tairova-Yakovleva strips away the stereotypical tropes of Mazepa as a traitor to Russia or national hero of Ukraine. Instead, this study reveals a complex man in complicated times who navigated between historical forces to preserve the Ukrainian Hetmanate to the best of his ability in what was probably, at the end, an impossible task. Not a biography, the monograph proceeds chronologically but thematically, with stunning archival evidence that brings a fresh perspective to this history. More than a portrait of the hetman, this study presents a portrait of the times and a measure of what exactly was at stake as the fate of the southern frontier of the Russian empire hung in the balance.

Tairova-Yakovleva is well-known for her scholarship on Ukraine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this is her first major study to be translated into English. The work constitutes a revised version of the author's 2013 Russian book on the topic, incorporating new archival evidence and additional observations (xi). Her prodigious archival work, particularly in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow and the archive of the St. Petersburg Institute of History, has uncovered new evidence that contradicts previous well-worn versions of this history. Just as critically, she clearly points out gaps in the documentation, revealing how much still remains hidden in the folds of time. Throughout, details and quotes from the sources bring to life the human element—surprising, poignant, and intriguing.

Through Tairova-Yakovleva's even-handed telling of the history, we can reconfigure our understanding of Mazepa's actions: he had no "pro-Polish orientation" (23), and in the end, there is no truth to Peter I's claim that Mazepa "gave Ukraine to the Poles" (302); he did not orchestrate the removal of Hetman Ivan Samoilovich or bribe his way into the position of hetman (34, 45); he was not a "cruel feudal lord" over Hetmanate lands (81). What comes across in the eleven chapters of this study is how hard Mazepa worked to preserve the autonomy and well-being of the Hetmanate. His political savvy maneuvered between finding favor with both Vasili Golitsyn under Tsarina Sophia Aleksevna and with Tsar Peter I, under whom he restored Hetmanate autonomy. Mazepa never gave up on the possibility of reuniting right bank Ukraine to the Hetmanate despite the partitioning of Ukraine after the 1686 Treaty of Eternal Peace. His domestic policies led to an impressive economic boom and a magnificent cultural flourishing that introduced the Ukrainian Baroque style in art and architecture. He also faithfully served Russia. Tairova-Yakovleva elaborates the "scale and depth" of Mazepa's assistance to the Russian regime via diplomatic advice and sharing of intelligence from the hetman's extensive network of informants in Poland-Lithuania, the Ottoman empire, the Danubian principalities, and the Crimean Khanate. (123). Tairova-Yakovleva considers him "Russia's most important expert on foreign policy in the southern region almost to the last moment" (137).

Opposing traditional interpretations, the author argues that the final moment of Mazepa's defection from the Russian side to the Swedes during the Great Northern War was not a "long-planned betrayal" (258). Instead, she observes, Mazepa "vacillated until the last," making no preparations for any transfer of power (307). Peter's "onerous exactions" (262) on the Cossack military during the Great Northern War and his centralizing reforms from 1707 that undermined the autonomy of the Hetmanate formed the context of Mazepa's decision. It was the tsar's orders in 1708 for the Cossacks to carry out a scorched-earth policy in the Hetmanate before the Swedes invaded that put Mazepa over the edge. He could not command the destruction of Little Russia. Consulting all available sources and contemporary explanations, Tairova-Yakovleva posits that Mazepa, old and ill from debilitating gout, considered an alliance with the Swedes the best option to preserve the well-being of the Hetmanate. But, she acknowledges, the silence in the sources on Mazepa's "hidden thoughts and secret intentions" means that "none of us can ever be certain" (311).

The book ends rather abruptly, and the author provides no comprehensive conclusion to pull together her main observations or to advise areas of future work on the topic. To some readers, this will be disappointing. However, the document-based revelations in each chapter of the monograph more than make up for the absence of a conclusion. By dismantling the clichés and myths that have obscured the realities of this complex history, this book is a valuable addition to both Russian and Ukrainian history. For anyone interested in this or any period of Russian/Ukrainian relations, it should be essential reading.

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