

A. Nazarevich
163 Whellams Lane
Winnipeg 16, Man.

DMYTRO PELYCH

IVAN MAZEPPA

the Great Hetmar



Artist: John Keywan

Translated from the Ukrainian by Very Rev. S. P. Symchych



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IVAN MAZEPPA, THE GREAT HETMAN

By Dmytro Pelech

He is so great; so great he dazzles the eyes,
When he appears, all will bow to prostration
In every home; then only the sound of surma
Will echo the momentous salutation.

Ivan Koledynsky Mazeppa was born in Bila Tserkva, in the Kievan region, on March 20, 1632, into a Cossack family of Koledynskys which accepted the name of Mazeppa from the native family estate bearing the same name. His father was called Stepan, and his mother's maiden name was Mary Mokiyevesky. Ivan Mazeppa's father was an eminent officer in the Cossack wars led by Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky against the Poles.

The witty youth, with aristocratic manners, gained the favor and confidence of the Polish king. Mazeppa was the king's page, and a trusted one. In 1656 the king sent Mazeppa to the military academy in Holland. Following this, young Mazeppa visited Germany, France and Italy, scrutinizing the culture and customs of those countries. Beside Latin and Polish languages, which he knew very well, Mazeppa mastered the German, French and Italian languages. While he was abroad, he learned the fundamentals of the system of the Western States and the essence of their Statehood. Being removed from his native land, Mazeppa felt a growing love for his own country. There, also, he recognized the pains and misery of his own people among abundance. Here he also conceived the idea to serve his country, Ukraine, to the best of his ability.

On his return, he entered into the service of the Polish king for a few years. In 1669 Ivan Mazeppa volunteered his services to Hetman Petro Doroshenko, "a Cossack from time immemorial". He held the position of Secretary General. In 1674, Mazeppa was in the services of Hetman Samoylovich of the Left Bank of Ukraine. Here he held the rank of Deputy Hetman of the Cossack Army.

While in the services of Hetmans Doroshenko and Samoylovich, Mazeppa's national aspirations were strengthened very

greatly. Here he devoted much of his time to a study of Ukrainian conditions, the relations of the social strata. In particular, he recognized the significance of the officers' class and the clergy.

Mazeppa also realized the designs of those States which aspired to gain influence in Ukraine. As an ex-Polish court servant, he knew many secrets of the Polish Government. In Chyhyryn, the seat of Hetman Doroshenko, he met Turkish emissaries and became acquainted with the policies of the Turkish Government. He also knew Crimea through various duties as envoy to the Khan. He became acquainted with the Muscovite policies while visiting Moscow where he had friends and informers. He knew Muscovy in broad terms, understood Poland and Crimea in reality, as well as other States adjoining Poland.

Mazeppa also knew of Muscovite savagery where there was no consideration for individual freedom or the right of the people. According to the Tsar's will, the magnates and the noblemen were beheaded; there was a general lack of enlightenment; human dignity was debased; the Tsar's violence was legalized; the Tsar's regime was brutal and boundlessly savage. Wild Crimea bordered on Ukraine's South. They thrived on wars, "pillaging and plundering". In addition to this, Eastern Europe was undergoing political changes, therefore its equilibrium was shaken. Moscow planned to dominate Europe. Sweden and Turkey were an obstacle to Russia's plans. Ukraine was overburdened with intermittent wars which lasted over a period of almost 35 years.

At such an inopportune time for Ukraine, disregarding the internal threatening circumstances, the intrigues and delations, the wild Muscovite aspirations, Mazeppa, "in the midst of storm and alarm", accepted the Hetman's mace on the 25th of July, 1687, after a Divine Liturgy in the army barracks near the river Kolomak, in the Cossack Grove. He was elected Hetman of Ukraine during an army conference. Accepting the Hetman's mace, Ivan Mazeppa inherited the unspeakably difficult consequences of a

horrifying 30-year period of ruin which turned the flowering and rich Ukraine into wilderness. Everything was destroyed; decadence and confusion was evident; disorder, faithlessness, insubordination and disobedience was the order of the day. Muscovite armies were stationed in cities and villages. The Ukrainian State of Bohdan Khmelnytsky was split into three sections; the Right Bank where the Poles endeavored to retain control; the Left Bank where the Muscovites eventually gained control; the Zaporozhian Sich which only lived by tradition and insubordination and, in turn, favored both sides - Poland and Muscovy. Moscow exercised every occasion to foster internal strife in Ukraine. This state of affairs in Ukraine demanded from Hetman Ivan Mazepa unmistakable prudence and dexterity, resolute decisions and unswerving faith to retain the State's helm in his hands.

Being a person of European culture and a great Ukrainian patriot; knowing the conditions of the Ukrainian Hetmanate through experiences while in the services of Hetmans Doroshenko and Samoylovich; recognizing the delicate diplomatic relations regarding Muscovy; and having an immense knowledge of the circumstances and contemporary political situation, Hetman Mazepa quickly raised the authority of the Hetman due to his own skill and personal orientation. Hetman Mazepa depended upon the lawful and chief superior command as well as the Cossack officers who fundamentally supported the idea of Ukraine's Statehood. In them he saw the most active, conscious and hopeful stratum which supported Ukraine in its aspirations to attain freedom. The sum total of the Hetman's plans were expressed in this way: "In order to attain recognition and become a sovereign State, Ukraine must emphasize cultural and economic progress. It must also have efficient and experienced personnel to fill every post."

Mazepa considered that cooperation with Muscovy is a realistic policy for contemporary Ukraine. Ukraine's autonomy, won because of a stubborn struggle by Hetmans Doroshenko

and Samoylovich, offered a realistic basis for further expansion until Ukraine's complete independence was reached. Hetman Mazepa knew very well that the people, with a high standard of scholarship and consciousness of their wealth of cultural heritage, could have the perseverance to shake off subjugation of a culturally inferior foreign rule. This motivation inspired Mazepa to assign a sizeable amount of national revenue as well as his private funds toward the expansion of the Kievan Mohyla College, transforming it to an Academy (University) patterned on West European Universities. This plan included the founding of a College in Chernihiv. The Mohyla Academy in Kiev was considered a university with the highest standard in Eastern Europe. Its students numbered over 2,000 and covered every social stratum of Ukraine - which was quite unique in Europe at the time. Students from other countries: Rumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, Greece, Arabia and others studied there. Hetman Mazepa sent top-ranking students to Western Europe to study in their universities. Upon returning to Ukraine, these students were a great asset to Ukrainian scholarship.

Hetman Mazepa was a great supporter of publications: literature, theatrical art, painting, engraving, architecture He himself knew and loved art, handled a bandura with ease and excelled in poetic skill. Hetman Mazepa was an eminent patron of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. He built a wonderfully designed St. Nicholas Cathedral at Pechersky, a church in Podillia, All Saints church near the entrance of Pecherska Lavra, rebuilt St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, Transfiguration church of the Mezhyhorsky Monastery and St. Michael Vydubetsky Monastery near Kiev. Hetman Mazepa built many churches in smaller towns and villages which are even too numerous to mention. Apart from this, Hetman Mazepa decorated many churches with expensive and highly-artistic Iconostasis. He was also an ardent patron of monasteries and financed their renovation. He donated bells to many churches in Ukraine, as well as the sepulchral linen (plashchanytsya) engraved in copper to the Resurrection Church in

Jerusalem. It is impossible to enumerate all that Hetman had donated to the churches in Ukraine and abroad. Here we only mention in part his contribution to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Monasteries and churches found an ardent defender of their rights in the Hetman, especially if abused by the Tsarist regime. Hetman Mazeppa was instrumental in establishing an era of flourishing architecture which adorned Ukraine with their wonderful designs. In Baturyn, the Hetman's seat, he built a sumptuous fortress. Ukraine's boundaries were secured by a series of fortresses, structures and citadels. He helped and encouraged trade and commerce. Hetman Mazeppa continuously defended the population in his general proclamations. He prohibited the landowners to overtax the peasants, and to force the Cossacks to revert to agriculture. Such inducements on the part of the officers were proclaimed contrary to military law and the will of the Hetman. Instances are known where officers were penalized for choosing to violate the Hetman's order.

Hetman Mazeppa knew how to strengthen his authority in Zaporozhia. Mazeppa distinguished himself in bravery and gallantry during incessant wars against the Poles, Turks and Tartars. During twelve years, he took part in eleven summer and twelve winter campaigns. Mazeppa received the highest awards for the victories of the army under his command. He endeavoured to strengthen the Ukrainian Cossack army, and tried to reinstate the Ukrainian fleet on the Black Sea. Mazeppa wished to fulfil the plans of his predecessors - Hetmans Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Petro Doroshenko: To unite all Ukrainian territory occupied by the neighboring States under the Hetman's rule. He took advantage of the Muscovite-Polish wars against Sweden which began in 1700. He occupied a part of West Ukraine which was under Polish domination, and refused to relinquish his claims in spite of Tsar Peter's demands.

During his period of office, Hetman Mazeppa experienced the horrors of Muscovite destructive policies regarding Ukraine. He foresaw Moscow's intention to destroy the remaining indepen-

dence and Ukrainian national culture by incessant pillaging and physical extermination of its population. Muscovy wilfully allowed Ukraine to carry the brunt of wars which she waged against the Turks, Tartars, and later on against Sweden. This gradually undermined the autonomous Ukrainian State.

The Muscovite regime gradually began to entertain the idea that Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire. Mazeppa, a man of European culture, wholeheartedly resented Moscow, but, due to circumstances, had to diplomatically pretend friendliness in anticipation of an opportune moment to settle the differences. This required a definite plan, a character hard as steel and firm faith in his ideology. This necessitated qualified diplomatic skill, sound reasoning regarding contemporary political conditions. Mazeppa managed to conceal his real plans even in these difficult circumstances. For many years Mazeppa entertained the idea of a national armed resistance against Muscovy in order to liberate Ukraine. He finally decided to negotiate a treaty with Sweden. In 1707 Hetman Mazeppa secretly contacted King Charles XII of Sweden and signed a treaty as equal partners. This treaty guaranteed a sovereign Ukraine and all privileges. Hetman Mazeppa assured his assistance to the Swedish forces, providing the Swedish army or King Leschinski's forces begin their campaign on Russian territory. Mazeppa shared the secret with Orlyk, the Secretary General, of his negotiations with King Charles XII. This was gradually relayed to the personnel closely connected with the Hetman. Revealing the news to Orlyk, Mazeppa took this oath: "I BESEECH ALMIGHTY GOD TO BE MY WITNESS, AND I SWEAR THAT I DO NOT SEEK FAME, MATERIAL WEALTH OR OTHER PERSONAL BENEFITS. I DO THIS FOR YOU ALL - THOSE WHO REMAIN UNDER MY AUTHORITY - FOR YOUR WIVES AND YOUR CHILDREN, FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR MOTHER COUNTRY, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WHOLE UKRAINIAN POPULATION, TO INCREASE THEIR RIGHT AND FREEDOM. MAY GOD HELP ME SO THAT YOU AND YOUR WIVES, AND OUR NATIVE COUNTRY WOULD NOT PERISH NEITHER UNDER THE MUSCOVITES

NOR UNDER THE SWEDES. IF I DO THIS FOR PRIVATE REASONS, MAY GOD, THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE GUILTLESS CHRIST'S PASSION, PUNISH ME - BODY AND SOUL."

In accordance with the treaty drawn, King Charles XII had planned his strategy. Swedish main forces were to advance in the direction of Moscow, supported by military operations in the North and South. Ukraine had to supply provisions, and Hetman Mazeppa's Cossack forces had to defend the South flank of the long front. This strategic plan suited the Hetman. According to the above plan, the main Swedish forces separated Ukraine from Russia and offered Hetman Mazeppa sufficient time and a free hand to muster his forces. But the campaign and the plan suddenly changed. The Swedish corps under General Levenhaupt encountered the Russian army and was crushed in the battle near Lesna, in the vicinity of river Sozh, on September 27, 1708. The Swedes abandoned all their artillery on the field of battle as well as the supplies. The severe losses forced Charles XII to direct his army into the Ukraine and towards Mazeppa's support and supplies. The unexpected shift of Charles XII to Ukraine, and the military developments in Muscovy, did not offer Hetman Mazeppa sufficient time to inculcate the liberation movement among Ukrainian population. A decisive moment had approached. Hetman Mazeppa found himself between two forces - the Swedish and the Russian Armies. Mazeppa, however, made the preparations in advance. He gathered large quantities of military supplies in Baturyn. The Hetman, meanwhile, received an order from Tsar Peter to personally appear before the Russian supreme command. Mazeppa shunned the order, and discovered that Muscovite forces under Menshikov were marching toward Baturyn. The Hetman immediately started out with 5,000 Cossacks to meet Charles XII. They met on October 28, 1708, in Horky, on the Northern border of the Hetmanate. On October 30, joint armies proceeded in the direction of Baturyn to aid those Cossack forces which were left to defend

the Hetman's capital. They came too late ! Baturyn was burnt; all supplies and ammunition were destroyed, and the population, including women and children, were slaughtered. The loss of Baturyn had a negative reflection on Mazeppa's plans and the results of the war of Charles XII on Ukrainian soil. Baturyn had over 90 cannons, and ample supplies of ammunition and provisions which the Swedish army needed very badly after the defeat near Lesna.

The destruction of Baturyn had an unusually negative effect on the morale of the Ukrainian people at this crucial moment. Tsar Peter's revenge, which followed Mazeppa's alliance with the Swedish army, horrified the Ukrainian people. This reprisal was meant to humble the Ukrainian people, to nip in the bud any intention to follow their Hetman. Mazeppa's alliance with the Swedes provoked bitter anger in Tsar Peter and Muscovy. The most severe repressions were applied on those who were suspected of sympathizing with Mazeppa's ideas. Thousands of "Mazepintsi" were tortured in Hlukhiv and Lebedyn. They were tortured, stretched on wheels, burned at the stake, hanged or beheaded. Tsar Peter applied such bloody terror to terrify the Ukrainian population in order to discourage a recurrence of Ukrainian national consciousness. Unfortunately this brutality achieved its end. Some people were won by favors, others submitted because of inhuman tortures. Wide masses of the Ukrainian population were hesitant to follow the Hetman's call. The most opportune time was not utilized to build a sovereign State.

The Zaporozhian Camp under Kost Hordienko answered the Hetman's call against Moscow. On June 28-29 (according to the old calendar) 1709, the battle of Poltava took place. The Swedish army came to Ukraine weakened by the long march and heavy losses in battle near Lesna. The Muscovite army had an intermission from 1700 to 1708. While King Charles XII waged war in Poland, Tsar Peter prepared his armed forces with the aid

of West European experts. He built a strong artillery. The Muscovite outnumbered the joint Ukrainian-Swedish armies two to one. In addition, Moscow had a decided advantage in artillery. To make things worse, King Charles was wounded before the battle and was not able to personally assume leadership, to set their courage afire with his own example. Ukrainian Zaporozhian army displayed unbelievable valor and fame, but proved powerless in view of the Muscovite advantage in arms and men.

After the defeat, both Hetman Mazeppa and King Charles, together with the remaining forces, had to retreat into the Turkish territory. Hetman Mazeppa died on October 4th, 1709, in the village called Varnytsi near Bender. Prior to his death, King Charles in company with the British and Dutch ambassadors paid their last complements. Hetman Mazeppa was buried at Varnytsia, but the Ukrainian army disinterred his remains and buried him in Jassy, the capital of Moldavia with a full military funeral. The funeral service was officiated by the Moldavian Primate (Metropolit). Historian R. Mlynovetsky, described the funeral in this manner: "The funeral was led by the trumpeters and the Cossack surma band, playing in turns. Then followed the officers who carried the Hetman's mace, flag and Cossack standards. The Hetman's remains were drawn by six horses mounted by Cossacks with bared swords. The casket was covered, according to the Cossack tradition, with red silk (earlier it was with velvet with a gold border). Following the hearse rode the Swedish king accompanied by his top-ranking officers, all accredited ambassadors; the Turkish Sultan's representative, and the Wallachian and Moldavian governors. Then came the top-ranking officials: Orlyk and Voynarovsky, followed by the Swedish king's retainers with banners at half-mast and lowered arms. Then came the Janissaries dressed in white. Following them was the Ukrainian army followed by the people." The Hetman's remains were laid to rest in St. George's Monastery in the city of Galatz.

Hetman Mazeppa's independence movement provoked violent action on Tsar Peter's part. After the destruction of the Hetman's capital in Baturyn and the mass murder of its population, the Tsar ordered, on November 5, 1708, that a theatrical pageant be organized, derisively personifying Mazeppa's deposition and demotion. In Holy Trinity Cathedral at Hlukhiv the Godless and son-killing Tsar's decree of November 12, 1708, compelled the incumbent pastor of the cathedral to read an order excommunicating Mazeppa. The Muscovite church, which was reformed by Tsar Peter in an illegal manner to make it a political tool of the Muscovite State, had to repeat Mazeppa's excommunication order for 161 years until 1869, when the Synod of the Muscovite church, without the knowledge of the faithful, repealed the excommunication. At the Tsar's order, the Zaporozhian Sich was liquidated because Hordienko agreed to join Mazeppa and Charles XII. A small contingent of 300 Zaporozhians was tricked, taken prisoners and brutally murdered. All ammunition and valuable documents were taken. Everything else, including the Sich church, was ruined and destroyed. Tsar Peter had begged the Sultan not to grant Mazeppa the right to enter his country, and demanded his extradition. The Sultan refused to comply even though Tsar Peter offered him 300,000 thalers in gold. All children of the Cossack officers, who followed Mazeppa into exile, were taken to Moscow at the order of the Tsar. He hoped to bring them up as effective janissaries. All land and property of Hetman Mazeppa's supporters was confiscated at the Tsar's command and distributed among the Muscovite magnates: Dolgoruky, Menshikov, Holovkin and others. Hetman's very personal effects were not spared. Muscovite historians and writers, contrary to documentary evidences - the original letters which are preserved - tried to disgrace the Hetman-widower's innocent love of Motria Kochubey. For the lady's sake, the Hetman refused to marry her (even though it broke his heart) to avoid unnecessary gossip. Although Motria loved Hetman, she agreed with destiny and married one of Mazep-

pa's supporters. After Mazeppa's defeat, the Muscovites exiled him, but Motria accompanied her husband into exile, and died there.

Ukrainian historiography portrays Hetman Mazeppa as the one who wished to restore the Ukrainian State and dispel the erroneous conception of the treaty of Pereyaslav; to include Ukraine into the political orbit of Western Europe. Ukraine had succeeded under his command to overcome the disaster of the 30 years which had undermined all phases of Ukrainian life. He also gathered the hitherto divided country and united it under one banner; restored a flourishing cultural and economic life; his idea of State affairs was so prominent that it bears his name, - awaiting a master to realize it. Mazeppa's policy regarding the State constitutes a vanguard which persistently revolves in the fore, guaranteeing the materializing of the ultimate objective - an independent and sovereign State.

For the last 250 years Mazeppa's name stood firmly as a symbol to the supporters of his ideas, and the enemies were also not able to forget him. He was and is the subject of new literary materials, historical treatises and researches. Reputed literary figures like Byron, Voltaire, Hugo, Mickewich and many others perpetuated Mazeppa's colossal ideology and engraved his immortal name among the great philanthropists and defenders of human rights. Hetman Mazeppa is the subject of innumerable legends and stories in his native land and abroad, among his supporters and his enemies. Many volumes in Ukrainian, Russian, French, Swedish, Turkish, Rumanian, Polish, Danish are written about Mazeppa.

Unfortunately, historians and scholarly researches have not compiled and systematized the historical data regarding Mazeppa. No wonder there are so many diverse conceptions and varied evaluations of the Hetman. Many of Mazeppa's contemporary diplomats, who knew him personally, considered him a great statesman, a shrewd politician and a diplomat. Almost

everyone eulogises the Hetman's scholarliness, farsightedness, prudence and permeability. A French diplomat Jacques Baluz described, in part, the characteristics of Hetman Mazeppa: "From Moscow I proceeded to Ukraine, the country of the Cossacks, where I was a guest of Hetman Mazeppa, the supreme ruler of that country. I delivered a letter from the Muscovite chancellor to him. The Cossack guard of honor greeted me at the border and they escorted me in great pomp to Baturyn, where sovereign Mazeppa resides. Formerly, although a Cossack of aristocratic stock, he was a ranking courtier during King Casimir's reign. My father knew him very well, and I saw Mazeppa in the court in my youthful days, - beautiful and slim. Knowing that high ranks change a man, and that it is rarely safe to remind an eminent personality of his youthful days, I, coming to Baturyn, greeted the sovereign most graciously, becoming to his rank, and mentioned nothing of his past. He was first to ask me if I was the son of Antoine Baluz. Receiving a positive answer, sovereign Mazeppa was most delighted that his most Christian highness has a son of his old acquaintance in his services. Mazeppa himself mentioned his youthful days, that he often saw me in Krakow and then, sighing, quoted a Latin verse. Generally speaking, he likes to adorn his speech with Latin quotations. Regarding the perfect and proficient knowledge of this language, he can compete with the best authorities. His language is exquisite and elegant.

"I conversed with the sovereign of Ukraine in Polish and Latin languages, because he assured me that his command of French is not sufficient, although in his early days he visited Paris and Southern France. He participated in the Pyrenees Treaty celebration (1659). I am not certain whether there weren't any special reasons for the assertion, for I personally saw French and Dutch newspapers at his place. He is highly respected in the Cossack country where the people, in general, are freedom-loving and proud, and have no love for foreign rule.

"Mazeppa captured the hearts of the Cossacks with his firmness, personal bravery and luxurious receptions of Cossack officers in his residence. The conversation with the sovereign was very pleasant. He is highly experienced in politics and, contrary to the Muscovites, he follows and knows the conditions in other countries.

"He showed his collection of arms, one of the finest I saw in my life; also his library, many of the books in Latin. Very cautiously I directed our conversation toward the political situation of the time. I must confess that I was not able to draw anything definite from the sovereign. He belongs to the class of people who either prefer to remain silent, or to speak and reveal nothing. I always feel that his relations with the Muscovite Tsar are not amicable, for he did not say a word when I complained about the Muscovite Tsar. However, he did not hide the fact that Poland is following the Roman Empire, - disintegrating. He spoke about the Swedish king with great respect, but considered him too young. I particularly liked the deep feeling of respect the sovereign showed toward His Majesty, Louis XIV. He asked very many questions and asked me to pass his best regards and loyalty to the French king."

Hetman Mazeppa very clearly and concisely reflected his idea regarding the State, society, and outlined in no uncertain terms his attitude toward Moscow and Poland - the perennial enemies of his State - in this manner:

Let's all join our hands
And guard our native lands
Against the bitter tortures !
Grip your swords, drive out the demon,
Protect our cherished freedom.

This pensive poem is the soul's outburst of feelings of Hetman, the patriot. It is a proclamation to the whole Ukrainian nation, to all classes, loyal sons, then and now. He calls us to stand hand-in-hand with fixed bayonets to

guard Ukraine's integrity, reputation, freedom and truth. The call is saturated with faith in our verity that Ukraine will be free. Mazeppa and Mazeppa's ideals are alive now, and will continue to live as long as the Ukrainian nation shall live. As descendants of the Great Hetman Mazeppa we must reveal him in the right perspective to the whole world.

Muscovy and communism, on the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Poltava, are employing every avenue to falsify historical facts, distort the actuality of 1709, and blackmail the heroic defenders of Ukrainian freedom and Statehood. To all this we reply with a Ukrainian proverb: "All will pass, but truth will linger on".

We look into the future with a firm conviction that THE BATTLE OF POLTAVA HAS NOT ENDED. IT WILL END WHEN UKRAINE BECOMES A FREE, INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN STATE.

May the words of wisdom of Great Hetman Ivan Mazeppa set the hearts afire of the brave ones in their liberation movement, the words of encouragement he wrote:

Ring out, ring out these famous words,
Our freedom came through use of swords.

IVAN MAZEPPA, THE GREAT HETMAN
written by Dmytro Pelech

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