



KYIV-MOHYLA
HUMANITIES JOURNAL

KYIV-MOHYLA SCHOLARLY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

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Source: Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal 6 (2019): 127–136

Published by: National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

<http://kmhj.ukma.edu.ua/>

The Logic of Imperial Rule

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Abstract

The process of the liquidation of the Hetmanate lasted for decades because of its scale and the constant need of Russia in the Cossack Army. Empress Elizabeth's regime continued the centralizing policies introduced by Tsar Peter I. In anticipation of the possible consequences of this centralization, in the early 1860s Hetman Kyrylo Rozumovskyy tried to strengthen local governance by reforming his administrative system and judiciary, outlining the justification of his measures in an appeal to Empress Catherine II, entitled "Petition of the Little Russian Nobility and Officers, Together with the Hetman Concerning the Restoration of Various Old Rights of Little Russia." At the same time, Catherine II's State Secretary, Grigorii Teplov expressed opposite views to the positions expounded in the "Petition," in his so-called "Notes on Violations in Little Russia." The main theses of Teplov's memorandum were used by the Empress in secret guidelines issued to Petr Rumiantsev in his position as the President of the Second Little Russian Collegium. The reasoning of the above-mentioned documents formed the basis for Rumiantsev for the liquidation of the Ukrainian state.

Key Words: Hetmanate, Kyrylo Rozumovskyy, Russian Empire, Second Little Russian Collegium, Petr Rumiantsev.



Introduction

The relationship between sovereigns and vassals in the early modern era had a clear-cut structure. As a rule, it was marked by appropriate agreements. For the Zaporozhian Army, from the middle of the 17th century this meant "statutes" with the Muscovite state. The latter always sought to restrict the Hetmanate's independence. This process lasted for decades because of Russia's constant need in utilizing the Cossack army to facilitate expansionist politics in the Northern Black and Azov Sea areas. This was accomplished by the end of the 18th century through the imperial government's liquidation of the Ukrainian state.

The problem of the collapse of the first Ukrainian state of early-modern times has been the subject of scholarly inquiry. In popular historiography the focus has been on social questions, in particular, Oleksandr Lazarevskyy and Venedykt Miakotin¹ analyzed

1 Aleksandr Lazarevskii, *Malorossiiskie pospolitye krestiane (1648–1783 gg.)* [*Little Russian Peasants, 1648–1783*] (Kyiv, 1908); Venedikt Miakotin, *Ocherki sotsialnoi istorii Ukrainy v XVII–XVIII vv.* [*Essays on the Social History of Ukraine in the 17th–18th Centuries*], vol. 1, part 3 (Prague: Vataha i plamia, 1926).

the enserfment of the Left-Bank Ukraine peasantry. The transformation of Cossack officers into the Russian nobility is described in detail by Dimitrii Miller.² Heorhii Maksymovych³ studied the role of the president of the Second Little Russian Collegium, Petr Rumiantsev, in the political events of that time in Ukraine. The liquidation of the Hetmanate was largely ignored by Soviet historians. Only Aleksei Putro has researched changes in the socio-economic development and the administrative-military structure of Left-Bank Ukraine, as a region of the Russian empire in the second half of the 18th century.⁴ The destruction of institutions and social structure of the Hetmanate in the imperial system became the subject of research of Canadian historian Zenon Kohut.⁵ Development of the same topics is found in the work of Ukrainian researcher Oleksii Strukevych.⁶ At the same time, clarification of the logic for the justification of the centralizing policy of imperial authorities during the liquidation of the Ukrainian state in the second half of the 18th century has not been addressed, and is the focus of this article.

Imperial Policies Regarding the Hetmanate in the Second Half of the 18th Century

The restoration of the Hetmanate in Ukraine in 1750 under the rule of Empress Elizabeth (1741–1761) was the result of efforts of Cossack officers who took advantage of the morganatic marriage of the Empress with Ukrainian Cossack Oleksii Rozumovskiy. However, the freeing of Hetmanate officers from interference by Russian officials in Hetmanate administrative affairs was compensated by the presence of Elizabeth's representative at the highest level, tasked with providing effective imperial control over Cossack Ukraine.

In the following years, Aleksei Bestuzhev-Riumin, Russian Chancellor and the President of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs, which was also in charge of Ukraine,

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- 2 Dimitrii Miller, "Ocherki iz istorii i yuridicheskogo byta staroi Malorossii. Prevrashchenie kazatskoi starshyny v dvorianstvo [Essays on the History and Legal Life of Old Little Russia. The Transformation of Cossack Officers Into the Nobility]," *Kievskaiia starina* 1 (1897): 1–31; 2 (1897): 188–220; 3 (1897): 351–74; 4 (1897): 1–47.
 - 3 Georgii Maksimovich, *Deiatel'nost Rumiantseva-Zadunaiskogo po upravleniiu Malorossiei* [*Rumiantsev-Zadunaiskii's Activities in the Government of Little Russia*], vol. 1 (Nizhyn, 1913).
 - 4 Aleksei Putro, *Levoberezhnaia Ukraina v sostave Rossiiskogo gosudarstva vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka* [*Left-Bank Ukraine in the Russian State in the Second Half of the 18th Century*] (Kyiv: Vyscha shkola, 1988).
 - 5 Zenon Kohut, *Rosiiskyi tsentralizm i ukrainska avtonomia. Likvidatsiia Hetmanshchyny 1760–1830* [*Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy. Liquidation of the Hetmanate, 1760–1830*] (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1996).
 - 6 Oleksii Strukevych, *Ukraina-Hetmanshchyna ta Rosiiska imperiia protiahom 50–80kh rr. XVIII stolittia (polityko-administratyvnyi aspekt problemy)* [*The Ukraine-Hetmanate and the Russian Empire During the 1750s and 1780s (Political and Administrative Aspects of the Problem)*] (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 1996).

took a number of steps towards the elimination of Ukraine's autonomous structure. Given the long absence of Hetman Kyrylo Rozumovskiy from his Hlukhiv residence, Bestuzhev-Riumin regularly sent Russian advisers there to coordinate government policy. From 1754 the Hetman was forbidden to independently appoint colonels and could only nominate candidates for these positions. Two years later, Ukrainian affairs were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Senate, which significantly lowered the Hetmanate's political status. Its finances and tax system came under strict Senate supervision. Subsequently, Kyiv was also removed from the jurisdiction of the Hetman, with the same subordination. The Collegium of Foreign Affairs obliged the Hetmanate to report monthly income and expenses. At the same time, Elizabeth's regime neglected the Ukrainian government's political initiatives, including a request to allow the establishment of diplomatic relations with European courts. Thus, under the reign of Elizabeth, despite the restoration of the Hetmanate, the Russian imperial course continued towards the final elimination of Ukrainian autonomy.

In anticipation of the possible consequences of Russia's centralizing policies towards Ukraine, in the early 1760s Hetman Kyrylo Rozumovskiy attempted to strengthen his central and local governments by reforming their administrative systems and judiciary. He paid considerable attention to economic problems, including the development of trade. However the implementation of many of his projects was slowed due to the ascension of Catherine II to the Russian throne in 1762.

Kyrylo Rozumovskiy was forced to leave St. Petersburg a year later and return to Ukraine because of conflicts with imperial favorites. Under the influence of Cossack officers on the Hlukhiv council, in 1763 he issued a petition to the Empress, entitled "The Petition of the Little Russian Nobility and Officers, Together with the Hetman, on the Restoration of Various Old Rights of Little Russia."⁷ It presented the vision of the Ukrainian elite about the future of the Hetmanate, while demonstrating the level of its political culture. In particular, the tradition of the renewal and confirmation of contractual articles was emphasized. In essence, the "Petition" contained a proposal to legitimize an interstate level of relations between Russia and Ukraine with the expansion of the latter's political autonomy and the implementation of reforms aimed at consolidating Ukrainian society.

The mood among Cossack officers was well known to Kyrylo Rozumovskiy's former mentor, Hetman estates manager Grigorii Teplov. He is credited with the authorship of a document entitled "Secret Notes on the Current State of Little Russia," known in the literature mainly through its publication by Panteleimon Kulish as "Notes on Disorders in Little Russia" in the second volume of his work "Notes on Southern Russia."⁸ A legal assessment of the "Secret Notes," along with the publication of the full text of the

7 "Proshenie malorossiiskogo shliakhetstva i starshyn, vmeste s hetmanom, o vozstanovlenii raznykh starinnykh prav Malorossii, podannoe Ekaterine II v 1764 godu [Petition of the Little Russian Gentry and Officers, Together With the Hetman on the Restoration of Various Former Rights of Little Russia, Submitted to Catherine II in 1764]," *Kievskaia starina* 6 (1883): 317–46.

8 Panteleimon Kulish, *Zapiski o Yuzhnoi Rusi* [*Notes on Southern Rus*], vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1857).

document with an introduction and 12 positions, was subsequently made by prominent law historian, Mykola Vasylenko.⁹

In his position as Catherine II's state secretary, Grigorii Teplov expressed views opposite to ideas expressed in the "Petition." He emphasized the imperial thesis of the belonging of "the people of Little Russia" to Russia from old times, supposedly confirmed by "Russian and Little Russian chroniclers and many foreign authors"; from which it is possible to see that Little Russia belonged to Russia from old times not only in territory but also in population.

In the opinion of Teplov, a significant "disorder" in Little Russia was the practice of Cossack officers of subordinating not only peasants, but also ordinary Cossacks to their authority, which led to a significant reduction in their number. Under such circumstances, the military potential of the Hetmanate, which was widely used by the Russian Empire in the 18th century for conducting expansionist politics in the Northern Black and Azov Sea areas, suffered significant losses.

Grigorii Teplov believed that the obstacle to turning Ukraine into a profitable province of the Russian state was the absence of objective information about it. This primarily concerned the collection of taxes from peasants. He thus pointed to the need for new audits, since after the times of the First Little Russian Collegium Russian officers had not participated in them. Teplov's distrust of the Hetman and the Ukrainian administration later turned into the official policy of the empire. Furthermore, according to Teplov, the prohibition of the free movement of peasants in Left-Bank Ukraine, that is, their actual enserfdom, could bring added profits to the treasury of the St. Petersburg court.

Grigorii Teplov was greatly concerned with the existence of traditional legal norms in Ukraine, in particular, the Lithuanian Statute, which contradicted the principle of autocracy and precluded imperial authorities from using Ukraine's resources. The official noted that Ukrainian law and legal proceedings brought with them only exploitation and misunderstanding, bureaucratic red tape, and endless appeals, which were used by Cossack officers. Teplov insisted on the necessity to restrict the use of the Lithuanian statute because of violations of "human rights and freedoms." For justification he also cited cases of arbitrary decisions of Ukrainian judges against Russians, when the law was used "in their favor, but contrary to the Russian owners, as they are considered foreigners and aliens in Little Russia."¹⁰

The main points of Grigorii Teplov's "Secret Notes" memorandum were fully, sometimes exactly as stated, used by Catherine II to carry out imperialist policies in Ukraine. Secret instructions to Petr Rumiantsev consisting of 20 points were ample evidence of this. They were prepared by State Secretary Adam Olsufiev and edited by the Empress herself, upon the appointment of Rumiantsev to the position of President of

9 Mykola Vasylenko, "G. M. Teplov i yoho 'Zapiska o neporiadkakh v Malorossii' [G. M. Teplov and His 'Note on Disorders in Little Russia']," *Zapysky Ukrainskoho naukovohto tovarystva v Kyievi* 9 (1911): 13–54.

10 Mykola Vasylenko, "G. M. Teplov i yoho 'Zapiska o neporiadkakh v Malorossii,'" 42.

the Second Little Russian Collegium and concurrently Little Russian Governor-General. In justifying the need for imperial unification, Catherine II noted the significant territory of the Hetmanate, its high population density, soil fertility, and a favorable climate: “The vastness, the multiplicity of the people living in it, its great fertility, and the kindness of the climate are different from other lands in the empire.” At the same time, in her opinion, these advantages did not provide the Russian state with adequate profits in the previous period, “to the contrary, it is well known that Russia, despite all this, has very small, and during the last Hetman’s rule, almost no benefit and income.”¹¹

In the introductory part of the instructions to Count Petr Rumiantsev, Catherine II also criticized the interweaving of military and civilian power, the application of the Lithuanian statute, and the use of old rights and privileges by Ukrainians, which, in her belief, made a mess in the functioning of administrative structures and impeded the functioning of the justice system in Ukraine: “There were many ingrained disorders, the incongruous mixing of military rule with the civilian; endless red tape, and intimidation in trials and by the death penalty.”¹²

Catherine II regarded Cossack officers who opposed the imperial census, took part in the embezzlement of government revenue, and incited the people “by partisan and insidious interpretations” as the main opponent of the imperial government’s policies towards Ukraine. As a result, the Empress recognized the “secret hatred” of the Ukrainian people of Russians, which was especially evident among the Cossack elite. Under these conditions, the governor-general should have made the transformation not through force but through more diplomatic means, “showing both a wolf’s bite and a fox’s cunning.”¹³ Rumiantsev constantly monitored the behavior of the officers, especially those under suspicion, in order to prevent possible threats to the empire. In order to strengthen his power and establish his new regime, the governor-general also effectively used existing social contradictions in Ukrainian society.

Catherine II tasked Petr Rumiantsev with carrying out administrative reform in Ukraine on a Russian model. To this end, a necessary step was the abolition of the office of the position of hetman forever. The political assimilation of the Hetmanate had to be accomplished by its complete incorporation in the transformation of the Ukrainian political and administrative system into the imperial one.

Catherine II’s instructions also included proposals for the replenishment of the imperial treasury in the spirit of enlightenment ideology. This involved the statistical study of human and natural resources of the region to stimulate economic development, and the encouragement of the development of trade, including foreign. Emphasized were the need to improve the state of roads, the development of entrepreneurship,

11 “Nastavleniia, dannye P. Rumiantsevu pri naznachanii ego malorossiiskim gubernatorom s sobstvennoruchnymi pravkami Ekateriny II [Instructions Given to Petr Rumiantsev on His Appointment as Little Russian Governor with Catherine II’s Handwritten Notes],” in *Sbornik Russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, 1871), 376–91.

12 “Nastavleniia, dannye P. Rumiantsevu,” 376–91.

13 “Nastavleniia, dannye P. Rumiantsevu,” 382.

livestock, the introduction of new technical crops, the expansion of forest areas, and improvements in the social sphere. Such measures would prove to Ukrainians the benefits of imperial rule over the “inferior” government of the previous administration.

Thus the political program of the revival of Ukraine’s autonomy presented in the “Petition” caused a sharp reaction in St. Petersburg and became the reason for the ultimate liquidation of Ukrainian autonomy by the imperial regime. The logic of Grigorii Teplov’s “Secret Notes” was used as the basis for the directives of Governor-General Petr Rumiantsev. Catherine II’s decree dated November 10, 1764 abolished the hetman government and established the Second Little Russian Collegium,¹⁴ marking the beginning of the dismantling of the Hetmanate.

Arriving in Ukraine in April 1765, Petr Rumiantsev acquainted himself with the state of affairs and prepared a memorandum, dated May 18, for Catherine II to clarify certain provisions of the reforms. He proposed to organize a police service in every city of the Hetmanate, radically reorganize the judicial system, introduce regular postal communication, secularize property of the Ukrainian church, pay officials rather than grant them land, create a military cadet school, etc.¹⁵ Certain of the above positions approved by the Empress opened wide opportunities for their implementation by the governor-general.

The main prerequisite for increasing revenues to the imperial treasury was a census of the population of Ukraine. Its official purpose was to establish a better and fairer order. Additionally, Petr Rumiantsev intended to solve many other problems. Rumiantsev’s census provided a detailed depiction of the movable and immovable property of the region’s inhabitants, their social status, occupations, profits and level of taxation, family status, etc. Established in each of the ten regiments, special census commissions of local government officials were headed by Russian officers. The census in the Hetmanate occurred from 1765 to 1769 and was interrupted by the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War.¹⁶ It is difficult to talk about its comprehensiveness, as a large amount of documentary evidence is not extant. However, on the basis of the collected material, the “General Description of Little Russia” was prepared, which provides information on more than three and a half thousand settlements. This document also became the basis for the beginning of the struggle with peasant transitions in the Hetmanate and the appearance in May 1783 of Catherine II’s decree on the enserfment of the peasants.

14 “Ukazy i povelennia imperatritsy Ekateriny II za fevral-dekabr 1764 goda [Empress Catherine II’s Decrees and Orders of February-December 1764],” in *Senatskii arkhiv*, vol. 14 (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1910), 524–25.

15 “Doklad grafa P. Rumiantseva kasatelno meropriiatii po upravleniiu Malorossieiu i sobstvennoruchnye resheniia Ekateriny II [Count P. Rumiantsev’s Report Concerning Measures on the Government of Little Russia and Catherine II’s Personal Resolutions],” in *Sbornik Russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 10 (St. Petersburg, 1872), 9–21.

16 Dmitrii Bagalei, *Generalnaia opis Malorossii [A General Description of Little Russia]* (Kyiv, 1883).

The Little Russian Collegium became the main imperial administrative institution, taking over the functions of the General Military Chancellery. The unification of the Collegium with corresponding executive bodies of the Russian Empire was completed in mid 1768. Individual departments were responsible for military, judicial, and financial affairs. A striking example of the unification was the reorganization of the General Military Court. By order of the Little Russian Collegium, dated August 1767, it was forbidden to hold annual elections to its membership, which in effect meant the liquidation of the effective administrative body of the Hetmanate. Instead, the appointment of judges “from all local chains” was introduced, respectively, according to their titles. Unlike in previous years, the new officials were given annual monetary rewards.¹⁷ The reorganization also affected the judicial chancellery: two separate expeditions were formed, in criminal cases and appeals. Strict prosecutorial supervision was established over them. And in the early 1780s, zemsky, grodno, and sub-comorian courts were finally liquidated, legal proceedings being instituted on the basis of Russian legislation.¹⁸

The idea of a radical administrative reform of the imperial provinces began to be effectively implemented after the completion of the Russian-Turkish war in 1774. The provincial statute of 1775, the standards of administrative units, and the powers of their leaders were supplemented by clarifications of the mechanism for the implementation of provincial governance. At the same time, the extension of these provisions to the Hetmanate required thorough preparation. To introduce a new administrative system, Catherine II appointed an assistant to Petr Rumiantsev, an official from the Cossack elite, Andrii Miloradovych, as the second governor-general of Little Russia.¹⁹ He created a special commission consisting of military officers and Ukrainian officials, which carried out a thorough inspection of the Hetmanate and in 1781 submitted a report to the Little Russia Collegium. Instead of the traditional regimental-company military system of Cossack Ukraine, it proposed to introduce Ukraine’s division into three constituencies: Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Novhorod-Siverskyi, each consisting of 11 counties.

Taking into account the autonomist traditions of the Hetmanate, Petr Rumiantsev tried to avoid possible conflicts and in a memorandum he offered Catherine II possible options for their prevention.²⁰ In particular, he stressed the need to equalize Ukrainian and Russian government ranks, to resolve the issue of Cossack rights and privileges, among which the most relevant involved Cossack land tenure. To use profits from municipalities, the governor-general proposed to ban urban land tenure, which was in contradiction of imperial regulations. However, all of Rumiantsev’s proposals were

17 “Akty po upravleniu Malorossieiu gr. P. A. Rumiantseva [Acts on the Government of Little Russia by Count P. A. Rumiantsev],” in *Chteniia v istoricheskom obshchestve Nestora letopistsa*, vol. 5, edited by M. F. Vladimirskii-Budanov (Kyiv, 1891), 93–136.

18 Kohut, *Rosiiskyi tsentralizm i ukrainska avtonomia*, 181; Vladimir Grigoriev, *Reforma mestnogo upravleniia pri Ekaterine II [Catherine II’s Reform of Local Government]* (St. Petersburg, 1893).

19 Kohut, *Rosiiskyi tsentralizm i ukrainska avtonomia*, 185.

20 “Doklad grafa P. A. Rumiantseva imperatritse Ekaterine II 1871 goda [Count P. A. Rumiantsev’s 1781 Report to Empress Catherine II],” *Kievskaiia starina* 12 (1884): 693–703.

ignored and in January of 1782, administrative reform was put into effect. All Ukrainian state institutions were abolished and corresponding imperial ones were established, with the transfer of financial affairs to the treasury chambers of the three provinces. These transformations did not meet any resistance from Hetmanate officials, for whom devotion to imperial service had become commonplace. This was also testimony to the absence of, at least at the official level, an attitude of Ukrainians to Russians that could be constituted as dangerous for the autocracy.

Along with the administrative reform in the Hetmanate, a reorganization of Cossack troops was also carried out, albeit not without difficulty. The President of the Little Russian Collegium recommended the creation of 10 regular regiments in which experienced Cossack officers would be given appropriate military titles. Catherine II agreed with these proposals, in 1778 establishing a military judiciary under the jurisdiction of the General Military Court.

The need for Cossack contingents grew due to ambitious imperial plans for the seizure of the Northern Black Sea area and Crimea. The deployment of units, the nature of the draft, and the location of headquarters were determined in Petr Rumiantsev's numerous instructions in 1783 to Russian general Karl Kaulbars and the governor of Little Russia, Andrii Miloradovych. Preference was given to reliable personnel, in particular, participants in the last Russo-Turkish war. Officers were recruited only from the large pool of existing Cossack officers.²¹ Instead of Cossack regiments, Carabinier regiments were created according to the model of regulars of the imperial army.

The tendency for the incorporation of senior Ukrainian civilian and military strata into the imperial political sphere is also evident in the granting to them of official ranks according to a rank table.²² Thus former opponents of Russian authority became its supporters and the executors of government policies. Some achieved high government positions, for example, Oleksandr Bezborodko was appointed Imperial Chancellor, and Dmytro Troshchynskyi and Viktor Kochubei became ministers during the reign of Alexander I. The majority of the Ukrainian nobility and Cossack officers were equalized in rights and privileges with the Russian nobility according to the Charter to the Gentry of 1785.

Conclusion

The logistics of Russian imperial rule in the 18th century relied on thorough substantiation, which was inspired by the idea of the inviolability of the principles of autocracy. The governing council of Elizabeth's regime, primarily due to

21 Kohut, *Rosiiskyi tsentralizm i ukrainska avtonomia*, 193; Nikolai Storozhenko, "Reformy v Malorossii pri gr. Rumiantseve [Reforms in Little Russia Under Count Rumiantsev]," *Kievskaiia starina* 3 (1891): 483–92.

22 "Zapiska kasatelno prav na dvorianstvo byvshykh malorossiiskikh chinov [Note on the Equation of Noble Status with Former Little Russian Ranks]," in *Chteniia Istoricheskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1861), 88–92.

Chancellor Aleksei Bestuzhev-Riumin, continued centralizing policies introduced by Peter I. Considering the dangers of the imperialist course, in his “Petitions of the Little Russian nobility.” Kyrylo Rozumovskiy attempted to reform the Hetmanate in order to conserve its status. However, his mentor Grigorii Teplov, having received the title of state secretary of Catherine II, in his “Secret Notes on the Current State of Little Russia” memorandum to the Empress, prepared an alternative to the autonomist views of the Ukrainian elite. This document and instructions given to Petr Rumiantsev in his position as the President of the Second Little Russian Collegium formed the basis for the elimination of the Ukrainian state of the time.

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