

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Archival Sources for Historical Reenactments

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Ukrainian types of different social classes in the dress of the Cossack-Hetman era, illustration. Tymofii Kalynsky. Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.

The reenactment of the past, notably commemorating and underscoring distinct historical periods, episodes, and personages has been a popular worldwide phenomenon for centuries. Such reenactments may take various forms. Often they are presented as theatrical performances on a given theme, in the form of tableau-like scenes, museum exhibitions, period costume shows, etc. Historical reenactments serve an important educational purpose for both the general public and especially for students. For

this reason the enactments must reflect a high level of authenticity, a precise adherence to detail, and a thoughtful presentation of factual elements. Preparation for a project of this nature requires extended research and the examination of authentic archival material in order to make a proper, believable and successful presentation.

Ukrainians for decades presented reenactments of major Ukrainian cultural and historical periods and events. As a nation subjugated for centuries

by foreign powers, reenactment of its glorious past was just one of many ways to keep its historical memory alive. It was and remains an important tool to inform and expand the knowledge of the general populace, especially the younger generations and imbue them with pride, dedication and resolve. Ukrainians in the Diaspora also used this method to educate their American born of Ukrainian descent generations, encouraging them to acquire knowledge about and a meaningful understanding of their heritage, and thus help them preserve their ethnic identity.

In our library collection we have a good number of rare books and archival material pertaining to Ukrainian history. These publications are a useful source of material for doing research on a reenactment of a particular historical period or event. Ukrainians especially favored the reenactment of the glorious era of the Hetman Cossack State (1640-1780), emphasizing the political, diplomatic, and military accomplishments, the intellectual erudition of its leaders and nobility, and the cultural development and sophistication of the nation in general, including the middle and lower classes.

Just a few weeks ago we received as a gift a rare publication which contains valuable historical and illustrative material, including the Cossack-Hetman era. The author – Dmytro Bantysh-Kamensky, 1788-1850, was an archeographer and a historian writing on Ukrainian and Russian history. Among his numerous publications is his work *Istoriia Maloi Rossii*, which was commissioned by Prince Mykola Repnin (1778-1845) a friend and supporter of Taras Shevchenko, and father of Varvara Repnina, and first published in 1822. The second publication came out in 1830 in three volumes with numerous illustrative materials, and it is this edition which we received as a gift. Among the interesting

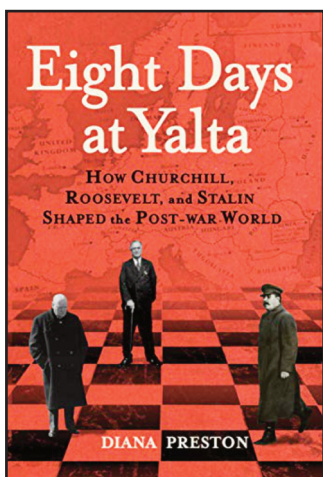
illustrations in the book are a series of portraits of Hetmans of Ukraine as well as political and Church leaders. These engravings were the work of Aleksii Osypov, ca. 1770 – ca. 1840s, a noted engraver whose works illustrated a number of other publications. The second group of illustrations in the book are 3 color plates (26 images) depicting Ukrainian types of different social classes in the dress of the Cossack-Hetman era. These depictions were the work of a Ukrainian artist Tymofii Kalynsky, 1740? – 1809, originally done for a book by Alexander Riegelman, 1720-1789, entitled *A Chronicle*

Account of Little Russia and its People and the Cossacks in General, written in 1785-86 but published much later. Bantysh-Kamensky explains that the color illustrations he included in his book were drawn from the Riegelman manuscript with some alterations. From the illustrations we can gather definite information about the life style of the period, distinction between the social classes, prosperity, occupation, esthetic tastes, etc.

The work *Istoriia Maloi Rossii* by Dmytro Bantysh-Kamenskii is an invaluable historical source and we are grateful to the donor for her wondrous gift. ❖



Political and Church leaders, illustration. Aleksii Osypov. Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.



Eight days at Yalta: how Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin shaped the Post-war world by Diana Preston (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020, \$28).

When I first heard about this book (without seeing the subtitle), I thought this was a tourist book about the seaside resort city

Book Review by Museum Director

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of Yalta in Crimea, a peninsula located on the northern coast of the Black Sea. While the peninsula of Crimea is very familiar to anyone who knows the present predicament of the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia over territorial rights, Yalta was the getaway place for the Soviet elite of the twentieth century. Its famous Promenade Walk, I believe, is as noteworthy as the Cliff Walk which is located in the resort town of Newport, Rhode Island.

When I actually had the book in my hand, it was clear to me that this book was about the most famous conference of post-World War II territorial maps. This conference, held in Yalta for eight days, took place on February 4-11, 1945 as World War II was ending.

The conference was attended by the “Big Three” leaders of the world: Franklin Roosevelt, the President of the United States; Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Joseph Stalin, the Head of the Soviet Union and its Communist party. The author believes that General Charles de Gaulle, the President of France was deliberately excluded from the Conference by Roosevelt, much to the delight of Stalin.

This indeed is a fascinating book written by a renowned British historian and author. It clearly presents the personalities of the three leaders and how it affected the historical outcome of drawing up new boundaries for post-war European countries. The slyness of Joseph Stalin and the

coyness of the other two leaders is wonderfully presented in this book by the handshake of a treaty drawn up by the conference’s participants. The author assesses that the Yalta Conference resulted in the creation of the infamous Iron Curtain of Europe. Heartbreaking is the author’s presentation of the agreement regarding the repatriation of all Soviet prisoners of war by the Communists – this included thousands of Ukrainians, Poles, and Crimean Tatars.

The book clearly presents the aloofness of the American and British leadership when it came to the remapping of present-day Poland. Some powerful quotes are attributed to the “Big Three”. Stalin was thrilled to be given Poland and Western Ukraine as

satellite territories of the Soviet Union. He believed that “whoever occupies a territory can also impose on it his own social system (in this case, totalitarian Communism) because his army has the power to do so”. Roosevelt is quoted as saying that the result of the Yalta Conference was good in the sense that it guaranteed a free Western Europe. It also is clear that Churchill was haunted by the eventual outcome of the conference and the sacrifices that were surrendered by the Allies to Soviet Communism.

This book presents the effects of the Yalta Conference vividly in the memory of civilization and not merely as a footnote in history. I recommend it highly for anyone interested in the darkest days of Eastern Europe under the control of Soviet ideology. ❖

For more information about The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford, please, visit www.ukrainianmuseumlibrary.org, call 203-324-0499 or 203-323-8866. We are located at: 161 Glenbrook Road, Stamford, CT 06902.