

Ukrainian Draft Treaty of 1654

A Byelorussian Copy of the Articles sent by the Cossack Envoys Samoylo Bohdanov and Pavlo Teterya on the 14th day of May, 7162 (A.D. 1654)

To Alexei Mikhailovich, by the grace of God Great Sovereign and Grand Duke, Autocrat of all Great and Little Russia, and the Sovereign and Ruler of many states:

We, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Hetman of the Cossack Army, the whole Cossack Army and the whole Christian Russian world humbly petition Your Tsarist Majesty.

We have been greatly pleased with the great reward and countless favors which Your Tsarist Majesty deigned to bestow upon us. We greet most humbly you, our Sovereign, and will serve forever Your Tsarist Majesty in all matters according to your orders. We only beg most earnestly, as we did in our letter, that Your Tsarist Majesty deign to grant us and show us His Sovereign favor in everything what our envoys will petition.

1. At the beginning deign, Your Tsarist Majesty, to confirm the rights and liberties which have been enjoyed from ancient times by the Cossack Army, including trial according to their own laws and privileges so that no voevoda, boyar or steward should interfere with their army courts and that they should be tried by their elders: where there are three Cossacks, two of them shall try the third one.
2. That the number of the Cossack Army should be fixed at 60,000, to be always at full strength.
3. That those of the gentry in Russia who have taken the oath of allegiance to you, our Great Sovereign, to Your Tsarist Majesty, according to Christ's immaculate commandment, retain their liberties and elect their elders to

serve as officials with the courts and enjoy their properties and privileges, as they did under the Kings of Poland, so that other (peoples), seeing such favors of Your Tsarist Majesty, may also submit under the rule and under the exalted and mighty arm of Your Tsarist Majesty, together with the whole Christian world. Rural and town courts should be directed by officials chosen voluntarily by themselves, as before. Also those of the gentry who invested their money in leased property, should either have their money returned or be allowed to use the properties till the lease expires.

4. That in towns the officials be chosen among our people who are worthy of it and who shall direct and rule the subjects of Your Tsarist Majesty and collect due revenue for the treasury of Your Tsarist Majesty honestly.
5. That the district of Chyhyryn, which was assigned to the Hetman's mace with everything that belongs to it, should now remain under its authority.
6. In case the Hetman should die (which God forbid) – for all men are mortal and this is inevitable – that the Cossack Army be allowed to elect (a new) Hetman among themselves and by themselves and notify His Tsarist Majesty and that he takes no offence since this is an ancient custom with the Army.
7. That the properties of the Cossacks be not taken away from them and that those who own the land and its produce receive titles to these properties. That the children of the widows left by the Cossacks keep the liberties of their ancestors and fathers.
8. That the Secretary of the Army be assigned through the kindness of His Tsarist Majesty 1,000 Zloty (gold coins) for his clerks and a mill for their sustenance, since he has great expenditures.
9. That a mill be assigned for each colonel since they have great expenditures and, if such be the kindness of Your Tsarist Majesty, even more than that, according to the discretion of Your Tsarist Majesty.
10. That the justices of the Army should also be assigned 300 Zloty and a mill and the secretary of the court, 100 Zloty.
11. We also beg Your Tsarist Majesty that the essays of the Army and those of each regiment, who are always busy in the service of the Army and cannot till land, be assigned a mill each.
12. Concerning the artillery of the Army, we beg Your Tsarist Majesty graciously to provide for the winter quarters and food of the cannoneers and all the artillery workers; also 400 Zloty for the quartermaster (of the artillery).

13. That the ancient rights granted to both clergy and laymen by dukes and kings be not violated in any respect.
14. That the Hetman and the Cossack Army be free to receive the envoys who come to the Cossack Army from foreign countries with good intentions and that His Tsarist Majesty take no offence because of this; and in case there should be something adverse to His Tsarist Majesty, we should notify His Tsarist Majesty.
15. We should prefer that, as it is done with regard to tribute in other countries, a specified amount be paid by those who belong to Your Tsarist Majesty; if, however, it cannot be done otherwise, then no voyevoda should be allowed to deal with these matters. (We suggest) that a voyevoda should be chosen among natives, a worthy man, who would deliver all that revenue honestly to His Tsarist Majesty.
16. Our envoys have been instructed to talk over this matter, because if a voyevoda should come and violate their rights and introduce (new) customs, it would be a great annoyance to them since they cannot soon grow accustomed to a different law and bear such burdens; and if officeholders should be natives, they will rule in accordance with local laws and customs.
17. Formerly the Polish Kings did not persecute our faith and oppress our liberties and all of us always enjoyed our liberties and therefore served (the King) faithfully; now, however, because of the violation of our liberties we have been forced to submit under the mighty and exalted arm of His Tsarist Majesty and our envoys have been instructed to beg earnestly that His Tsarist Majesty give us privileges written on parchment, with suspending seals, one (charter) for the liberties of the Cossacks and another one for those of the gentry, so that they remain inviolable forever. Having received these (charters), we shall ourselves check (the register) and whoever is a Cossack will enjoy Cossack privileges, while peasants shall fulfil their duties with respect to His Tsarist Majesty as before. Also (it should be stated) concerning all those who are subjects of His Tsarist Majesty what their rights and privileges should be.
18. They have to mention during the negotiations the Metropolitan (of Kiev) and our envoys received oral instructions concerning this matter.
19. Our envoys have also to entreat His Tsarist Majesty that His Tsarist Majesty deign to send his army to Smolensk at once without any delay in order that the enemy should not prepare themselves and be joined by others because the troops are now ill-prepared. They should not believe any (enemy) blandishment if (the Poles) make recourse to such.

20. It is also necessary that soldiers be hired, about 3,000 or even more, at His Tsarist Majesty's will, to protect the Polish frontier.
21. The custom exists for the Cossack Army always to receive a salary; and now they beg His Tsarist Majesty that he should appropriate to the colonels 100 thalers each, to the regimental assaults, 200 Zloty, to the army assaults, 400 Zloty, to the captains, 100 Zloty, to the Cossacks, 30 Zloty.
22. In case the horde should invade (Ukraine), it would be necessary to attack these from Astrakhan and Kazan; likewise the Don Cossacks should be ready, however, the peace with them should not yet be discontinued and they should not be provoked.
23. That His Tsarist Majesty would now graciously supply food and powder for the guns at Kodak, a town built on the Crimean frontier, where the Hetman permanently keeps a garrison of 400 men, providing them with everything. That likewise, His Tsarist Majesty would graciously provide for those who guard the Cossack's Headquarters (Kish) beyond the cataracts, since it could not be left without a garrison.

The Author's Note:

The "23 Articles" are the Ukrainian draft of the treaty with the Tsar of Muscovy; therefore they are reproduced here without the resolutions of the Boyarskaya Duma which are included in the Muscovite copy of the document. Also omitted is the final note of the Boyars concerning the return of Muscovite refugees.

Acts pertaining to the History of Southern and Western Russia. Vol. X, Document XI, pp. 446-452.

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