

Life of the Righteous Petro Kalnyshevsky

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Petro Ivanovich Kalnyshevsky (1690 - 1803)

EARLY LIFE AND MILITARY CAREER

The future Koshevoy was born on June 20th according to the Old Calendar in the year 1690 at the village of Pustoviytivka in Lubensky district in the Hetman region of Ukraine (now Romensky district, Sumy region) into the family of an Orthodox priest.

As is customary according to the Orthodox canons, on the 8th day after birth, on June 29th, on the feast of the Chief Apostles Peter and Paul, the young child was baptized with the name Petro (Peter) in honor of the Holy Apostle Peter.

However, Petro did not want to become a priest like his older brother Semyon or nephew Stefan, but the age of eight, following his other brother Andrii, he went to the Zaporizhye Sich, where he was accepted by his relative Davyd Kalnysh to the Kushchiv guard, where he served as a squire, where he mostly helped feed the horses of the Cossacks.

Between 1735-1739, Petro Kalnyshevsky served during the Russo-Turkish wars of that year, and distinguished himself alongwith his fellow Cossacks during the capture of Ochakov, Kinburn, Bakhchisaray, and Hadzhibey.

In 1750, he participated in an assault on the Southern Bug against the Poles, who wished to invade Ukraine and force its inhabitants to become Papists.

By 1752 he was already mentioned as a marching colonel, by 1754, as a field commander. In 1755-1757, a Zaporizhian Cossack deputation was sent to St. Petersburg to visit the Tsarita Elizabeth for "certain military needs" , and Petro Kalnyshevsky, as a solid man, was included in its composition. This delegation of the Zaporizhye Cossacks, led by Danilo Stefanav Gladky, helped stop smuggling and the illegal slave trade in the areas around Zaporizhzhya and Murmansk regions.

After his return, he was elected a military judge for a year (1757-1758). After that, in 1758-1760, he took part in another deputation sent to St. Petersburg. In 1760-1762, he was once again elected as a military judge. In 1762-1763, he was elected for the first time as governor. In this capacity, Kalnyshevsky was sent to Moscow to attend the coronation of Catherine II as a basket-bearer. But the following year, the Empress

removed him from the position of basket-bearer. For his part he had received a ribbon of the order of St. Andrew, 3rd class, by the Tsarita.

During his deputations to St. Petersburg (1755-1756, 1762, 1765), he often interceded for the peasants of the Zaporizhye who were having their land stolen. He often promoted resettlement of Serbian and Moldovan refugees on the Left Bank (Dnipropetrovsk), Right Bank (Dniporpetrovsk) and Slobid. Despite frequent protests from other chieftains, he would often house fugitives and criminals and often try to mediate conflicts and stop injustices from incurring. Along with his generous donations to the churches, he established 45 villages and about 4,000 farms. During his time as Koshevoy, the population of Zaporizhye had grown by about 55,000 people.

On January 1st, 1765, despite not being wanted by the Tsarita, the military elected him Koshevoy (chieftain) of Sich, and Petro Kalnyshevsky remained this title for more than 10 years, until the destruction of Sich in 1775. In 1767 the Turks and Tatars launched raids into the areas around Zaporizhye Sich to take Orthodox Christians as slaves, which were repelled by Petro Kalnyshevsky.

In 1768, an unlawful rebellion against the Tsar broke out in Sich (the so-called "poor man's rebellion"), during which Kalnyshevsky and a Cossack foreman hid in the Novosichen Fortress under the protection of the Russian army. On the second day, Kalnyshevsky's squad together with the garrison of the fortress suppressed the uprising.

The Russian Empire used the expertise of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in military operations against the Turks, in particular, during the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774. The Koshevoy Petro, who was 78 years old in 1768 at the beginning of the war, and 84 years old at its end, showed himself to be a talented commander. Kalnyshevsky saved the Russian riflemen regiment of Count Rumyantsev near Larga and Kagul with his Cossack regiments. With help from the Russian Navy, he took part in the assaults on Bender and Izmail, and in the capture of Perekop. The Zaporizhzhya army as a whole distinguished itself in the battles against the Turkish fortresses of Ochakiv and Silistria, in raids on the Crimean rear and captured the well-fortified Kafu fortress, the center of the Turkish slavers.

In 1770 for his actions, Petro was awarded a gold medal with diamonds, weighing around 30 chervonets -- the highest award of the Russian Empire -- that being the Order of the All-Praiseworthy Apostle St. Andrew the First Called, 1st class. On the medal was an inscription and comment that said: "For the troops of the Zaporizhye Cossacks, to the Koshevoy Kalnyshevsky, for excellency and bravery in battle against the enemy and special zeal for the service."

In 1773, Kalnyshevsky was promoted by the Army to the rank of Lieutenant General.

BENEFACTIONS AND PIETY

"If you have the honor of building the House of God, accept it as a great gift from the Creator, because the right hand of the Lord touches the one who builds the temple, and the Lord will forgive him many sins." - St. John of Kronstadt

The first significant contributions known to us made by Petro Kalnyshevsky were to the Trinity Church in his native village of Postovitvka in 1757 -- a cypress Cross, and in 1762, a Gospel, half a meter wide, in an expensive frame, at the price of 600 rubles (which today is now in the Romensky Museum of Local History) -- in 1763, the Church of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God in Sich received a Gospel decorated with silver and precious gems, along with gilding for 1025 rubles.

With his own funds, Petro Kalnyshevsky built: the cathedral church in the town of Lokhvytsia (Poltava region), the Church of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God in the town of Romny (Sum region), the Church of the Holy Trinity in his native village of Pustovytyvka (Sum region), the Church of St. George in the village of Petrikyvka, established by the Koshvoy himself (Dnipropetrovsk region), and the largest temple among all Zaporizhye churches -- the nine-domed Holy Trinity cathedral (built 1775-1778) in the village of Novoselitsa (near the city of Novomoskovsk, Dnipropetrovsk region). Like former chieftains, Kalnyshevsky continued to provide great material support to the Kyiv-Mezhihirsky Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery. In 1765, after a fire, he restored many of the monastery buildings, and in 1772, he built a large stone gate in the same monastery, and a new church in the name of the Apostles Peter and Paul next to it. The Koshevoy was also the founder of the monastery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles in Dragomyrna (Bucovina, Romania), and the Sekulsky and German monasteries in Moldovlachia (Romania.)

In 1763 the Koshevoy made a pilgrimage to Kyiv, where he donated a riza to an icon of the Apostle Peter. For which he was given a Church award by the Metropolitan Andrey of Kiev and Gallicia.

Petro Kalnyshevsky in particular maintained close ties with Mount Athos, he invited many experienced elders and teachers from there, made generous donations to the monasteries on Mt. Athos, made several pilgrimages, and had received much spiritual direction and did obediences in the monasteries of the Holy Mountain.

A friend of Petro Ivanovich Kalnyshevsky, also descended from a Ukrainian Cossack priestly family and a nephew of his, was Pyotr Ivanovich Velichkovsky (1722-1794), better known by his monastic name Paisius (Velichkovsky or Niametsky), who founded the Saint-Illinsky hermitage on Mount Athos. With the money of the Koshevoy and the

labors of Elder Paisius, a monastic-ascetical school was created, which carried out the titanic works of: translating the works of the Holy Fathers into the Slavonic language, reviving the lost Orthodox traditions of eldership and Hesychasm in the Russian land -- which gave a powerful impetus not only to the revival of real monasticism and spirituality, but also to the revival of the greater Orthodox East Slavic culture. It can be said that Kalnyshevsky, albeit indirectly, contributed to a greater rise in Orthodox spirituality, as through many of the monasteries and churches he helped establish with the fathers and golden chain of Saints from them, some gave us such Saints as Seraphim of Sarov, many of the Optina elders, the Glyn elders, etc.

Among the correspondence between Petro Kalnyshevsky and Fr. Paisius Velichkovsky is a letter, dated 1772 which predicted for the Koshevoy a place among the Saints: "Christ will build you an eternal temple, not made by hands, in Heaven. For the decoration of the monasteries He will decorate your soul with an unfading crown. For the clothing of naked souls, Christ will clothe your soul with incorruptible clothing and will make you worthy in His Heavenly abode to eternally enjoy His Divine Glory."

Another center of Slavic spirituality on Mount Athos was founded by the Zaporizhzhya chieftain in 1747, the Hermitage of the Nativity of the Virgin, or the "Macedonian skete" which existed on Mt. Athos in the 18th-19th centuries near the Zograf monastery. This monastery was an important link connecting Mount Athos and the Orthodox people of Zaporizhzhya Sich. The connection with the monastery was best explained by the Koshevoy, who lovingly described the Hermitage -- called "Sviatohirsky" among the Eastern Slavs -- to be the "Spirituality of Zaporizhzhya".

The faith of the Zaporizhye chieftian can be evidenced by the role of the last Koshevoy in the appearance of the miraculous Novokaidak (Samara) icon of the Mother of God, the feast of which takes place on November 1st.

In 1770 in the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Novo Kaidak, a newly revealed icon of the Mother of God was found, in the likeness of the miraculous Akhtyrka icon. As healings occurred, people brought silver pendants to the icon, of which there were more than 20. In October 1770, the rector of the Novo Kaidak church; Fyodor Fomich, officially reported to the Koshevoy about the miraculous icon located by the altar.

By order of Petro Kalnyshevsky, the priest Grigori Porokhnya, in the presence of the military commanders, collected evidence of healings from the icon. After which the Koshevoy ordered the miraculous icon to be transferred from the altar in front of a large crowd of people and installed in the middle of the Church near the right choir in the newly built icon case -- a donation of a silver riza, with gilding and many precious colored gems, for the honored icon.

The Koshevoy after the wonderworking icon was placed said to the Mother of God: "We pray, cover us with your Honest Protection and deliver us from all evil." Which is written on a scroll of many icons of the Righteous Koshevoy to this day.

Along with churches and monasteries, Petro Kalnyshevsky also built schools and hospitals for the people of Ukraine.

In 1772, the famous iconographer Dziga Yarem presented a copy of the Mother of God of Okhtyr, a famous local wonderworking icon of the Mother of God to Petro Kalnyshevsky as a gift.

EXILE AND REPOSE

In May of 1775, Tsarita Catherine II secretly ordered the liquidation of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the destruction of the fortress of Sich. An order was given to Grigory Potemkin -- himself a friend of Petro Kalnyshevsky and an honorary Cossack -- to send soldiers to protect the borders of the Russian land. Unaware of the trickery and wishes of the Tsarita, Potemkin sent the troops to Ukraine.

On the night from Thursday until the morning of Friday, June 4-5 of 1775, Zaporizhye Sich was surrounded by a 45,000 strong Russian army under the commander of Lieutenant General Peter Tekelia, which consisted of 10 infantry and 13 Don Cossack regiments, along with 8 regiments of dragoon cavalry, reinforced by 20 hussar cavalry and 17 pikemen squadrons. At that time, no more than 3,000 Zaporozhzhyan Cossacks remained in Sich, the rest went home for the 3 day celebration of the "Green Holidays", which begins on the day of Pentecost Sunday. For the Orthodox Cossacks, this period was also important as the week was when meat was allowed before the beginning of the Petrivka (Apostles' fast), which begins on the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints -- however an old tradition is that Christians would fast the evening before. The Cossack Chieftain Petro Kalnyshevsky was given an ultimatum -- to surrender despite being Orthodox and not showing any hostile intent. Two hours were given for reflection. In order to prevent the inevitable mass murder of the innocent population of Sich, the 85 year old Kalnyshevsky, the abbot of the Sich Church of the Protection of the Holy Mother of God, Archimandrite Volodymyr (Sokalsky) and several other military commanders of the Zaporizhye army surrendered before the Russian Army. The Archimandrite insisted on not spilling Christian blood -- especially during the celebrations of the Holy Days. With such a numerical advantage (a 15 to 1 ratio), the difficult decision to accept an unjust imprisonment saved the lives of many of the Cossacks, who were later able to establish the town of Novo Sich along the mouth of the Danube river, near the territory of the Ottoman Empire.

The Russian Army destroyed the town of Sich and all fortifications in the territory. The

archive and military treasury with the trinkets and jewels were stolen. Kalnyshevsky was arrested together with many of the military elders. The Koshevoy was banished for life to the Solovetsky Monastery, where he was sent at the end of July 1776.

Tsarita Catherine II, who had murdered her husband and shut down many monasteries and convents in Russia, and ordered the unlawful arrest of Petro Kalnyshevsky wrote "there is no longer any pain in the Zaporizhzhya Scythia, nor the ugliness of its politics". She had accused the Koshevoy of stealing property and wealth from the people and churches, and trying to subvert the Imperial power.

The Historian Dymtro Yavornitsky described Kalnyshevsky's path to Solovetsky monastery: "the path of the Koshevoy passed through Moscow (where he was held for a year) to Arkhangelsk. He was transported secretly at night with a large guard, without mentioning his name or surname anywhere. From Arkhangelsk, he was sent across the White Sea to the Solovetsky Monastery, where he was under very close supervision".

The Cross Petro Kalnyshevsky bore at Solovetsky was that of suffering -- a man who in freedom was endowed with worldly power and wealth, and was suddenly and falsely accused and deprived of freedom by those who hated Orthodoxy. The Christian feat of Petro Kalnyshevsky was much comparable to the faith and suffering of the Righteous Job the Long-Suffering. The Koshevoy spent his days in repentance -- as he saw it fitting, as the old tradition of the Zaporizhian people was that if they did not die in war, they would finish their days in their earthly lives struggling in monasteries hoping to attain spiritual feats. At one time, Petro Kalnyshevsky was hoping to have spent his days in the monastery, hoping to attain a calm spirit, Petro Kalnyshevsky gladly accepted the will of God, when, by royal decree, he was imprisoned in a monastery, which his soul had longed for.

In the annual report, where the Solovetsky archimandrite briefly noted the behavior of those imprisoned to the monastery, he wrote the following record about the Zaporizhia chieftain -- unchanged from years prior: "He lives his life humbly, with worries only about himself". A quarter of a century passed in solitary prayer, only three times year, on Pascha, Holy Transfiguration and the Nativity of Christ, was he allowed to walk freely around the island and eat the trapeza meal. From Kalnyshevsky's confiscated earthly fortune, at his insistence 1 ruble per day was allocated for his maintenance, with the rest of his wealth being given in charity to the poor and needy. The average monk at Solovetsky monastery received 9 rubles a week and a normal prisoner was given 10 to 30 rubles a month.

Besides his "ration money", which was allocated 1 ruble a day, he did have a portion of his wealth which was not given to the poor to be made into a Gospel and cover worth 2,435 rubles and donated it to the Solovetsky monastery. During a brief transfer to a

solitary prison near Povarna, Petro was very disheartened to be away from the monastery's daily services.

While at Solovetsky, he made baskets which the Fathers of the monastery sold -- although he refused to take any of the proceeds or earnings for himself. Having been in prison, his beard and hair had grown long, his nails grew long, and all of his clothes had been reduced to tatters. He wore a simple caftan even during the winter, which did not protect him from the cold.

The Fathers took the proceeds from the baskets Petro Kalnyshevsky made and in 1794, used it to make a large altar cross made of silver that weighed more than 30 pounds. In 1798 a silver-gilded chasuble with crowns was made using the earnings of the Koshevoy's baskets.

His cell on Solovetsky island was written about by Father Symeon, who wrote complaining of the conditions Petro Kalnyshevsky was left in during the spring of 1779, according to him, water constantly dripped from the roof of the cell due to the rains, and caused his clothes to rot. There was only hay as flooring and he voluntarily wore chains like the Russian ascetics of old, along with his poverty, and his appearance, many of the Fathers on the Solovetsky island said he lived like a wild animal.

On March 15th, 1801, Tsar Alexander I, on the occasion of his coronation to the throne, issued a decree on amnesty for persons detained in the military department of the Secret Police, mostly those who were falsely accused. Among those who were on this list, Petro Kalnyshevsky was listed first. The Tsar wrote "the prisoners held in fortresses and exiled to various places, deprived of various dignities and ranks... release them immediately from their current places of residences and allow them to return wherever they wish..."

In response to the pardon of the Tsar, the Koshevoy replied; "...that even here, in the Solovetsky monastery, I enjoy freedom in the fullest extent...", Thus according to the testimony of Petro Kalnyshevsky himself, at the end of his life he achieved spiritual freedom that every Orthodox Christian strives for. Unwilling to leave Solovetsky due to his old age (according to the document, he was already 110 years old, and blind), the Koshevoy requested to be left in the monastery with the same conditions and squalor he had been living in, stating "I will devote the rest of my days to the service of the One True God in this blessed solitude, to which through I am completely used to the twenty-five year old stay of my time here. In this monastery I await with a calm spirit for the approaching end of my life." Tsar Alexander I granted Kalnyshevsky's request.

After receiving his freedom, Petro Kalnyshevsky became a novice at the Solovetsky monastery, and was later tonsured, and after living two years in peace with his brothers

and God, he achieved as witnesses said, a "a pious, good death" on October 31st, 1803. The casket of the last Zaporizhzhyan chieftain was buried in a place of honor, in the graveyard of the Church of St. Onuphrius, between the graves of the prominent state figure from the 17th century, Avraamiy Palitsyn, and the important church figure, Solovetsky Archimandrite Feodorit. In 1856, by order on the Archimandrite Oleksandr (Pavlovich), a slab was installed on the grave of Kalnyshevsky, on which an epitaph was engraved, which perfectly reflects the spiritual feat of the last Zaporizhzhyan chieftain on Solovetsky:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ laid His soul on the Cross for all of us, He does not want the death of sinners: Here is buried the body of the deceased Koshevoy, the honored Zaporizhye Cossack chief, Ataman Petro Kalnyshevsky, who was exiled to this monastery by Royal Decree in 1776 for his humility. He was released again in 1801 by the royal decree of the Tsar, but he himself did not want to leave the monastery where he found peace of mind, as a humble Christian who sincerely recognized his own sinfulness. He died on Saturday, October 31st, 1803 at the age of 112, by a pious and good death.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints, Amen"

In the spring of 1887, a historian by the name of Dmytro Ivanoyvich Yavornytskyi visited Solovetsky monastery. His works to this day are the most important source for our knowledge about the Koshevoy's imprisonment. Today there are many memorials, placed and orders named after Petro Kalnyshevsky.

Another great source for the life of Petro Kalnyshevsky comes from his clerk, Ivan Globa -- who wrote on behalf of the Koshevoy, since according to an old Zaporizhye custom, the Koshevoy was to be illiterate. He was accused once by the General Isakov of supporting a rebellion against the Tsar due to a delayed response, by which he justified himself by saying "... (by my) inability to write... if I had wrote my subcommander, there would have been great confusion, and many of my men would have been killed".

During the reign of the atheistic Bolsheviks, the Soviets destroyed many of the churches and monasteries the Koshevoy built, as well as subjecting his memory to a damnation. The Soviets turned the island of Solovetsky into a political prison, and desecrated the grave of Petro Kalnyshevsky, including removing the slab with his epitaph.

In 2002, the slab with the epitaph on the grave of Petro Kalnyshevsky was moved to the Germanovsky courtyard of the Solovetsky monastery. In 2004, a monument of Petro Kalnyshevsky was erected on the same courtyard at the island of Solovetsky designed by Zaporizhzhya native, Nikolai Sobol.

Today there are Church buildings in Ukraine named after Petro Kalnyshevsky in the Zaporizhzhya district, in the Levoberezhnoye region, which contains relics (personal belongings) of Petro Kalnyshevsky. Another Church named after Petro Kalnyshevsky exists in the Buda district, in Cherkasky District. Another Church with a prototype icon and some small relics is at the Holy Intercession Cathedral in Zaporizhye district. A small chapel in his honor in Kyiv exists on Kalnyshevsky street. A village in the Dnipropetrovsk region is named "Petrikivka" after the Righteous Koshevoy, it being the only village he founded (in 1772) that still exists. In most icons, Petro Kalnyshevsky is depicted on the island of Solovki at the Solovetsky monastery, standing before the wonderworking Samara icon of the Mother of God.

Today throughout the lands of Russia and Ukraine, Petro Kalnyshevsky is widely considered by many to be a Saint. A man who in great piety and humility obtained salvation and accepted unjust punishment. His memory is celebrated on October 31st, the day of repose.