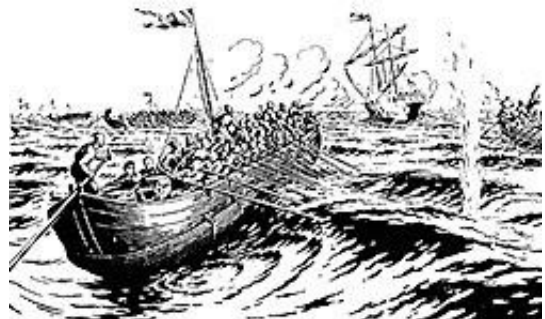


THE KOZAKY AT SEA

During the 16th and 17th centuries the Kozaky became a great maritime power, following in their ancestors, the Viking Russ,' footsteps. The catalyst for those seagoing exploits was slavery. By the 1500s, the Turks had forced the Crimean Tatars to recognize Ottoman authority, and were conducting trade in Ukrainian slaves at the Crimean port of Kaffa. Abducted by Tartars during lightning raids on the southern Ukraine, young girls were carried off to become concubines in Turkish harems. Men and boys went directly into the ranks of oarsmen, though the luckier ones became janissaries. So it came to pass that the slave market at Kaffa burned in the hearts of Ukrainians, and especially in those of the Kozaky of the wild empty steppe lands.

Early Kozak successes understandably gained the attention of the 'Turks' European enemies. The Papacy and both the French and Hapsburg courts opened diplomatic relations with the Kozaky, in hopes of launching joint campaigns against the Turks. During one such mission to the Kozaky in June 1594, Hapsburg diplomat Erich von Lasotta recorded in his journal that he arrived in camp just as 1,300 Kozaky under Bohdan Mikosinsky were returning from a successful 50-ship sea raid. From 1600 to 1624, the Zaporozhian sea campaigns reached their greatest magnitude.

During that period, raids involved from 40 to 80 shallow draft galleys called chaiky, (**pewit. Ukr.**) Each longship was up to 60 feet long and 12 feet in both width and depth. Chaiky were made from stone oak, linden, ash or other hardwood trees growing along lower Dnieper. To enhance the chaika's buoyancy, sheaves of reeds were fastened along both sides to act as a flotation collar, they also provided some protection against cannon enemy fire. The longships were propelled by 10 to 12 sets of oars and one or two square-rigged sails. The masts were lowered before going into battle, making the vessel almost invisible at a distance. Chaika also featured rudders located at both the bow and stern, providing exceptional mobility. A chaika could execute a 180-degree turn within its own length. The main armament consisted of up to eight falkonetts, which were augmented by the muskets and sabers that each crew member carried. Blunderbusses/horse guns were very popular for boarding enemy vessels and close-quarter combat because of their wide dispersal shot pattern. Each galley was equipped with its own compass, not the norm for such small vessels in the 17th century.



The Kozak chaika was often augmented by a number of Turkish-style galleys that served as command-and-control ships for the senior officers. These larger vessels were powered by about 30 oars and three or four sails. They also mounted larger cannons than the chaiky. A distinctive feature of these vessels was the mast arrangement, the foremast was the tallest of the three, the mainmast the shortest.

Petro Konashevych Sahaidachny was elected hetman in 1613. Sahaidachny was a dynamic nobleman from the Halychyna region of the western Ukraine. After studying at the Ostrih Academy, he quickly rose in the ranks and helped lead successful raids against several Turkish strongholds along the western shore of the Black Sea, including Varna (1606), Ochakiv (1607), Perekop (1607 and 1608), Kilia (1609), Ismail (1609) and Akkerman (1609).

It has been said that Sahaidachny realized that the Zaporozhian host could be the start of a Ukrainian nation. By attacking Ottoman targets, he hoped to obtain recognition and support from the European states opposing the Turks in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. By 1618, the Zaporozhians were members of the Imperialist Anti-Turkish League. Sahaidachny even moved the official leader's seat of power to the old Ukrainian capital of Kyiv (Kiev), and conducted a foreign policy that was nominally under the Polish Crown's authority, but for practical purposes was independent.

In the early summer of 1614, 40 vessels and 2,000 men headed for the Anatolian coast. The towns and cities on its shoreline made up a 17th-century Turkish Riviera, populated by rich merchants. Leaving two men behind per ship to guard the fleet, Sahaidachny and the Kozaky proceeded to plunder and sack their first landfall, Trebizond. From there, they used former slaves as guides to make a surprise attack on the luxurious Anatolian pleasure port of Sinope, known in the Ottoman Empire as the "City of Lovers." Storming the port from the landward side, the Kozaky seized the citadel, and in addition to sacking the city destroyed the large Turkish fleet of galleys and galleons at anchor in the harbor. In 1615 one of the Kozaky greatest naval exploits came to pass. After entering the Bosphorus, an 80-vessel fleet landed the Kozaky between Mizevna and Archioca, the twin ports of Constantinople. Sahaidachny split his forces into two units, which simultaneously assaulted and plundered both ports. According to the Ottoman chronicles, Sultan Ahmed I saw the smoke from the burning ports while on a hunting trip and immediately ordered the janissaries from the 30,000-man garrison to engage and massacre the Kozaky. However, Sahaidachny quickly recalled the Kozaky, who re-embarked before the janissaries arrived. After a four-day pursuit along the west coast of the Black Sea, the Turks overtook the Kozaky near the mouth of the Danube. At that point the Kozaky, making use of the chaika's superior mobility, suddenly reversed course and attacked the leading Turkish galleys, capturing the Turkish admiral! With the loss of their commander, Turkish morale collapsed and their remaining vessels fled southward. The Kozaky in a typical gesture of defiance towed the captured galleys to Ochakiv and burned them in view of its

garrison. Using the burning vessels as a diversion, some of the Kozaky slipped ashore, seized all the garrison's cattle and horses, and drove them overland to the Sich.

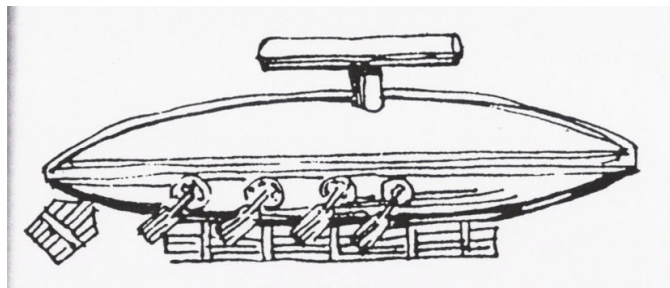
After returning to camp, each man received his fair portion of the spoils and hid it in a secret underwater location along the labyrinth of small islands, reed beds and marshes. As a result, this region of the Dnieper became known as Shcharbniza Voyskova, or "Treasury of the Kozaky."



The Kozak naval raids finally petered out, because they found more lucrative markets for their talents during the Thirty Years' War. Kozaky fought first for the Hapsburgs and later for France. There was even one regiment of Kozaky who fought in their Chaika in the Baltic against the Swedes for the Poles with some good measure of success! By the end of these wars, the rebellion of 1648 had taken root. There were engagements throughout the region by river, both attacking Polish supply vessels and in siege actions.

One unusual weapon of the seaborne Kozaky was the fire tube. This was a pointed copper or brass tube filled with an explosive warhead and a considerable amount of powdered propellant and a short fuse that was launched from the small shipboard cannon on the chaika as an incendiary device. It seems that a short length chain trailed behind as a stabilizer and to ensure attachment to the rigging of the opponent's ship.

Mention must be made of the legend of the undersea Chaika. These craft appear in more than one folk tale regarding the attacks on Turkish cities. The vague descriptions vary from what may have been merely an upturned and weighted small boat to a true underwater craft. These descriptions convey a craft powered by rear or side mounted jointed oars and raised and lowered by compression of goatskin bladders. Perhaps, an archeological discovery will one day give another first to the Kozaky!



A period drawing of a more advanced form of underwater Chaika that appears to be very similar to Dutch designs of the period.