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SLAVE HUNTING AND SLAVE REDEMPTION
AS A BUSINESS ENTERPRISE:
THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA REGION
IN THE SIXTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

I should like to begin my article with what I regard as an inspiring quote from Alan Fisher's history of the Crimea:

From 1468, the time of the first recorded Tatar raid in the northern steppe, until the end of the seventeenth century, Tatar raiders made almost annual forays into Slavic agricultural communities in the north searching for captives to sell as slaves. It is understandable that Slavic historians describe these events with dismay; yet viewed from a less emotional or nationalistic perspective, these slave raids can be seen as a very successful economic activity that produced the means by which the Tatars developed a lively urban and cultural society.¹

I fully agree with this somewhat provocative opinion, although I seriously doubt that today, in the era of "political correctness", any American historian would dare to write such a sentence with regard to the trade in black slaves across the Atlantic.

It goes without saying that slavery in early modern times was considered something "normal" by most contemporaries. It also had a long tradition from antiquity onwards. Therefore, while writing about the institution of slavery, we should perhaps avoid the use of modern-day judgements. On the other hand, this does not mean that the people concerned were indifferent to the fate of their relatives.

Tatar raids left deep and traumatic traces in the collective memory of the East European peasantry. As late as 1948, school children from south-eastern Poland were asked to collect "interesting stories" from the past of their villages. Most of these stories concerned the Tatars, who had not been seen in that region since the 17th century! The long-lasting memory of "Tatar horrors" can be further confirmed by folklore and proverbs.² Local tradition confirms that

1 – Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1978, p. 27.

2 – Franciszek Kotula, "Warownie chłopskie XVIIw. w ziemi przemyskiej i sanockiej" [Peasant strongholds in the districts of Przemyśl and Sanok in the 17th century], *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości*, VIII, pt. 1 (1962), p. 73-149, especially p. 74-76. It should be stressed that the region studied by Kotula was once quite remote from the border. More distant provinces

Tatars hunted mostly young men and women, while the elderly were usually spared. Small children, who could not walk and were not so valuable, were often left behind by the captors, especially when they were pursued by Polish troops. In a report from 1672 we read:

In the fields and forests they [i.e. the Tatars] left behind over 200 poor children whom they could not take along since everyone preferred to take horses and oxen rather than children. Carts were sent from the town [of Zamość] in order to bring them back alive.³

The author of a report dated 1624 saw masses of deserted and crying children on the fields near Halyč. While being followed by Polish forces, Tatar and Nogay raiders killed a few hundred captured men, apparently fearing their revolt. The Polish author concluded that «it was better for these men to die than to be converted to heathenry or to die every hour for many years on the galleys».⁴

For those abducted by the Tatars, their captivity was equal to civil death in their native society. Following large human losses in 1624, the Catholic bishop of Przemyśl, Achacy Grochowski, allowed those whose husbands or wives had been taken into slavery to remarry.⁵ According to one folk tale, captured Christians were kept in cages and fed with milk and nuts. When they were so fat that they could not walk, they were roasted and eaten by the Tatars.⁶

So far, only two authors have attempted to study in detail the demographic losses of the region in a given period. The Polish historian, Maurycy Horn, based his estimates on declarations (so called *iuramenta*) by Polish nobles, who registered the number of abducted subjects in order to receive tax exemptions. For obvious reasons these documents tend to be complete as it was in the proper interest of the nobles to give as large a number of abducted peasants as possible. On the other hand, they are not extant for all years and regions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Horn's research is focused on the densely populated province of Ruthenia, centred in L'viv, leaving aside Volhynia, Podolia and Ukraine proper. For the 29 years between 1605 and 1633 covered by his study,

of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, located to the south-east (today in Ukraine) were much more exposed to the Tatar raids.

3 – Ambroży Grabowski, (ed.), *Ojczyście Spominki z rękopismów zebrane* [Home Memoires Collected from Manuscripts], Cracow, J. Cypcer, 1845, II, p. 183.

4 – L'viv, L'vivs'ka Naukova Biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka NAN Ukrainy, fond 5 (Oss.), opys 1, no. II-475, p. 256, a report from the battle of Halyč (also known as the battle of Martynów) on 20 June 1624, dated 22 June; for a slightly different version, where the quoted fragment is missing, see Stanisław Przyłęcki (ed.), *Pamiętniki o Konięcpolskich. Przyczynek do dziejów polskich XVII wieku* [Memoirs about the Konięcpolski Family], Lwów [today L'viv], 1842, p. 250-258, especially p. 255-257.

5 – Franciszek Kotula, "Warownie chłopskie", p. 75. The bishop's surname is misspelt as Grocholski.

6 – Franciszek Kotula, "Warownie chłopskie", p. 75 (a local tale from Staromieście near Rzeszów).

the author estimated that over 100,000 Ukrainians and Poles were abducted from Ruthenia alone, adding another 100,000 for the remaining provinces of the Commonwealth.⁷ Thus we arrive at an annual average of 7,000 captives, abducted by the Tatars from Poland-Lithuania. In order to get the full picture of demographic losses, Horn proposed to increase these numbers by at least 30 per cent to include the victims of famine and plagues resulting from the Tatar raids. His estimates were accepted as realistic by other Polish historians.⁸

The Russian author, Aleksej Novosel'skij, based his estimate on declarations by Russian *voevodas*, sent every year to Moscow on the request of the tzar. In this case, the *voevodas* were definitely not interested in giving high figures as that would disclose their incompetence in protecting the district. According to Novosel'skij, the number of Russian subjects abducted into slavery in the first half of the 17th century amounted to 150,000 to 200,000 (i.e. 3,000 to 4,000 per year). While admitting that his calculations were rather minimal, he estimated that the demographic losses of Ukrainian territories, then belonging to Poland, must have been much larger.⁹

Taking Novosel'skij's estimate, data from various chronicles, and tax revenue figures from Caffa, Halil İnalçık has calculated that the slave population imported into Ottoman lands from Poland-Lithuania, Muscovy and Circassia, amounted to over 10,000 a year in the period 1500-1650.¹⁰ If we consider that a number of slaves died while being transported through the steppes, while many others remained in the Crimea, it can be safely stated that the demographic losses of Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania alone (leaving the Caucasus aside) approached 10,000 per year, that is two million in the two centuries between 1500-1700.¹¹

7 – Maurycy Horn, *Skutki ekonomiczne najazdów tatarskich z lat 1605-1633 na Ruś Czerwoną* [The Economic Consequences of the Tatar Raids into Red Ruthenia in the Years 1605-1633], Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1964, p. 91-94.

8 – For the discussion of this problem, see also Wojciech Hensel, *Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej na Krymie i w Turcji (druga połowa XV-XVII w.)* [Slaves Originating from the Ancient Commonwealth in the Crimea and Turkey (Second Half of the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries)], unpublished doctoral thesis, Warsaw, 1977, p. 52-54.

9 – Alexej A. Novosel'skij, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s Tatarami v pervoj polovine XVII veka* [The Struggle of Muscovy against the Tatars in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century], Moscow-Leningrad, Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1948.

10 – Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 285.

11 – A chronological list of estimated losses of both Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy has been compiled for the years 1468-1694 by Alan Fisher in his article "Muscovy and the Black Sea slave trade", *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, VI (1972), p. 575-594, especially p. 580-582. However, this list is neither complete nor reliable. Chronological and eyewitness reports as well as 19th-century historians' estimates, some of which are largely exaggerated, are treated as equal to more realistic data proposed by modern scholars. Well aware of this, Fisher concluded that «it is impossible to arrive at the total number of captives seized by the Tatars in these raids, since all are not known, and many of the individual figures appear to be inflated by contemporary sources», p. 582. If one gathers together the heterogeneous material gathered together by Fisher, one arrives at a figure of circa three million captives.

As a comparison, the estimates of Philip Curtin for the Atlantic slave trade amount to less than 300,000 for the years 1451-1600, and less than 1.5 million for the 17th century, that is much less than two million for the whole period.¹² Admittedly, these estimates were criticised by Joseph Inikori and other African historians, who suggested that these numbers be at least doubled in order to give the actual demographic losses of African societies resulting from slave wars, plagues and the decline of local economy.¹³ Nevertheless, one can safely conclude that until 1700 the Black Sea slave trade was fully comparable in size with the Atlantic slave trade. It was only in the 18th century that the Black Sea slave trade gradually declined while the Atlantic slave trade reached its peak.

Playing with demographic figures can be a tricky game, especially if combined with politics. In 1972 an ominous book was published by the Bulgarian historian Christo Gandev. By using the 15th-century Ottoman survey registers, the author mistakenly assumed that each *mezra*^{ca} was identical to a Bulgarian village, whose inhabitants had been slaughtered by the Turks. In conclusion he claimed that almost 700,000 Bulgarians had been exterminated as a result of the Ottoman policy of "debulgarisation" (обезбългаряване). Moreover, as the number "discovered" by Gandev was almost 40 per cent of the estimated Bulgarian population in the 15th century, he accused the Turks of reducing today's Bulgarian population by 40 per cent, that is 13 million.¹⁴ His book played a prominent role in the anti-Turkish propaganda in Bulgaria in the 1980s.

While treating such "scholarly" studies as a memento, we should not close our eyes to the consequences of depopulation, affecting large Slavic territories in Eastern Europe. If an "alternative" history of Ukraine were imaginable, perhaps the country's historical development would have looked different had it not been for the slave trade.

The 17th-century English observer Paul Rycaut claimed that the Tatars were hunters of the Turks, and the latter fed on their prey.¹⁵ Slave raids and slave trade played a major role in the economic life of the Crimea. Admittedly, this factor heavily influenced historical judgements by numerous Polish, Ukrainian and Russian scholars. Further, 19th-century Russian historiography used to legitimise the annexation of the Crimea by stressing the "primitive" and "parasitic" character of its economy as compared with the more "civilised" Russian empire.

12 – Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade. A Census*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, p. 268.

13 – For the discussion of this problem, see the chapter on the slave trade by Bronisław Nowak in M. Tymowski, (ed.), *Historia Afryki do początku XIX wieku* [History of Africa to the Early Nineteenth Century], Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1966, p. 1213-1219.

14 – Christo Gandev, *Balgarskata narodnost prez 15 vek. Demografsko i etnografsko izsledvanie* [Bulgarian Nationality in the Fifteenth Century. Demographic and Ethnographic Research], Sofia, Nauka i izkustvo, 1972, p. 55, 100, 385-90 (English summary).

15 – «The Tatar is to the Turk, as the giacall to the lion, who hunts and finds the prey for the lion to overcome and feed on», Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, London, J. Starkey and H. Brome, 1668 (reprinted New York, Arno Press, 1971), p. 59.

A “postcolonial” deconstruction of the whole of Russian 19th-century literature has been recently proposed by Ewa Thompson in her book inspired by Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.¹⁶

The nationalist perspective was largely inherited by Soviet Russia and reached its peak in 1944 when the Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia. In a book on the Crimea published by a Russian historian as late as 1987 we still find familiar imperial arguments, supplemented by a quotation from Friedrich Engels dated 1851 about the “progressive” role of Russia in the Middle East.¹⁷

It is easily understandable that some other historians, especially in Turkey and in the West, were engaged in defending the historical legacy of the Crimean Tatars, sometimes in a no less emotional manner. In the introduction to the volume published by a French team directed by Alexandre Bennigsen, we read: «Nul État n’a pas été autant décrié, honni et calomnié que le khanat tatar de Crimée». ¹⁸ Perhaps in this context we should read the statement by Alan Fisher, quoted at the beginning of this article. Fisher’s monograph on the Crimean Tatars appeared in the Hoover Institution series on the “forgotten” nations of the Soviet Union.

Andrzej Dziubiński estimates that a large expedition by the Crimean Tatars, called *sefer* and led by the khan, *kalgay*, or another high dignitary, might have captured 5,000 to 6,000 prisoners.¹⁹ The great campaigns of 1649, 1653 and 1667 ended with Polish-Tatar negotiations and the invaders were formally allowed to leave along with their human prey. In these years as well as during the Polish-Ottoman wars of 1620-1621 and 1672-1676, the number of captives may have been much larger. Fortunately, there were also periods of peace in Polish-Crimean relations.

Dziubiński also stresses the importance of smaller raids called *beş baş* (literally five heads), carried out by the Nogays and Budjak Tatars. These raids were more difficult to detect by the Polish border guards and occurred many times a year with no regard to the actual political climate between Warsaw and Bahçe-saray. An average number of captives abducted in this way from Poland-Lithuania was estimated by Dziubiński as 1,000 a year.²⁰

Bistra Cvetkova describes numerous slave tradesmen, who accompanied the

16 – Ewa Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism*, London, Greenwood Press, 2000.

17 – Gennadij A. Sanin, *Otnošenija Rossii i Ukrainy s Krymskim xanstvom v seredine XVII veka*, [The Relations of Russia and the Ukraine with the Crimean Khanate in the Mid-Seventeenth Century], Moscow, Nauka, 1987, p. 15-16.

18 – A. Bennigsen et al. (eds.), *Le khanat de Crimée dans les Archives du Musée du Palais de Topkapı*, Paris-The Hague, Mouton Éditeur, 1978, p. 1.

19 – Andrzej Dziubiński, “Handel niewolnikami polskimi i ruskimi w Turcji w XVI wieku i jego organizacja” [The trade in Polish and Ruthenian slaves in 16th-century Turkey and its organisation], *Zeszyty Historyczne Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, III (1963), p. 36-49, especially p. 42.

20 – Dziubiński, “Handel niewolnikami polskimi i ruskimi”. Cf. Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 54.

Ottoman army on its campaigns.²¹ According to Polish sources, the role of such merchants was also crucial in organising Tatar raids into Poland-Lithuania.

In the 1540s Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent constantly accused the Polish border commanders of raiding Ottoman territories, and asked the Polish king to punish them. In reply, one such commander, the *starosta* of Bar, Bernard Pretwicz, prepared a lengthy report which was read in the Polish diet in 1550. Pretwicz accused the Ottoman merchants from Akkerman of being responsible for the Tatar slave raids. They «went with them or sent their servants while others lent horses to the Tatars in return for half of their prey».²² Among the horses captured by Polish soldiers in numerous skirmishes with the Budjak Tatars, almost half belonged to the Turks from Akkerman.²³ In a royal document dated 1555 we read: «There are many Turks who send Tatars supplied with their horses and armour into our domains, and later share the profits in the fields»,²⁴ this last expression referring to the fact that the division took place far from the eyes of the Ottoman police and customs officers who might have viewed negatively the breaking of the peace treaty or the failure to pay taxes due by those involved in the slave trade.

Notwithstanding such efforts to escape the tax duties, the Ottoman state was among the principal share holders in the Black Sea slave trade. According to Pretwicz, the sultan's income from the slave trade in Akkerman and Oçakiv (Turkish Özü) amounted to a few 100,000 *akçe* a year.²⁵ Strikingly similar are the numbers for Caffa established by İnalçık on the basis of Ottoman tax registers. The slave tax collected in Caffa amounted to 620,000 *akçe* in 1520 and 650,000 *akçe* in 1529.²⁶ The same author estimates the total state revenue from the slave trade as approaching 100,000 gold florins (i.e. circa 6,000,000 *akçe*) in the mid-16th century.²⁷

The Ottoman tax system concerning the slave trade has been already studied by numerous authors, to mention only Berindei and Veinstein, Dziubiński, Fisher, Hensel, İnalçık, Novičev, Sahillioğlu and Uzunçarşılı.²⁸ Yet, the relation

21 – Bistra Cvetkova, “Robstvo v Osmanskata imperija i po-specialno v balgarskite zemi pod turska vlast” [Slavery in the Ottoman empire, especially in the Bulgarian lands under Turkish rule], *Istoričeski Pregled*, X/2 (1954), p. 82-100, especially p. 89.

22 – “Bernard Pretwicz i jego apologia na sejmie 1550 r.” [Bernard Pretwicz and his apology in the diet of 1550], *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 1866, III, no. 7, p. 44-59, especially p. 49.

23 – “Bernard Pretwicz i jego apologia”, p. 53-57. The report by Pretwicz was extensively used by Dziubiński in his article, “Handel niewolnikami polskimi i ruskimi”.

24 – «Jest Turków wiele, którzy na koniach swoich, swoją zbroją Tatarów tutaj w państwa nasze wyprawują, a z nimi się na polu korzy.cią dzielą», quoted from Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 45.

25 – “Bernard Pretwicz i jego apologia”, p. 49.

26 – İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 283.

27 – Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600*, New York-London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973, p. 131.

28 – Mihnea Berindei and Gilles Veinstein, “Règlements de Süleyman Ier concernant le liva de Kefe”, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XVI (1975), p. 57-104, especially p. 72-73;

between various taxes such as the *pençik*, *gümrük*, *öşr*, *resm-i mukarrer*, *tamga*, *resm-i mühür*, *köprü tamgası*, *resm-i köprü*, *bac-ı ubur*, *resm-i geçid*, *tota*, *dellallık*, *bac-ı pazar*, *bac-ı tekrar*, *adet-i tezyin*, and some other terms used by foreign observers is not altogether clear and remains beyond the scope of this article.

Apart from the state and its functionaries (*emins*, *mültezims*, etc.), numerous Ottoman merchants throughout the empire made profits on the slave trade. Besides the Black Sea ports and major trade centres such as Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, Damascus and Cairo, smaller towns had separate slave markets as well, to mention only Xaskovo, Nova Zagora and Kazanlik in Bulgaria.²⁹ In Istanbul alone, no less than 2,000 people, men and women alike, were making their living by engaging in the slave trade as merchants, brokers, apprentices, gatekeepers, watchmen and so on.³⁰ While in the 16th century most of the slave dealers had been Jews, in the following period this profitable profession was apparently dominated by Muslims.³¹

Mihnea Berindei and Gilles Veinstein, "Règlements fiscaux et fiscalité de la province de Bender-Aqkerman 1570", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XXII (1981), p. 251-328, especially p. 254, 265, 295-296; Dziubiński, "Handel niewolnikami polskimi i ruskimi", p. 42-44; Andrzej Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu. Handel między Polską a Imperium Osmańskim w XVI-XVIII wieku* [on the Routes of the Orient. The Trade between Poland and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries], Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Leololdinum, 1997, p. 208-210; Alan Fisher, "The sale of slaves in the Ottoman empire: markets and state taxes on slave sales, some preliminary considerations", *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi. Beşeri Bilimler – Humanities*, VI (1978), p. 149-174, especially p. 163-169; Hensel, "Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej", p. 59-70; Halil İnalçık, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea I The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487-1490*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 91-111, 143-146; Aron D. Novičev, "Pençik. K istorii robstva v Osmanskoj imperii" [Pençik. From the history of slavery in the Ottoman empire], *Turcologica. K semidesjatiletiju akademika A.N. Kononova*, Leningrad, 1976, p. 305-312; Halil Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries", *Turcica. Revue d'études turques*, XVII (1985), p. 43-112, especially p. 68-70; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları I Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1943, especially p. 89-90.

29 – Cvetkova, "Robstvoto v Osmanskata imperija", p. 90.

30 – A valuable description of the Istanbul guild of slave dealers (*esirciyan*) was left by a 17th-century Ottoman traveller, Evliya Çelebi, see Fisher, "The sale of slaves in the Ottoman empire", p. 156-157.

31 – Departing from Evliya's description as well as the reports by western observers, Robert Mantran has claimed that in the 17th century the slave trade in Istanbul was still monopolised by the Jews, see Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, L'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul, 1962, p. 506-507. Yet, by quoting a mid-17th-century list of slave dealers, Alan Fisher has demonstrated that this was not the case. On the contrary, the Ottoman authorities tried to eliminate non-Muslims from the slave trade, see Fisher, "The sale of slaves in the Ottoman empire", p. 157-160. I am very grateful to Minna Rozen, who has drawn my attention to the fact that 17th-century Jewish sources do not reflect any involvement in the slave trade on the part of Jews, unlike the 16th-century ones which are full of such references. Although it is hard to believe that Jews were completely banned from this profitable activity, they were at least much less apparent as slave dealers for a certain period of time.

The ethno-religious composition of those profiting from the slave trade was not limited to Jews and Muslims. In the late 15th century, the Italians from Caffa were often accused of selling Christian slaves to Turkey.³² Two centuries later, in 1658, a French merchant, Louis d'Arvieux, travelled from Izmir to Alexandria on an English ship which had been hired together with the crew by Turkish slave merchants. The young Frenchman was apparently fascinated by the "cargo":

Pour les filles elles étoient à peu près de même âge, la plus vieille ne paroissoit pas avoir dix-huit ans; c'étoient des Polonoises, des Moscovites, et des Circassiennes, que les Tartatres avoient enlevées dans leurs courses, et qu'ils étoient venues vendre à Constantinople ou à Caffa. Elles étoient bien faites et parfaitement belles, su-tour les Circassiennes.³³

Although he sharply criticised the English «viandes rôties» and «leur pudding détestable», he did not mind his carriers' occupation and even called the English captain «un très-honnête homme».³⁴

As was the case in the African slave trade, local native merchants also participated in the export of human cargo. The institution of slavery existed in Poland-Lithuania as well, although it did not play a great economic role. While the export of Christians to Turkey was strictly forbidden, other slaves, especially Muslim Tatars, might have been legally exported. Further, the Polish border authorities often arrested Jews and Armenians, who carried children with them, apparently kidnapped or even bought from their foster-fathers.³⁵ A Polish nobleman even deliberately left his minor cousin in a village exposed to a Tatar raid in order to inherit her bequest, although this is perhaps not a typical event.³⁶

Unlike the black slaves transported across the Atlantic, at least some Slavic slaves, abducted by the Tatars and Turks, might have conceived of a redemption and return to their home countries. This applied especially to the nobles whose

32 – Marian Małowist, *Kaffa – kolonia genueńska na Krymie i problem wschodni w latach 1453-1475* [Caffa – the Genoese Colony in the Crimea and the Eastern Question in the Years 1453-1475], Warsaw, Towarzystwo Miłośników Historii, 1947, p. 318; cf. Marian Małowist, *Wschód a Zachód Europy w XIII-XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych* [East and West of Europe in the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries. A Confrontation of Socio-Economic Structures], Warsaw, PWN, 1973, p. 185.

33 – Louis D'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte, consul d'Alep, d'Alger, de Tripoli, et autres échelles du Levant*, Paris, C.J.B. Delespine, 1735, I, p. 152.

34 – D'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, p. 153.

35 – Dziubiński, "Handel niewolnikami polskimi i ruskimi", p. 45-46; Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu*, p. 204-206.

36 – Hensel, "Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej", p. 150; Władysław Łoziński, *Prawem i lewem. Obyczaje na Czerwonej Rusi w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* [By Right and Might. Social Customs in Red Ruthenia in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century], Lwów (today L'viv), H. Altenberg, 1904, I, p. 166.

relatives were able and willing to pay for their freedom. The ransom usually exceeded an average slave market price as the Crimean or Ottoman merchant, who often had to wait for years while feeding and housing his prisoner until the demanded sum was delivered, treated this transaction as a profitable capital investment.³⁷ Rich Polish magnates often tried to pass for ordinary soldiers as they knew that the ransom was proportional to the captive's wealth and position. Peasant captives, on the other hand, tried to pass for nobles in order to receive better treatment.³⁸

Many redemptions were made possible by Armenian merchants who acted as intermediaries between the two worlds and spoke the Turkic language. A Polish priest and historian of Armenian origin, Sadok Barącz, presented such activity in quite a sentimental way in his book published in the mid-19th century: «They [i.e. the Polish Armenians] returned husbands to longing wives, fathers to their crying children, and relatives and friends to the mourning families, often with no reward but the satisfaction of their conscience».³⁹

Though such idealistic motives cannot be excluded, often one finds a quite different picture. In the Armenian court register from Lwów (modern L'viv) I found the documentation of a lawsuit which took place in 1679. A Polish noble, Aleksander Tatomir, sued an Armenian woman, Anna Szahinowa, whose husband, a resident merchant from Lwów, had undertaken to deliver Mrs Tatomir from captivity in the Crimea. The ransom, already paid by Tatomir, amounted to 400 lion thalers (Polish *talary lewkowe*, Turkish *esedi gurus*). Mrs Szahinowa, who was acting as her husband's agent during his absence from Lwów, had promised that Mrs Tatomir would return by Christmas. As the term elapsed, Tatomir lost his patience and demanded either his wife or money back. He added that he would not pay another penny as he was not willing to lose his entire wealth.⁴⁰

A Polish 16th-century envoy to the Khan, Marcin Broniowski, noted that slaves played a great role in agriculture, husbandry and urban economy in the Crimea.⁴¹ In the following century, Evliya Çelebi estimated the number of Cossack (i.e. Ukrainian) captives in the Crimea as 400,000 men, 400,000 women and 300,000 children.⁴² Although Evliya Çelebi's numbers cannot, as usual, be

37 – Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 133.

38 – Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 106.

39 – Sadok Barącz, *Żywoty sławnych Ormian w Polsce* [Biographies of Famous Armenians in Poland], Lwów (today L'viv), Zakład im Ossolińskich, 1856, p. 115; Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 145-147.

40 – L'viv, Central'nyj deržavnyj istoryčnyj arxiv Ukrainy u L'vovi, Mahistrat mista L'vova, fond 52, opys 2, no. 531 (Knyha induktyv virmens'koho sudu), p. 1426-1429.

41 – *Martini Broniovii... Tartariae descriptio*, Cologne, Officina Birckmannica, 1595, p. 17; Russian translation in *Zapiski Odesskago Obščestva Istorii i Drevnostej*, VI (1867), p. 333-367, especially p. 357; cf. Hensel, “Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”, p. 188.

42 – Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, VII, Istanbul, İkdam Matbaası, 1928, p. 601; Polish translation in Zygmunt Abrahamowicz (ed.), *Księga podróży Ewliji Czelebiego (Wybór)*, Warsaw, Książka i Wiedza, 1969, p. 279.

trusted, his general impression of the great number of slaves in the Crimean Khanate was undoubtedly true.

It is much harder to trace the role of slaves in the Ottoman empire itself. Much has been written about the *kul* system, the palace and janissary corps. These slaves, however, constituted a tiny privileged minority among the former captives.

Another sector "reserved" for slaves, this time the most unlucky ones, was the galley fleet, numbering tens of thousands of oarsmen. In 1622 a galley crew, headed by a Polish nobleman, rioted off Lesbos and managed to escape to Italy. The oarsmen numbered 22 Turks, condemned for various crimes, and 220 Christians. Among these Christians there were three Greeks, two Englishmen and one Italian, while all the others originated from Ukraine or Muscovy.⁴³

Most of the slaves went neither to the palace nor to the galleys. According to Paul Rycaut, the bulk of captives imported into Ottoman lands, were used to compensate for losses due to epidemics and wars.⁴⁴ While numerous modern scholars stress the importance of slaves in Ottoman society, such statements are rarely followed by any particular research. According to Wojciech Hensel, the use of slave labour in the Ottoman economy usually escapes scholars' attention.⁴⁵ Halil İnalçık admits that due to frequent manumissions slaves who became integrated into the mass of the *reaya* it is hard to trace their fate as a separate group.⁴⁶

At least we know that they were not eaten by the Tatars. Some of them were used as agricultural workers on the imperial estates (the so-called *ortakçı kulları*, sharecropper slaves).⁴⁷ Most of the slaves acquired by private individuals entered the Ottoman urban economy. To date the most meticulous research on the place of slaves in Ottoman society has been done by Halil Sahillioğlu on the basis of the Bursa *kadı* and census registers. According to his estimates, slaves constituted one fifth to one fourth of the city's population.⁴⁸ In addition, no less than 15

43 – Marek Jakimowski, "Opisanie krótkie zdobycia przesniejszej galery alexandryjskiej w porcie u Metelliny" [Short description of a seizure of a superb Alexandrian galley in the harbour of Midilli] in Ambroży Grabowski (ed.), *Starożytność historyczne polskie*, Cracow, Józef Czech, 1840, p. 470-476, especially p. 471 and 474. On the uncertain dating of this event see Jerzy Pertek, "Marek Jakimowski" in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary], X, Wrocław, 1962-1964, p. 332.

44 – «Many think, were it not for the abundant supplies of slaves, which daily come from the Black Sea (as before we have declared) considering the summer slaughters of the plague, and destructions of war, the Turk would have little cause to boast of the vast numbers of his people», Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 81.

45 – Hensel, "Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej", p. 172.

46 – Halil İnalçık, "Servile labor in the Ottoman empire", in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, Béla K. Király (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and the Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern*, Brooklyn, New York, Brooklyn College Press, 1979, p. 25-52, especially p. 34 and 41. See also İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 284.

47 – Hensel, "Jasyr z ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej", p. 173; İnalçık, "Servile labor in the Ottoman empire", p. 27-30; Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", p. 46.

48 – Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", p. 95.

per cent of inhabitants were freedmen.⁴⁹ With its developed silk industry Bursa was certainly a major centre for slave labour. Nevertheless, a substantial number of slaves lived and worked in other Ottoman cities as well.

Sahillioğlu's research covers a relatively early period between 1456 and 1513. In that period slaves from Eastern Europe had only recently begun to appear on the Ottoman market. Yet, in the latest court register studied by Sahillioğlu they already constituted the largest group. Among 514 slaves registered in Bursa between 1511 and 1513, as many as 239 were *Rus*. This term is mistranslated as "Russians" in the English version of the article. Though some of these *Rus* might indeed have been Russians, most of them were apparently Ukrainians, subjects of the Polish king. This is confirmed by the fact that most Tatar raids in the early 16th century were directed against Poland-Lithuania, and not against Muscovy. Along with 19 Poles these *Rus* amounted to over 50 per cent of all registered slaves.⁵⁰

Unlike the black slaves in America, bound for generations to the same plantations and stigmatised by racial prejudice, Slavic slaves in the Ottoman empire, men and women alike, easily assimilated into Muslim society, if not in the first, then in the second generation. The better a given group assimilates, the less visible it becomes – this is also the reason why the history of Ottoman slavery is so difficult to trace. One might even suggest that for many East European peasants, accustomed to serfdom and the *corvée*, new urban life in the Muslim environment might have been easier and better.⁵¹ Yet, such arguments may be risky: it is like declaring that it was good for Africans to be kidnapped by slave hunters since their descendants today carry American passports.

To conclude, apart from its impact on the development of Eastern Europe, at least two aspects of the Black Sea slave trade deserve to be recognised as crucial for Ottoman economic history. The first one concerns the effect of absorbing over two million people into Ottoman society. The second is related to the purely financial benefits from the slave trade and its influence (or lack of influence) on capital formation. This last question already has a long tradition in the historiography of the Atlantic slave trade, to mention only Eric Williams's famous thesis on the impact of this trade on the Industrial Revolution.⁵² These issues are certainly not easily calculable. Yet, they definitely merit further research.

49 – Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", p. 86-87.

50 – Sahillioğlu, "Slaves in the social and economic life of Bursa", table VII on p. 104.

51 – An early 18th century Ukrainian chronicle by Samujil Velyčko refers to a "confusing" story under the date of 1675: when the Cossacks led by the *ataman* Ivan Sirko invaded the Crimea and delivered Ukrainian prisoners, they simply refused to return to their homeland, see Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, "Pro dolju ukrajins'kyx polonjanykiv u kryms'komu xanstvi" [On the fate of Ukrainian prisoners in the Crimean Khanate], in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, *Studiji z Krymu*, Kiev, 1930, p. 14-17.

52 – Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapel Hill, University of South Carolina Press, 1944.